

NOTE

Subject: Summary conclusions of the 28th meeting of the Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC), held in Brussels on 2 March 2016

The meeting was chaired by Mr. Dan ANDRÉE (SFIC Chair, SE). Agenda point 5 was chaired by Ms. Iulia MIHAIL (SFIC Vice-Chair, RO). The Forum drew the following conclusions:

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda (CM 1594/16) was adopted, with two modifications: the withdrawal of point 5a on Brazil and the addition of an AOB on the SFIC mandate, requested by FR (covered under point 7a).

The Chair also took the opportunity to welcome new representatives to SFIC: Ms. Marion STEINBERGER (DE), Ms. Jana SCHNIEDERS (DE), Mr. Maël LE BAIL (FR), Mr. Franco CIRO (IT) as well as Mr. Andrea CARIGNANI (Commission) and Mr. Stephen SADLER (Commission).

The Chair recalled that the **summary conclusions** of the SFIC meeting of 3 December 2015 were approved by written procedure as set out in doc. 1351/16.

2. SFIC's contribution to the 2nd Report on the implementation of the Commission's international R&I Strategy

The Chair recalled the good cooperation with the Commission, in particular on the preparations for the first Report that led to the organisation of a Multi-Annual Roadmaps (MAR) workshop in March 2014. The Chair also reminded the MAR workshop foreseen for the same afternoon of 2 March, and considered such cooperation as one of the core tasks of SFIC's work, highlighting a four-step approach: 1) SFIC input to the draft Report; 2) SFIC comments on the draft Report; 3) SFIC opinion on the Report; and 4) SFIC Members' action according to the SFIC opinion.

Ms. Cristina RUSSO (Commission) gave an overview on the Commission's plans towards the publication of the Report and considered the collaboration as a "mutual benefit exercise" to describe but also realise the synergies with and between Member States, an aspect particularly covered by the chapter named "Strengthening the synergies with the EU's external policies and the activities of the Member States". Ms. RUSSO also invited Member States to provide input in a more structured way, proposing a type of "fiche" in which Member States would summarise their bi-lateral and multi-lateral activities with third countries. The Chair welcomed the idea and suggested to link this request by the Commission to the work of the SFIC Toolbox WG as well as to the development of ERA Roadmap - Priority 6 at national level.

Delegations welcomed the openness and transparency by the Commission and commented on the importance of reflecting more national activities (AT) and multi-lateral activities and information sharing (FI) in the Report. Other comments emphasised the partnership approach, the importance of engaging Member States/Associated Countries in the planning of policy dialogues and JSTCC meetings, the role of international cooperation in Horizon 2020 and asked for clarification concerning the Global Research Area concept (DE).

Commission highlighted its willingness to enhance synergies with Member States and invited SFIC to be more proactive in providing input, including written comments to the Report. The Chair also invited the Commission to regularly update about JSTCC meeting dates.

SFIC delegates to submit written comments to Commission's Report by 22 March 2016 (as announced via e-mail by the Secretariat).

SFIC delegates to consider the proposal by the Commission to provide a summary "fiche" on bi-lateral and multi-lateral activities with third countries, potentially linked to the work of the SFIC Toolbox WG and to implementation of the ERA Roadmap - Priority 6 at national level.

3. **SFIC contribution to "Open to the world"**

The Chair introduced the new version of the draft SFIC opinion on "Open to the world" and recalled the previous discussions at plenary and Steering Board level, in which oral and written comments were received (and incorporated) in the draft text. The Chair also highlighted the fact that SFIC is the specific ERA-related group covering the same policy area as Commissioner Moedas' "Open to the world" agenda, therefore the opinion should be directly communicated to him.

SE and FI made drafting suggestions to be incorporated in the text. Commission announced its intention to channel the opinion to Commissioner Moedas and to come back with this agenda point at the June plenary meeting to give an update on the status of "Open to the world".

SFIC opinion on "Open to the world" to be adopted via written procedure.

Commission to channel final version of the opinion to Commissioner Moedas and to give an update on "Open to the world" at the next plenary in June.

4. External dimension of the European Research Area

a) SFIC's contribution to ERAC Annual Report: Reporting on Priority 6

The Chair informed delegations about ERAC plans to have its first Annual Report covering the year 2015, aiming at adopting the report at the ERAC meeting on 22 April 2016.

Following the streamlining of reporting and coordination amongst ERA-related groups, SFIC was asked to contribute with its input on the implementation of ERA Roadmap Priority 6 - international cooperation, with an initial discussion at ERAC Steering Board on 3 March. The Chair also presented the draft contribution by SFIC, focussing only on the implementation of Priority 6 and not on all SFIC activities (which are to be covered in the regular SFIC report of activities). Only linguistic remarks by SE were made (and incorporated to the final text) before the draft SFIC contribution to ERAC Annual Report 2015 was adopted by the SFIC plenary.

