

**NOTE**

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Subject: Summary conclusions of the 32nd meeting of the Strategic Forum for International S&T (SFIC) cooperation, held in Brussels on 8 March 2017

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The meeting was chaired by Ms. Rozenn Saunier (SFIC Chair, [FR](#)).

**NB:** Whenever a presentation was given in the meeting, the summary conclusions will contain a reference. The presentations themselves have been distributed separately.

The [Forum](#) drew the following conclusions:

**1. Adoption of the agenda**

The agenda was adopted

**2. Tour de table of national activities**

The Chair provided feedback from the strategic SFIC workshop on 8 February and considered it a great success to further the reflection on the functioning of SFIC. The chair also invited delegations to inform the chair and the secretariat if they wanted to make a more extensive presentation (e.g. as done by DE - see presentation).

### 3. Administrative/Procedural issues

a) Biennial activity report 2015/16

The biennial activity report 2015/16 (Doc. WK 1713 2017) was approved by the forum. In line with article 7 of the SFIC rules of procedure, it will be submitted to the Council and to the Commission. It will be published as a public document.

b) ERAC annual report - SFIC contribution

The SFIC contribution to the ERAC annual report (Doc. WK 1760 2017) was adopted by the forum and will be formally submitted to ERAC on behalf of the chair and the vice-chair.

c) Work Programme 2017-18

The SFIC work programme 2017-18 (Doc. WK 2294 2017) was adopted by the forum. It will be published as a public document.

d) Election of the Vice-chair

Tiina Vihma-Purovaara (FI) was elected by consensus by SFIC as vice-chair. The chair and the forum thanked the outgoing vice-chair, Iulia Mihail, for her work over the preceding period.

e) Involvement of Armenia, Georgia and Tunisia as observers in SFIC

The chair informed the forum on the intention to invite representatives from the three new AC to the next meeting of SFIC as soon as nominations for ERAC have been received.

## 5. SFIC opinion(s)

### a) Gender in international cooperation

The AT delegate, standing in for the rapporteur, presented the state of play (see presentation) and called on SFIC to support the work by responding to the upcoming survey and by distributing the survey to the most relevant organisations (programme managers, funding institutions, policy makers, not at project level) in their countries.

On suggestion of IE, delegations are invited to provide the list of the institutions the survey has been sent on to.

The Chair invited all SFIC delegations to do their utmost to ensure a good response rate for this survey.

### b) Interim evaluation of H2020

The Chair thanked the forum for the work done on this topical opinion and informed about the ERAC workshop that will take place in Malta in the margins of the ERAC plenary.

SE issued the following statement to the minutes: 'As regards the SFIC opinion's suggestion (p. 6) that one must consider structural solutions to enhance international cooperation, such as a dedicated committee, or a dedicated budget heading; Sweden wishes to make clear that Sweden has adopted no formal position regarding the structure of the anticipated forthcoming framework programme. As such Sweden is not at this time in a position to neither support, nor act against, any such detailed proposals as here formulated in the SFIC opinion. Sweden also is of the opinion that the formulation of any such proposals would benefit from being based on a more extensive analysis, and will be happy to participate in discussions regarding different possible alternatives in the future.' DK and IE supported this statement.

This was followed by a number of interventions highlighting the need to have a discussion on measures and means to foster stronger involvement of third countries in the future framework programme.

The Chair concluded that the opinion presented an option and that the issue would be continued to be taken up in future contexts.

c) 2<sup>nd</sup> Commission's Report on international R&I cooperation

The rapporteurs presented the revised draft opinion (WK 2536 2017). The forum decided that the last sentence of paragraph 12 should be amended to refer to the consultation of SFIC in the setting of priorities and evaluating the outcomes.

The forum approved the revised text of the opinion. It will be published as a public document.

## **6. Service Facility**

The Commission presented the latest information on the Service Facility, including on the type of services provided and on possible applicants (see presentation). The following exchange of views related to the definition of conflict of interest, the timing and planning of priorities/activities of the Service Facility and the type of services that could be provided by it.

The Forum agreed with the Commission to establish a procedure on how to feed SFIC priorities into the planning

SFIC delegations are invited to send substantive ideas for services to be provided by the Service Facility to the chair, vice-chair and SFIC secretariat by the end of March. These will then be structured and after validation by SFIC submitted to the relevant Commission services.

## **7. State of play of Working Groups**

– Toolbox

The rapporteur provided feedback on the work of the working group and made the case for extending the mandate by 12 months. In particular, the plan is to run an additional workshop to describe best practices and experiences in INCO in autumn 2017. This proactive workshop will be open to SFIC delegations and experts in the field upon invitation.

The next WG meeting will be held back to back with the SFIC plenary in June.

The forum approved the modified mandate as contained in WK 1714 2017.

The forum also agreed to publish the summary of the results as contained in WK 1601 2017 with the addition of an additional explanatory paragraph, provided by the rapporteur.

Both documents will be published as public documents.

– Brazil

The rapporteur informed that the minutes of the last meeting will be circulated shortly. Relevant projects will be presented in the next SFIC plenary.

– China

The WG will meet shortly via videoconference to further clarify its role under the new work programme.

Horizontally, delegations raised the question of the follow up to the regional WGs (India, Russia, US) whose work has been suspended. The Chair concluded by inviting the Commission to provide a short state of play on the collaboration with India, US, RU in the next plenary and a more substantive presentation in the second semester 2017.

## **8. The Global Research Area**

The Commission presented the concept of the Global Research Area based on the book published by the Commissioner in 2016<sup>1</sup>. The concept is that of an area that embraces the principles of the three Os (Open Innovation, Open Science, Open to the World), where scientists, research institutions and companies share an open virtual knowledge environment. Practically this is used in bilateral science and technology cooperation committees, which often have these topics on the agenda. It is also used in high level regional policy dialogues, such as EU-CELAC's common research area, as well as in for a like the G7. The Global Research Area is used by Commission as a diplomatic tool in discussions with third countries.

Delegations welcomed the clarification that the Commission's presentation provided for the Global Research Area concept. The Commission also promised to share the timetable of the relevant events in this context with SFIC and to inform SFIC of involvement or feedback needs when relevant.

## **9. The drop in international participation in Horizon 2020 from a quantitative and qualitative perspective and corrective measures in the next WP**

The Commission presented the state of knowledge on the developments in INCO in Horizon 2020 (see presentation). Delegations welcomed the further details provided in the presentation and raised questions on the detailed reasons for the drop in INCO in Horizon 2020. The Commission also informed that further information on this drop would be contained in the SWP to be published in the course of this year.

The Chair thanked the Commission for its presentation.

## **10. National ERA Roadmap**

The vice-chair presented the draft overview on the use of national action plans on ERA priority 6. The Chair concluded that this was the first step in the work on these action plans and would be taken forward taking into account the outcomes of the ERAC workshop to take place in Malta in March 2017.

## **11. AOB**

Under AOB, the Commission presented the latest information on the establishment of innovation centres in Brazil, China and the US (see presentation); provided additional information and data from Horizon 2020/Societal Challenge 1 and from the US NIH programme (the Commission indicated that the numbers would be shared with the forum in writing); and presented (see presentation) the next steps in EU-CELAC cooperation and called for stronger MS involvement in the CELAC SOM.

DE presented the structure, focus and state of play on the EU-ASEAN joint funding scheme (see presentation) and the outcome of the European Interest Groups Japan and Korea (see presentation).

The Chair thanked the presenters.

In conclusion, the Chair informed the forum about the next plenary meetings in 2017, which will take place on 8 June, 29 September and 8 December.