

ERAC-SFIC 1354/16

NOTE

Subject: Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC) opinion on
Commission's "Open to the World" agenda

Delegations will find in annex the Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC) opinion on Commission's "Open to the World" agenda, as adopted via written procedure on 18 March 2016.

Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC) opinion on Commission's "Open to the World" agenda

1. INTRODUCTION AND KEY MESSAGES

SFIC is an advisory body¹ to the Council, the Member States and the European Commission and plays a central role in shaping future EU policy-making in international R&I cooperation. One of the top priorities of Mr. Carlos Moedas, Commissioner for Research and Innovation, is Europe's international role in research and innovation, summed up in the motto "Open to the World"²: *'For Europe to remain competitive in science at a global level, Europe should engage more in science diplomacy and global scientific collaboration, e.g. by not only supporting collaborative projects but also enabling partnerships between regions and countries'*. SFIC welcomes the increased focus on international cooperation and is prepared to give advice on how to develop the "Open to the world" agenda. This SFIC opinion briefly describes the activities of SFIC and how they can contribute to the Open to the World agenda. It also indicates some additional activities which could be pursued.

SFIC'S KEY MESSAGES ON "OPEN TO THE WORLD"

- *SFIC considers that strengthening the external dimension of the European Research Area (ERA) is a key element towards a more coherent and efficient interaction in research and innovation at a global level;*
- *SFIC believes that Europe, its Member States and Associated Countries should benefit from and engage more in already existing or planned specific R&I initiatives, for instance joint R&I programmes or regionally-targeted initiatives, as well as developing new ones;*
- *As an advisory body, SFIC is ready to continue to play an active role by supporting external policy, contributing to science diplomacy, serving as an exchange platform to discuss implementation of S&T cooperation agreements or strengthening its networking with stakeholders.*

¹ SFIC mandate (doc. 7308/16).

² Speech by Commissioner Moedas: "Open Innovation, Open Science, Open to the World": http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-15-5243_en.htm ('A new start for Europe: Opening up to an ERA of Innovation' conference, Brussels, 22 June 2015).

2. SFIC'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE "OPEN TO THE WORLD" AGENDA

The SFIC Work Programme 2015-2016³ focuses on five different priorities and areas of action. The activities identified therein should be exploited and, where relevant, aligned with the future Commission's priorities in this area, in order to maximise SFIC's input and impact towards the new Open to the World agenda.

2.1 *Strengthening the external dimension of the European Research Area (ERA): shaping the global R&I landscape*

R&I is increasingly global and countries not taking this into account risk lagging behind. The globalisation of science, technology and innovation activities calls for increased cooperation between the EU and its Member States in order to play an important role *vis-à-vis* other major R&I performing countries and regions with whom Europe needs to cooperate but also compete with. Moreover, there is the increasing need to access knowledge, infrastructures, value chains and markets from in and outside Europe in order to remain competitive on a worldwide scale. At the same time there is an imperative need to jointly address today's grand societal challenges.

The external dimension of the ERA should serve as an example and benchmark of what needs to be achieved at global level.

SFIC activities are in line with actions included in Priority 6 - International cooperation of the ERA Roadmap for the further development and implementation of the external dimension of ERA. The activities outlined below also contribute to such objective:

- SFIC shares the Commission's ambition to move towards a better coordinated R&I agenda at EU level that could shape the global R&I landscape. In order to do so, the further development of international R&I partnerships plays a crucial role.

³ Doc. ERAC-SFIC 1353/15.

In this respect, SFIC believes that the work of SFIC country-specific working groups with USA, Brazil, China and Russia effectively contributes to a coordinated approach towards a more coherent R&I cooperation strategy (including, when relevant, the development of SRIAs) and thereby also contributing to the EU's Multi-Annual Roadmaps for international R&I cooperation with third countries and regions.

- SFIC, as a partnership between Member States, Associated Countries and the Commission, has in the past months enhanced the structured policy coordination at strategic level in view of JSTCC meetings or SOM/GSO meetings. SFIC remains committed to such enhanced structured approach and looks forward to continuing cooperating with the Commission in view of high-level policy dialogue meetings. In this respect, initiatives such as the SFIC working group on the toolbox for international cooperation (with a future practical overview of relevant instruments for cooperation activities at bilateral and multilateral level), mapping activities on international agreements as well as questionnaires on bi-lateral cooperation with a specific country (as the SFIC initiative on South Africa) are definitely worth being considered for further action and expanded.
- The Policy Service Facility in support of the strategic development of international cooperation in research and innovation, aimed at supporting policy dialogues and other initiatives on international R&I cooperation with third countries and regions, can also boost the effectiveness and efficiency of enhanced policy coordination. SFIC is ready to provide expertise to the design, formulation and implementation of the Policy Service Facility to the extent possible.
- Discussion forums such as the Belmont Forum or the Global Research Council, with participation by Commission and/or Member States and Associated Countries should also be used to develop framework conditions in the international R&I arena to support excellent S&T and cooperation in R&I and serve as an international platform to exchange views. SFIC can contribute to (1) facilitate the exchange of information amongst SFIC Members and Observers ahead of the aforesaid Forums; as well as to (2) the design of framework conditions or principles as recently done with the SFIC opinion on common principles for the conduct of international R&I cooperation.