SFIC Secretariat to formally transmit SFIC's input to ERAC Annual Report 2015 to the ERAC Secretariat, as adopted by the SFIC plenary.

b) National ERA Roadmaps: Implementation of Priority 6 on international cooperation

SFIC delegations were invited to briefly present progress on the implementation of the ERA Roadmap at national level, in particular concerning Priority 6. Several delegations (AT, BE, CZ, DE, DK, EE, FR, FI, IE, IT, RO, PT, SE, NO and CH) took the floor. Interventions showed diverging statuses of the implementation of the ERA Roadmap amongst delegations, also including Priority 6. However, a general trend on reasonable progress made was acknowledged in view of the presentation of the national ERA Roadmaps by May 2016.

5. State of play of Working Groups by rapporteurs

a) BRAZIL: Update on WG work, including revision of mandate

The point was withdrawn from the agenda at the beginning of the meeting.

Brazil to be discussed at the next SFIC plenary meeting in June 2016.

b) RUSSIA: Update on WG work, including adoption of SRIA

Mr. Klaus SCHINDEL (Russia WG rapporteur, DE) presented the draft SRIA for EU/MS/AC-Russia cooperation, as main input from the SFIC Russia WG based on successful cooperation between WG members and valuable input by WG participants, including the Commission. FI acknowledged the good work done but considered that the introductory part would need some redrafting to be in line with the current EU-Russia policy. LT supported FI in consulting the Foreign Affairs Ministry.

The Vice-Chair concluded by requesting SFIC delegations to submit written comments (mainly on the introductory section) to the SFIC Russia WG rapporteur by 18 March 2016. Afterwards, the Russia SRIA will be adopted via written procedure.

Mr. SCHINDEL also presented the results of the questionnaire as part of the Strand 1 - policy coordination exercise, with a very successful response rate with 29 completed answers. Results highlighted, amongst other findings, that 63% of those delegations who responded have a national S&T framework or funding agreement with Russia; 57% do have joint calls, with cooperation focusing on specific areas/disciplines (53%), including innovation (57%). Results showed that there is high potential for cooperation with Russia that should be better exploited.

c) USA: Update on WG work

Ms. Marion STEINBERGER (USA WG representative, DE) debriefed delegations about the workshop on planning a marine litter campaign that took place on 10 December 2015 in the context of the SFIC USA initiative and the G7 Action Plan to Combat Marine Litter. This successful workshop will be followed-up by the scoping workshop “Developing a Global Outreach Campaign on Marine Litter” on 18 March 2016.

d) CHINA: Update on WG work

Mr. Maël LE BAIL (China WG representative, FR) recalled the recent work of the China WG and its meeting on 4 February, pointed out the links with the DragonStar+ project, the questionnaire on Strand 1, the regional/ASEAN aspects as well as the new initiatives under the Horizon 2020 WP2016-17. Mr. LE BAIL also requested the sharing of information and good practices with the Commission, e.g. information from Commission's science counsellor in Beijing to be transmitted to the China WG.

e) TOOLBOX: Update on WG work

Mr. KJELLEMO (Toolbox WG rapporteur, NO) gave an oral update on the work of the WG, focusing on the two meetings of the WG so far, which discussed: the distribution of tasks and formulation of work packages, a future mapping questionnaire to be launched during 2016, as well as the analysis of some existing tools and studies in the remit of the WG work. Mr. KJELLEMO also announced that an informal Facebook group may be set up in order to receive input from those interested in the WG work. The WG currently has 10 delegations / members.

The Vice-Chair informed SFIC delegations about the potential revision of mandates for the various SFIC working groups (in particular for all country-specific WGs as they expire by mid-2016). All WGs concerned are meant to brainstorm about their future and either work towards a renewed mandate or propose to discontinue the work of the WGs. Moreover, the WGs should consider, when revising their mandates, to include recent developments in the future mandates, such as the links to the Policy Service Facility as well as the interaction with relevant regional initiatives.

SFIC plenary in June 2016 to decide about the renewal of the mandates for the SFIC WGs on Brazil, China, Russia and USA (and to adopt revised mandates if necessary).

The renewed mandates could include additional references to e.g. regional activities as well as to the new Policy Service Facility, as appropriate.

