

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

Secretariat

ERAC-SFIC 1363/14

NOTE

Subject : Summary conclusions of the 22th meeting of the Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC), held in Brussels on 23 September 2014

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

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

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda (CM 4020/14) was adopted.

The [Chair](#) recalled that the **summary conclusions** of the SFIC meeting of 19 May 2014 were approved by written procedure as set out in doc. 1360/13.

2. Implementation of the strategy for international cooperation in R&I

- **Update on Report on the strategy implementation**
- **Update on the Multi-Annual Roadmaps process**

Ms. Cristina RUSSO (Commission) presented the Commission report on the implementation of the strategy on international R&I cooperation (including a Staff Working Document with the Multi-Annual Roadmaps) published on 11 September 2014. Ms. RUSSO highlighted the progress made on framework conditions (with focus on those -mainly emerging- countries not automatically eligible anymore for funding under Horizon 2020), the participation in international organisations and multilateral initiatives, and the synergies with EU's external policies and the activities of the Member States. However, she stressed the need for further work in assessing impacts with the use of quantitative indicators. Ms. RUSSO also highlighted the good collaboration with SFIC in the Multi-Annual Roadmaps process, willing to continue cooperating with the Forum in this matter, in line with the Council conclusions on international cooperation from 30 May 2013.

Delegations reconfirmed the success of the SFIC workshop organised by the Commission on the Multi-Annual Roadmaps on 26 March 2014. However, they regretted that there were no roadmaps for Africa and Latin and Central America and Caribbean regions, whereas a lot of work has been done in both regions, mainly via policy dialogues, in the last years. FR and DE stressed that stakeholders are missing the INCO NCP in Horizon 2020, which under FP7 allowed for the dissemination of information about international cooperation to their national communities and to their partners in third countries.

Delegations sought further clarifications regarding the relationship between the Multi-Annual Roadmaps for international cooperation and the Horizon 2020 Work Programmes for 2014-15 and 2016-17 as well as the ERA Roadmap. Questions also referred to how/whether the ERA Monitoring Mechanism would contribute quantitative data in assessing the Strategy for EU international R&I cooperation. The Commission explained that the Multi-Annual Roadmaps define the R&I priorities identified with 3rd countries and regions over the medium-term and that these priorities were not restricted to the timeframe of the 2016-2017 Horizon 2020 Work Programme. Meanwhile the Multi-Annual Roadmaps are living documents that will evolve as dialogues with 3rd countries and regions continue to be built.

FR suggested that the Commission organises two workshops in 2015 with participation of both Member States and Associated Countries on the Multi-Annual Roadmaps: one on the process itself and one on the content.

The Chair concluded that the Forum will prepare one SFIC opinion that will be covering both the implementation strategy report and the Multi-Annual Roadmaps process, setting out SFIC's contribution to the process in the future. In particular the issue of identifying indicators will have to be addressed.

3. Forthcoming work of SFIC for 2015-2016

– Presentation of the SFIC self-assessment in the context of the review of the ERA-related Groups

The Chair informed the Forum that the SFIC self-assessment paper in the context of the ERA-related groups review (doc. 1361/14) was adopted via written procedure on 20 August 2014, after many exchanges between delegations and also an informal meeting of SFIC delegates back-to-back to the strategic seminar in Stockholm in June 2014. The Chair also informed delegation that both the Research Working Party and ERAC will have a first discussion on the review of the ERA-related groups at their respective meetings on 2-3 October in Venice. The SFIC Chair and Vice-Chair will participate in the meetings.

Ms. Florence LELAIT (SFIC Vice-Chair, FR) presented the SFIC self-assessment document, stressing the added-value of SFIC and the solid advice received due to the number of responses. DE and SE welcomed the excellent document, FI stressed the necessary linkages of the exercise with the future SFIC Work Programme 2015-16 and ES highlighted the need for synchronising with ERAC.

The Chair concluded that the self-assessment exercise is food for thought for the next SFIC Work Programme 2015-16 and opened the possibility to invite ERAC representatives to SFIC meetings.