- The role of international cooperation in Horizon 2020 should be continuously assessed: SFIC has called on the Commission ‘to regularly provide information and analysis on international cooperation in Horizon 2020 to respective programme committee configurations and SFIC for further discussion’⁴ in order to ensure international involvement in Horizon 2020.

2.2 *Making use of specific R&I initiatives*

The Commission cooperates with Member States and partner governments within a variety of joint R&I programmes, for instance EDCTP2 on clinical trials for the sub-Saharan region, or a future PRIMA initiative on food systems and water resources for the development of inclusive, sustainable and healthy Euro-Mediterranean societies. SFIC is the relevant platform for exchange within Member States and the Commission to provide input to the design and implementation of such joint programmes. Moreover, SFIC has engaged with the High-Level Group on Joint Programming (GPC) and there is an already existing two-way cooperation to make the most of the international dimension of joint programming initiatives.

In addition to specific programmes and funding instruments, SFIC has proven its ability to use political momentum and link European with other multilateral policy initiatives (e.g. the Blue Growth Strategy with the G7 initiative on marine litter). SFIC is providing a platform to join forces within Europe and beyond.

Europe, its Member States and Associated Countries should benefit from and engage more in already existing or planned specific R&I initiatives

2.3 *Support to external policy through science diplomacy*

International S&T cooperation agreements are political tools to establish good framework conditions for collaboration, common priorities and cooperation activities with key partner countries. They are also important science diplomacy mechanisms to meet internal and external EU/MS/AC policy objectives. SFIC can serve as an exchange platform to discuss the strategic implementation of S&T cooperation agreements and provide support on the type of activities to be used via the SFIC working group on the toolbox for international cooperation.

⁴ Doc. ERAC-SFIC 1352/15.

Contributing to external policy also requires an active role by SFIC in networking with stakeholders. SFIC remains keen to promote links with networks of main stakeholders at EU level (e.g. European External Action Service -EEAS- as well as DG DEVCO) and at national level by, for instance, inviting them to any SFIC plenary during 2016 or involving them actively on consultations and workshops, where appropriate. SFIC also contributes to the external policy dimension through promotion and support for better coordination of external policy relevant for R&I at national level.

Moreover, depending on the particular situation at a given time in a specific third country or region, SFIC working groups can continue the technical work and dialogue that may have stopped at political level as a contribution to science diplomacy. Members of the SFIC working group on Russia have found very useful to meet and share experiences and the latest developments with Russia at a time where few bilateral contacts at political level exist.

SFIC is ready to continue to play an active role by supporting external policy, contributing to science diplomacy, and serving as an exchange platform to discuss relevant R&I issues

3. RECOMMENDATION TO THE COMMISSION

SFIC welcomes the Commission's "Open to the World" agenda as an invitation for the further development and implementation of EU/MS/AC international R&I cooperation policy. SFIC is ready to continue to play an active part as a platform for exchange, advice and policy formulation to the Commission on the design and implementation of the Open to the World agenda, as explained in point 2 above (and summarised in the Annex).

EU Member States and Associated Countries look forward to constructively cooperating with the European Commission in the framework of SFIC.

Potential "Open to the World" Agenda		SFIC actions
External dimension of ERA	Implementation of ERA Roadmap	– SFIC activities in line with actions included in Priority 6 - International Cooperation of the ERA Roadmap.
	Development of international R&I partnerships	– Joint EU/MS/AC initiatives: SFIC working groups on Brazil, China, United States and Russia; – Contribution to the EU's Multi-Annual Roadmaps with particular countries and regions.
	Structured policy coordination	– Coordination of EU/MS/AC activities and support to policy dialogues with third countries in view of high-level policy meetings, SOMs, GSOs as well as preparation of future JSTCC meetings; – SFIC working group on the toolbox for international cooperation (with a future practical overview of relevant instruments for cooperation activities at bilateral and multilateral level); – Use of mapping exercises and/or questionnaires (e.g. with South Africa, Russia) as a mechanism for policy coordination and information exchange.
	Policy Service Facility for international cooperation	– SFIC is ready to contribute to the design, formulation and implementation of the Policy Service Facility, in line with the Terms of Reference of this new instrument.
	Development of current framework conditions on the international R&I arena	– Provide input to Commission, MS and AC before their attendance to policy dialogues with third countries and facilitate exchanges ahead of international platforms or fora to contribute to the development of framework conditions and/or principles (e.g. previously done with common principles).

Potential "Open to the World" Agenda		SFIC actions
Specific Initiatives	Joint R&I programmes and joint programming	– SFIC should serve as a platform for exchange including with e.g. relevant joint R&I programmes or interaction with GPC (and JPIs when relevant).
	South Atlantic/Blue growth	– Opportunity for the SFIC working groups on Brazil and USA.
Support to external policy – Science Diplomacy	International S&T Agreements	– SFIC should serve as an exchange platform to discuss the implementation of S&T cooperation agreements and provide support on the type of activities to be used via the SFIC working group on the toolbox for international cooperation.
	Stakeholders	– SFIC to liaise with stakeholders at EU level (e.g. EEAS / DG DEVCO) and at national level (including through the MS/Commission networks of S&T counsellors and attachés in third countries), by inviting them to SFIC meetings or SFIC-related events/work.
	Technical-work/dialogue	– SFIC working groups to continue contacts at operational level on and/or with third countries even when few bilateral political contacts exist.