6. Structured policy coordination - Strand 2 - Policy Service Facility

Ms. Anca GHINESCU (rapporteur for Strand 2, RO) recalled the previous plenary in December 2015, where three key priorities were identified:

- Development of a composite indicator for international R&I cooperation;
- Databases for international R&I cooperation (with possible synergies with the toolbox for international cooperation);
- Impact studies of ongoing joint EU/MS (AC) initiatives and actions.

Based on the December 2015 plenary discussions, Ms. GHINESCU presented a background paper in which the previously identified key priorities were further developed. Commission considered SFIC's contribution so far as a very useful first articulation of SFIC's input and stressed the fact that SFIC can contribute to the Policy Service Facility (PSF) in a double manner:

- SFIC to propose activities for the PSF (activities "sponsored" by SFIC and contributing to SFIC's work); and
- Other activities proposed by Commission that could be of interest for SFIC (Commission is meant to propose a rolling planning/list of activities, which SFIC will be able to discuss, rank and prioritise).

DE suggested that the development of a composite indicator for international cooperation could be one of the first activities of the PSF requested by SFIC. Commission announced that the signature of the framework contract is expected over the summer, with the first individual contracts being out in Q4 2016.

The Chair concluded by informing delegations that the Steering Board will further discuss the issue, based on contacts between the Commission and the rapporteur and potential developments. An additional Steering Board meeting will be planned if necessary.

7. Administrative and reporting procedures

a) Amendment of the SFIC Rules of Procedure (following Council conclusions on the ERA advisory structure and revision of the SFIC mandate)

The Chair informed delegations that the standard clauses adopted by Council in December 2015 and the (soon-to-be) adopted revised SFIC mandate impose certain changes to the SFIC Rules of Procedure. The Chair highlighted the changes needed, as proposed by a background note prepared by the SFIC Secretariat, and covering Articles 2 and 3 (duration of mandate of Chair/Vice-Chair), and 7 (work programme, ERAC Steering Board involvement and reporting). There were no comments on this point.

The SFIC plenary agreed to amend the SFIC Rules of Procedure, as proposed. The SFIC Secretariat will send a revised version of the SFIC Rules of Procedure, incorporating the agreed amendments, to delegations once the revised SFIC mandate is adopted (expected in April 2016).

On another note, the Chair also informed delegations that the Council Research Working Party discussed on 22 February the draft mandates for SFIC and GPC. However, a last minute change was proposed by Commission on what concerns the participation of Associated Countries in meetings. Due to the objection of some delegations, both the GPC and SFIC mandates were withdrawn from the agenda of Coreper and Council, thus they were not adopted. The issue is meant to be discussed again within the Council instances.

FR took the floor to support the participation of Associated Countries in meetings, as essential added value for ERA-related groups and was in favour of keeping the original text, as proposed by SFIC. The Chair encouraged SFIC delegates to liaise with their counterparts at the Research Working Party.

The SFIC Secretariat will distribute the revised SFIC mandate to delegations once adopted by Council.

b) Procedure for the election of the SFIC Chair (June 2016)

The Chair informed delegations about the procedure for the election of the SFIC Chair, giving the following information:

- The current Chair is elected until 18th June 2016;
- The persons wishing to become candidates for the position of the Chair will have to send their CVs and letters of intention to the SFIC Secretariat, thus confirming the candidature. The deadline for the confirmation of the candidacies is tentatively **16th May 2016**;
- By **31st May 2016** (tentative) the SFIC Secretariat will send the CVs and letters of intention received from the nominees to all the SFIC Members;
- At the SFIC meeting of **15th June 2016** the election will take place (a vote will be required if there is more than one candidate);
- The newly elected SFIC Chair will take over the chairmanship from 18th June 2016.

The SFIC Secretariat will start the procedure for the election of the SFIC Chair and will inform delegations accordingly, when appropriate.

8. Standing information points

The Chair indicated that the following Standing Information Point was sent to delegations:

- Package of documents (including invitation) concerning the next EU-Africa High-Level Policy Dialogue meeting on 4-5 April in Addis Ababa.

No comments were received.

9. AOB

- *South Africa*: the SE delegation gave a debrief on the seminar that took place on 1 March, in which Commission and various Member States and Associated Countries shared their S&T cooperation with South Africa. The workshop was considered a very successful event, a food-for-thought exercise and a good and flexible way of cooperating.
- *Use of CIRCA*: the Vice-Chair reminded the Commission to both activate and actively use the CIRCA-bc platform. Such platform could be very useful for WG work and for sharing information.
- *Next meetings*: the Chair informed delegations that the next SFIC *plenary* will take place on Wednesday **15 June 2016**. The next SFIC *Steering Board* will take place on Tuesday **3 May 2016**