– **Presentation of Stockholm's strategic seminar report and outcomes for SFIC's work**

Ms. Marija MILIVOJEVIC (SE) presented a summary of the discussion in Stockholm on 12-13 June, with the main purpose of the seminar being to exchange experiences on tools for research and innovation in ERA for bilateral and EU level collaboration. The key messages and reoccurring points during the discussion were the following:

- Need for an overview of initiatives (e.g. “mapping of different instruments used in international cooperation at MS and EU level”, meta-projects, better linkages and information between policy areas);
- Internationalisation of existing structures/creating permanent platforms (e.g. a more permanent basis for international cooperation in the context of e.g. JPIs, Eureka, KICs);
- SFIC as a key actor in the internationalisation processes (presence in e.g. Joint Science and Technology Cooperation Committees -JSTCC-, active role in ERA, “monitoring” INCO in H2020?);
- Need for “horizontal” approaches (e.g. tools and experiences that are applicable on other/new/future initiatives, challenge-based activities);
- Evaluation and feedback from actors on what is needed.

The Chair concluded that the summary of the workshop and the contributions received during the discussions in Stockholm will be an important input for the SFIC Work Programme 2015-16.

– **Presentation of draft outline of the Work Programme 2015-2016**

The Chair presented the draft outline of the SFIC Work Programme 2015-16 as a basis for discussion on the contents of the next Work Programme, informing delegations that the draft outline follows a similar structure as the SFIC Work Programme 2013-14.

FR stressed the need to mention the work on the Multi-Annual Roadmaps more explicitly and separate a tool box for international cooperation activities from the work on International Agreements. AT and ES welcomed the structure of the document, with the latter wanting more focus on regions and bi-regional dialogues. DE highlighted the need of linking the Work Programme to Horizon 2020 and the ERA and its Roadmap, with special emphasis on "products" and impacts.

Delegations were encouraged to send written comments to the draft outline of the SFIC Work Programme 2015-16 by **7 October 2014** at the latest. After the comments have been received, a first draft Work Programme 2015-16 will be prepared and discussed at the next SFIC Steering Board on 6 November 2014. A revised version of the draft will be submitted for discussion at the next SFIC plenary on 8 December 2014.

4. State of play of Working Groups by rapporteurs

a) USA: Decision on USA Roadmap paper and update on Destination Europe

Mr. Alexander GRABLOWITZ (DE) presented a paper prepared by the USA Working Group for adoption as a roadmap for the work of the Working Group in the coming months. The draft roadmap focuses on both ocean and arctic transatlantic research cooperation (in particular with the Galway Implementation Activities) and innovation aspects. Due to the publication of the Blue Growth Strategy, the Action Plan for a Maritime Strategy and the Galway Statement, the Commission welcomes this action line. In line with both thematic fields, the SFIC USA Working Group will participate in a BILAT Workshop on Atlantic Ocean research on 6 October 2014, in the Galway Stakeholder Group and in the BILAT 2.0 Innovation Conference in January 2015.

Delegations welcomed the targeted approach of the roadmap but asked the Working Group to also consider ocean and arctic research as a pilot action in the short term.

The Forum adopted the roadmap for the USA Working Group, including activities for the coming 12 months of the USA initiative.

NO will represent SFIC in the BILAT Workshop on Atlantic Ocean research on 6 October 2014 in Rome.

Ms. Mary KAVANNAGH (Commission) also gave an update on the Destination Europe initiative, in particular with regards to the next event on 17 October 2014 in Atlanta, with the presence of the SFIC Chair. The next planned event will be in San José on 12 February 2015 (back-to-back with the AAAS annual conference) and the Commission asked for testimonials for this event. A Destination Europe event will also be organised back-to-back with the MIT Career Fair in Cambridge in the beginning of 2015 (date to be confirmed).

