

EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA
AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE
Strategic Forum for International
S&T Cooperation

Secretariat

ERAC-SFIC 1360/14

NOTE

Subject : Summary conclusions of the 21th meeting of the Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC), held in Brussels on 19 May 2014

The meeting was chaired by Mr. Dan ANDRÉE (SE).

The Forum drew the following conclusions:

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda (CM 2640/14) was adopted. DE made some remarks to include the Horizon 2020 implementation in the agenda. The Commission expressed the view that SFIC's main role is to provide advice, not to get involved in the preparation of Horizon 2020 Programme Committee configurations. The Chair informed that there is a discussion in ERAC on the same issue and if appropriate SFIC could take it up in a forthcoming meeting.

The Chair recalled that the **summary conclusions** of the SFIC meeting of 5 February 2014 were approved by written procedure as set out in doc. 1352/13.

2. SFIC Annual Report

The Chair indicated that the SFIC Secretariat drafted the first version of the report, which was first discussed by the SFIC Steering Board on 1 April 2014. An updated version was sent to all SFIC delegations for written comments, with a deadline for comments until 25 April 2014. Following comments from the DE, FR, SE and CZ delegations, further amendments were made to the document which was distributed to all SFIC delegations before the plenary meeting. The Chair also noted that the report should be finalised during the plenary meeting, so that it can be presented at the Competitiveness Council meeting on 26 May 2014.

The report was broadly welcomed. The FR, NL, FI, ES and DE delegations as well as the Commission provided further comments on the wording of different sections of the report.

After some on-the-spot redrafting, the Chair concluded that the Forum adopted the SFIC Annual Report 2013 and the report would be presented at the Competitiveness Council on 26 May 2014.

3. Implementation of the Commission's strategy for international R&I cooperation

a) Multi-Annual Roadmaps for international cooperation

The Chair recalled that the Council conclusions on international cooperation from May 2013 tasked SFIC "to contribute to the design and development of the multi-annual roadmaps in collaboration and open discussion with the relevant stakeholders". The Chair thanked the Commission for the organisation of a specific workshop on the Multi-Annual Roadmaps on 26 March 2014.

Ms. Cristina RUSSO (Commission) gave an update on the Multi-Annual Roadmaps process and Mr. Christopher GAUCI (Commission) presented the Commission's summary of the workshop.

The Chair informed the Forum that he was proposing a note on the Multi-Annual Roadmaps process which he suggested could be considered as the basis for a draft SFIC opinion on the issue, if appropriate. Delegations thanked the Commission for the organisation of the workshop on the Multi-Annual Roadmaps and discussed the future SFIC contribution to the process.

Delegations were asked to send written comments by 28 May 2014 on the Note by the Chair on the Multi-Annual Roadmaps process, after which a draft SFIC opinion on the issue will be prepared.

b) Integration of the international dimension into the ERA Monitoring Mechanism

The Chair recalled that the SFIC opinion on the First ERA Progress Report, adopted in November 2013, recommended to move towards the integration of an international cooperation dimension into the ERA Monitoring Mechanism. The same message was reflected on the Council conclusions of ERA Progress adopted at the Competitiveness Council in February 2014.

The Commission took the floor to explain that the integration of the international dimension into the ERA Monitoring Mechanism was on-going and that the next ERA Progress Report will contain indicators linked to international cooperation. The Commission is in the process of consulting the Member States on the indicators to be included in the ERA Progress Report.

SFIC will continue following-up the international dimension into the EMM. Commission will inform SFIC on any developments and will provide information on the indicators to be included in the ERA Progress Report.

4. Nomination of rapporteurs and adoption of mandates for Working Groups

The Chair informed delegations that, following the adoption of the new SFIC Rules of Procedure, the Forum decided to organise its work via Working Groups to be led by a responsible rapporteur. Furthermore, the work on specific country initiatives or topics should be now framed with a mandate, including clear objectives and a time-frame in accordance with Article 9.2 of the SFIC Rules. The work of each Working Group (preparing its own draft mandate) was acknowledged. The Chair proposed to jointly discuss points 4 and 5 of the agenda, to deal together with the mandate and the particular state of play of activities of each Working Group.

Delegations agreed that the mandate of the Working Groups should be concise and with either a 1-year or a 2 year time-frame for their work depending on their specificities and maturity. A general reference to the Multi-Annual Roadmaps as well as to relevant activities within Horizon 2020 was also agreed to be added to all mandates.

The Chair welcomed the work of the Working Groups and concluded by announcing the agreement on the horizontal points to be added to all mandates. The following rapporteurs were nominated:

- Brazil: Tiina Vihma-Purovaara (FI)
- China: Olivier Steffen (FR)
- USA: Claudia Bernarding (DE)
- Russia: Klaus Schindel (DE)
- Common principles: Julia Lewis (UK)

The mandates for the Brazil, USA and Russia Working Groups were adopted with a 2-year time-frame.

The mandates for the China and Common Principles Working Groups were adopted with a 1-year time-frame.

5. State of play of Working Groups by rapporteurs

a) Brazil: Discussion on questions prepared by the WG

The Chair asked delegates to focus the discussion on the Working Group recommendations based on two questions:

1. *Is there a need for two different kinds of events ("Tour of Brazil" and "Destination Europe")?*
2. *Should the SFIC Brazil Working Group start to discuss more concretely the setup for a European-Brazilian GSO?*

Ms. Tiina VIHMA-PUROVAARA (FI) presented the Mandate and the Working Group recommendations.

FR, SE, DE and FI expressed the view that the Destination Europe and Tour of Brazil initiatives needed to be coordinated. Moreover, they considered it was too early for the set up of a European-Brazilian Group of Senior Officials (GSO), noting that lessons from the Indian case should be drawn first.

Ms. Domenica BUMMA (Commission) announced the start of the tour of Brazil in April 2014, highlighting it provides opportunities for EU and Member States to promote research programmes. However, the different nature of Destination Europe events (focused on the mobility of researchers to Europe) was also acknowledged. The Commission also considered that it is too early to draw lessons from the India GSO case and further analysis of costs and benefits is needed before a new GSO is set up.

The Chair concluded that if there was to be a Destination Europe event in Brazil, it needed to be coordinated with the Tour of Brazil events. As regards the GSO question, the Chair concluded that SFIC would assess that question once delegates have more feedback on how the GSO with India is working.

b) China

Ms. Florence LELAIT (FR) provided an update of the work of the China Working Group and presented its mandate, also reminding delegates that a Working Group meeting would take place the day after the plenary meeting to discuss the work ahead on this initiative.

The Chair highlighted the organisation of a China Working Group meeting back-to-back with the SFIC Plenary as a good practise for optimising resources.

c) Russia: Presentation of a concept paper for a Russia initiative

The DE delegation presented the concept paper on Russia as well as the mandate for this Working Group and explained that the initiative was ready but that the political context had to taken in to account.

Several delegations supported the launching of the initiative despite the current political context, as it was believed that work at technical level would not come to a halt. However, it was agreed to modify the wording of the mandate to not commit SFIC to future actions with Russia and to better reflect the *status quo* of EU-Russia relations.

The Chair concluded with the decision of SFIC to launch a SFIC initiative with Russia. The mandate for the Russia Working Group was adopted with the agreed modifications.

The next meeting of the Russia Working Group was announced to take place on 25 June 2014 in Brussels.

d) USA

The DE delegation presented an update on the work of the USA Working Group as well as the mandate for this initiative, following the conference call the group had on 28 April 2014. The group stressed that the innovation dimension of the relation with the USA should be developed. A BILAT 2.0 conference was planned before the end of the year.

In the context of the USA WG, the Commission provided an update on the Destination Europe events foreseen in the USA.

The Chair asked the Commission to write a note outlining the dates of the various future Destination Europe events planned in the USA.

e) Common principles: Presentation of questionnaire results

The Chair recalled that in April 2014, a questionnaire on common principles for international cooperation (based on Commission's input) was sent to all SFIC Members and Observers. At the 19 May 2014 plenary, Ms. Julia LEWIS (UK) gave a presentation on the results of the questionnaire, following the feedback received from several delegations. A number of international fora were identified together with the three main priorities namely: (1) Open Access; (2) Research infrastructures; and (3) Research integrity. The need for a better coordination to promote existing common principles both at EU and Member State level was also highlighted.

Ms. Julia LEWIS (UK) also presented the mandate for this initiative which will run for 1 year. Delegations expressed support for the work of the Working Group.

The Commission stressed that Europe is the main laboratory for common principles and that the main point in this debate is to promote and implement existing common principles. Horizon 2020 is also understood as a global instrument for the implementation of common principles. A code of conduct being develop in the ERA is due to be presented the third week of May 2014 at the Global Research Council.

The Chair concluded by encouraging the Working Group on Common Principles to take forward the work to be carried out and reflected in the mandate.

6. Good practices in Member States

The Chair informed delegations that the presentation of best practice examples from Member States have been a recurrent exercise in past SFIC plenary meetings as a vital way to exchange and share information.

Mr. Jaani HEINONEN (FI) from *Team Finland* gave a presentation on their work. The Team Finland network brings together various players that promote Finland's external economic relations, the internationalisation of enterprises, investments in Finland and the country's image – both at home and abroad.

Their objective is to build a clearly defined, customer driven operating model that brings all of the parties involved under one umbrella, in order to pursue shared goals annually approved by the Government. Another key objective is to coordinate actions in a flexible way, based on both government and private sector involvement. Mr. HEINONEN also highlighted that the support of the Prime Minister's office was key to achieve internal coordination on these issues. He also stressed the very important role of the Chambers of Commerce (both locally and abroad) as well as public-private partnerships.

The Chair encouraged the FI delegation to make a summary of the presented best practice following the template used in the past (e.g. DK presentation on November 2013) and invited other delegations to present their best practices at forthcoming meetings.