The Chair encouraged delegations to use appropriate channels (e.g. RPOs) in their country in order to approach potential participants in the Atlanta event and forthcoming Destination Europe events.

b) China: Information on next steps

Ms. Florence LELAIT (SFIC Vice-Chair, FR) presented an update on the China Working Group, highlighting the work done so far on the preparation of a draft concept paper for an EU/MS-China workshop event in 2015 in China as well as a draft China country sheet. Further reflection and interaction within the Group is necessary before submitting the two documents as written contributions to a forthcoming SFIC plenary.

The China Working Group was encouraged to continue its current work in line with its mandate.

c) Russia: Information on next steps

Mr. Alexander GRABLOWITZ (DE) gave an update on the work of the Russia Working Group, mainly informing delegations on a workshop taking place in Berlin on 22 October on “Internationalisation of the European Research Area: Towards a Common European Approach in STI Cooperation with Russia”.

Despite the recent developments in EU-Russia relations, delegations expressed their support for continuing relations with Russia and its researchers at technical level. The Commission gave an update on the approach that has been adopted following the strengthening of sanctions against Russia. This approach is fully in line with the accompanying EEAS Guidelines on this issue while retaining the contacts at technical level but not at political level. The EEAS has shared the guidelines with the Member States with a recommendation to follow a coherent approach in pursuing relations with Russia.

The Russia Working Group was encouraged to continue its current work in line with its mandate.

5. European Research Area

– International cooperation in the 2nd ERA Progress Report

The Chair recalled that the SFIC opinion from 12 November 2013 on the 1st ERA Progress Report called for the "external dimension of ERA to be more elaborated", thus more visible in subsequent reports. Ms. Mina STAREVA (Commission) made a presentation on the 2nd ERA Progress Report, published on 15 September 2014, stressing two main points of the 2014 Report: (1) the ERA partnership has made good progress in completing the ERA; and (2) the goal for 2014 has been achieved: the conditions are in place for a fully functioning ERA, now it is up to Member States to implement the ERA reforms and make it work.

With regards to international cooperation, it is now presented as part of the Transnational Cooperation section (compared to a more cross-cutting approach in the previous report). The findings are so far based on an analysis of the policy indicators (whether there is a specific policy in place and/or S&T agreements), on answers given in the ERA survey and information emerging from the country snapshots. FR and DE underlined that international cooperation should be considered both in its horizontal and in its vertical dimension, i.e. as a sixth priority.

– **SFIC's contribution to the ERA Roadmap**

The Chair informed delegations about the discussions at ERAC and ERAC Steering Board level on the preparation towards the ERA Roadmap, including the invitation from ERAC to the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the ERA-related Groups to attend the ERAC meeting in Venice on 2-3 October, in order to discuss the possible inputs of SFIC to the ERA Roadmap, potentially delivered before the ERAC meeting on 3 December.

The Chair also informed delegations that the German delegation volunteered to do a first assessment of the ERA Roadmap contributions received on the international cooperation priority. In this respect, Ms. Marion MIENERT (DE) gave a snapshot and some general lines of the inputs from delegations to the ERA Roadmap inputs received (from 8 Member States and 2 Associated Countries) dealing with international cooperation, highlighting amongst others:

- The importance of the Multi-Annual Roadmaps process;
- The role SFIC can play on the implementation of the international dimension of ERA;
- The need for a multilateral approach and a common strategy;
- The need for national strategies for international cooperation toward third countries;
- The possible synchronisation of negotiations between Member States and third countries.

The Chair concluded by stating that this is an essential input towards the preparation of the SFIC Work Programme 2015-16.

After the ERAC meeting in Venice, attended by SFIC Chair and Vice-Chair, a decision will be taken on what and how any SFIC input should be formalised in view of a SFIC contribution to the ERA Roadmap as well as the ERA Progress Report.

The Chair encouraged SFIC delegates to liaise with their ERAC colleagues at national level.