7. ERA-related Groups review

The Chair recalled that the Council, in its resolution of 30 May 2013, dealt with the advisory work of the European Research Area and reminded of the necessity to start the review of the ERA governance by the end of 2014, as asked by the Council. A similar reviewing process is in motion in other groups such as GPC. Moreover, the Italian Presidency has confirmed that they are willing to start discussions at the Council Research Working Party on the review of the ERA-related Groups around October 2014. The Chair recalled that taking all these elements into account, any input to ERAC should be delivered if possible before the summer break and that the SFIC Steering Board agreed to nominate the SFIC Vice-Chair as the person in charge of the SFIC review process.

The Vice-Chair, Ms. Florence LELAIT (FR), presented the different potential review templates for SFIC's assessment, with the aim at having one response per delegation and to have both a quantitative and a qualitative assessment. VINNOVA (Swedish Innovation Agency) kindly offered to provide a software programme for the distribution, compilation and analysis of the results of the questionnaire.

Delegates commented on the two proposed assessment tables, indicating a preference for using a simpler table with open questions for the questionnaire while stressing the need to fill in not only a quantitative questionnaire but also a questionnaire where substantial input on SFIC's work could be provided.

The Vice-Chair summarised the discussion by confirming the use of table 2 (simpler table with open questions) for the questionnaire with a combination of factual quantitative questions and a qualitative assessment, jointly with open questions. The Forum also agreed to use the online questionnaire method proposed by VINNOVA.

8. State of play on bi-regional STI cooperation dialogues

a) EU-CELAC

Ms. Indirid BENEDIKTSSON (Commission) informed delegates of the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) that took place on 3-4 April 2014 in Costa Rica and announced a forthcoming ERANet-LAC call. A meeting will be held at the beginning of June in Tenerife to discuss this. The next SOM will take place on the second half of 2015.

b) EU-Africa

Ms. Nienke BUISMAN (Commission) informed delegates about the EU-Africa summit that took place in early April and where the roadmap for cooperation for the next 3 years was agreed. Food, nutrition and sustainable agriculture are the first focus issues for S&T cooperation. It was also agreed to set up a joint expert group which had its kick-off meeting on 30 April 2014. The group is expected to produce an operational document by November 2014 to feed into the Horizon 2020 work programmes as well as other programmes both at EU, African and national level.

c) Euro-Mediterranean

Ms. Vassiliki PLETSA (GR) gave a short debrief on the Euro-Mediterranean discussion that took place at the informal COMPET Council on 13 May 2014. The PRIMA initiative for cooperation on research and development focussed on food systems and water resources within an integrated and flexible approach to tackle the evolving Mediterranean challenges (such as those linked to energy, environment, transport and health) in line with the principles of co-ownership, mutual interest and shared benefits was welcomed and the forthcoming COMPET Council is likely to move the initiative forward. The GR delegation also informed delegates about the conference on R&I in the Mediterranean area and the Black Sea region (focus on marine science and renewable energies) that will take place in Thessaloniki at the end of May.

The IT delegation informed delegates that the Italian Presidency is planning to have Mediterranean cooperation on research as one of the priorities. The ES delegation also informed that a related Ministerial conference in 5+5 format will take place during Q1 2015 in Madrid.

The FR delegation asked the Commission to send the dates of the next important bilateral and multilateral meetings.

The Chair concluded that SFIC is ready to discuss in-depth the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation at forthcoming meetings.

9. Standing information points

The Chair indicated that the following Standing Information Points had been sent to delegations:

1. The SFIC Work Programme 2013-14 draft provisional meetings table: There were no comments on this point.
2. An information document on the Belmont Forum and Future Earth: The Commission informed delegates that the Commission intends to present its candidacy for the co-chairmanship of the Belmont Forum (a forum of funding agencies mainly from the G8 countries and BRICS) for the next 2 years. The Vice-Chair welcomed this initiative. As far as the Belmont Forum is tackling global environmental challenges, all EU Member States and Associated Countries could be involved in the calls; moreover, the EU could be able to increase its influence in this way while being in line with the EU strategy for international R&I cooperation, and in particular the participation in multilateral initiatives.

The Chair confirmed the overall support from SFIC delegates to have the Commission more involved in the Belmont forum, including its co-chairmanship.

10. Any Other Business

- **SFIC Strategic Seminar:** The SE delegation gave an update on the organisation of the upcoming SFIC Strategic Seminar taking place in Stockholm on 12-13 June 2014.

 - **Support for Horizon 2020 proposals:** The Chair informed delegates that he had been contacted by consortia preparing proposals under Horizon 2020 as work programmes include some references to SFIC's work, and cautioned delegates as they might also be approached. The Commission also cautioned delegates against getting involved with consortia bidding for projects as it might have an impact on the evaluation process.

 - The Commission informed delegates that they would provide an update at a future meeting on cooperation with Australia as well as on the status of the GSO with India.

 - **Next plenary meeting:** The Chair informed delegations that the next SFIC plenaries are scheduled to take place on 23 September 2014 (to be confirmed by the Italian Presidency) and 9 December 2014.
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