– **Presentation of Germany's ERA strategy**

Ms. Marion MIENERT (DE) presented the German national ERA strategy to SFIC delegates, focusing on the six priorities identified in their national strategy (the five priorities aligned with the Commission priorities on ERA + one priority for international cooperation). On its sixth priority on the international dimension of ERA, the German Roadmap towards ERA focuses on: "Strengthening and concentrating international cooperation with third countries to secure Europe's global competitiveness, successfully addressing great societal challenges, enhancing the attractiveness of the ERA for talented people and investors". Some examples on this area may include but not be limited to: strengthening the role of SFIC in establishing joint priorities and coherent approaches to cooperation with third countries; the internationalization of the Joint Programming Initiatives (JPIs); or the involvement of Member States in the EU's JSTCC meetings with third countries.

6. PRIMA (Partnership in Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area)

– Presentation of state-of-play of the PRIMA initiative by the French delegation

Ms. Florence LELAIT (SFIC Vice-Chair, FR) gave an update on the recent developments in relation to the PRIMA initiative, focusing on the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation context, the various steps towards an Article 185 initiative, the integrated and multi-faceted approach of the programme based on food systems and water resources in interplay with energy, environment, transport and health as well as the more detailed part of the programme: the scientific programme, the activities, the governance structure and the financial issues.

Ms. LELAIT informed that the Council is meant to adopt Council conclusions on the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership for Research and Innovation on 5 December 2014 and the submission of an Article 185 PRIMA Joint Programme proposal to the Commission is also expected in December 2014. The launch of the initiative is foreseen for 2017, under the Maltese Presidency, after the end of ERANET's ARIMNET 2 and ERANET MED.

The Chair encouraged SFIC delegates to liaise with their national counterparts when discussions are taken at Council level, as the Italian Presidency is planning a Council lunch debate on 26 September and Council conclusions on Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in December 2014.

7. Standing information points

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

- The updated SFIC Work Programme with a draft provisional meetings table;
- Two documents from the Brazil Working Group;
- Information from the German delegation on a Workshop on International Research Marketing and Research Communication;
- Information on the India Group of Senior Officials;

- An update on the EU-Africa High-Level Policy Dialogue;
- An update on Australia.

Two additional Standing information points on the Eastern Partnership were announced to be distributed.

The Chair informed that, in case the Workshop on International Research Marketing takes place back-to-back to a plenary, it should take place on 9 December 2014.

DE once more asked the Commission to present its position on the potential participation of Member States in JSTCC meetings, in particular in the up-coming JSTCC meeting with Australia (December 2014).

8. Any Other Business

- **Information by FR on input to the Horizon 2020 Programme Committee:** The FR delegation presented its views on international cooperation activities FR would promote in the Horizon 2020 Work Programme, including, amongst other activities, the implementation of the INCO-LAB activity according to the Horizon 2020 specific programme, and the creation of a network for people in charge of international cooperation in Horizon 2020 in the Member States. The Chair and other delegations welcomed this exchange.
- **Debriefing of meeting between SFIC Chair and EU Science Counsellors:** The Chair debriefed delegations on the meeting he had with EU Science Counsellors on 19 September, stressing the appreciation for some of the activities (e.g. Destination Europe, R&I tours) as well as pointing out where interactions can be possible.

The Chair also encouraged SFIC delegates to liaise with their counsellors and concluded, with the support of DE and NO, that the Science Counsellors topic should be appropriately discussed at a forthcoming plenary session.

- **Debriefing on the seminar on indicators for international cooperation in R&I:** The SE delegation gave a short summary of the aim and results of the seminar that took place at VINNOVA's office on 22 September 2014. One of the conclusions was that even though a lot of countries do have internationalisation strategies in STI put in place, as well as indicators measuring international cooperation, the link of the two is often missing. The results of the collected data should feed back into the 'policy cycle'. Those delegations who attended the workshop were very satisfied with the results and SFIC will continue paying attention to indicators work in the future.
 - **New ERA-NET LAC call:** The Commission informed about the recently launched call.
 - **Next plenary meetings:** The Chair informed delegations that the next SFIC plenaries are scheduled to take place on 8 December 2014 as well as on 5 March and 9 June 2015.
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