

EUROPEAN UNION

Brussels, 14 March 2014

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

Secretariat

ERAC-SFIC 1351/14

NOTE

Subject: Rules of Procedure of the Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation
(SFIC)

Delegations will find in the annex the Rules of Procedure of the Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC), as adopted via written procedure on 13 March 2014.

**STRATEGIC FORUM FOR INTERNATIONAL S&T COOPERATION (SFIC)
RULES OF PROCEDURE**

Article 1

COMPOSITION

1. The Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC) (hereinafter referred to as "the Forum") shall consist of the Member States and the Commission (hereinafter referred to as "Members"), and Associated Countries as Observers in line with their respective association agreements as appropriate (hereinafter referred to as "Observers").
2. Each Member and Observer shall nominate up to two representatives responsible for research and innovation policies. In addition, each Member and Observer may nominate up to two alternates, to replace the representatives when appropriate.
3. Notice of nominations or the replacements of representatives/alternates of Members and Observers shall be sent to the SFIC Secretariat.

Article 2

CHAIR

1. The Forum shall be chaired by one of its Members representing a Member State for a period of two years.
2. The Chair shall be elected in accordance with the procedure defined in Article 8.
3. In the framework of the orientations defined by the Forum, the Chair shall be responsible for chairing the Forum and for the overall guidance of its work.

4. The Member State from which a representative has been elected as the Chair shall nominate another representative in his/her place for the period of the Chair's term.
5. The Chair shall have no voting rights, except in situations where there is no for/against majority, in which cases his/her opinion in the discussed matter shall prevail.

Article 3

VICE-CHAIR

1. The Forum shall have a Vice-Chair elected from among Member State representatives for a period of two years. The Vice-Chair shall not have the same Member State of origin as the Chair and his/her term will be displaced by 6 months from that of the Chair to allow a smooth transition between Chairs and to support the incoming Chair on his/her work.
2. The Vice-Chair shall be elected in accordance with the procedure defined in Article 8.
3. The Vice-Chair shall replace the Chair in his/her functions on mutually agreed occasions or in justified absences of the Chair and shall assist the Chair in his/her duties when appropriate.
4. The Vice-Chair shall coordinate the contributions of working groups and related rapporteurs in accordance with Article 9.3.
5. The Vice-Chair shall have no voting rights, except in situations where he/she is the only delegate or representative of his/her own country, in which case he/she will have the right of vote as any other national SFIC Member.

Article 4

PLENARY

1. The SFIC Plenary is the decision-making body of the Forum and where strategic discussions take place.

2. The Forum shall meet up to four times per year (preferably three or four times every year). The Plenary is convened by the SFIC Secretariat on the initiative either of the Chair or of at least five Members.
3. The Chair, in collaboration with the SFIC Secretariat and the SFIC Vice-Chair, shall draw up the provisional annotated agenda of each plenary meeting, which shall be submitted to the Members and Observers of the Forum at least 10 working days before the beginning of each meeting. Documents related to items of the agenda shall also be submitted at least 10 working days before the beginning of each meeting.
4. The agenda items and their content shall be suggested 20 working days in advance of the Plenary meeting by the Steering Board and shall be approved by the SFIC Chair. Preparation of the SFIC Plenary agenda items is undertaken by the Steering Board.
5. The agenda will be adopted by the SFIC Plenary at the beginning of each meeting.

Article 5

STEERING BOARD

1. The Forum shall have a Steering Board. The role of the Steering Board shall be to draw up the draft agenda for plenary meetings and to assist the SFIC Chair in the preparation of SFIC plenary meetings and discussions at plenary level.
2. The Steering Board shall consist as a minimum of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Forum and the Commission as well as of the SFIC rapporteurs. A rapporteur may delegate his/her representation to the Steering Board to another member of his/her working group.
3. All additional SFIC Members and Observers as well as third parties, such as representatives of the Member State holding the Presidency of the Council of the EU and of other ERA-related Groups as well as experts, may also attend Steering Board meetings as appropriate.

4. The Steering Board shall be chaired by the Chair of the Forum.
5. Steering Board meetings shall take place when necessary, keeping in mind the needs of the Forum. Steering Board meetings are convened by the SFIC Secretariat on the initiative of the Chair or the Vice-Chair.
6. Invitations and agendas to Steering Board meetings shall be distributed to Steering Board members and, where appropriate, to other additional attendees. Any SFIC Member and Observer will be informed about Steering Board meetings and will be able to provide input in writing to the SFIC Secretariat before Steering Board meetings.

Article 6

SECRETARIAT

1. The Secretariat of the Forum and of the Steering Board shall be provided by the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU (SFIC Secretariat).
2. The Secretariat shall ensure proper running of the Forum's plenary meetings and of Steering Board meetings. It shall prepare the summary of conclusions of each meeting of the Forum and, in agreement with the Chair, submit it to the Forum for approval either at the following meeting or via written procedure. Minutes of Steering Board meetings shall be distributed to all SFIC Members and Observers.
3. All correspondence to the Forum and/or to the Steering Board shall be addressed to the Secretariat, using the following electronic address [erac.sfic@consilium.europa.eu].
4. All correspondence from the Forum to the Members and Observers shall be addressed from the Secretariat to the electronic addresses of the Members' and Observers' representatives (including the alternates). All representatives (including the alternates) must provide their electronic addresses to the Secretariat.

Article 7

WORK PROGRAMME AND REPORTING ACTIVITIES

1. The Forum shall have a 24-month rolling Work Programme.
2. The Work Programme shall describe activities of the Forum which are in line with its mandate and shall be adopted by the Forum.
3. The Work Programme shall include the organisation of at least one informal strategic seminar, to be organised every two years under the guidance of the SFIC Chair.
4. SFIC shall produce an Annual Report of activities, to be submitted to the Council and to the Commission during the Spring season of the following year the report refers to. Such report will take stock of the state-of-implementation of the Work Programme and the progress made from January to December of a given year.

Article 8

VOTING ARRANGEMENTS AND QUORUM

1. Each Member shall have one vote.
2. Decisions of the Forum, including opinions and reports, shall be adopted by a simple majority of its Members if a vote is requested¹. Members who are unable to participate in a meeting of the Forum may delegate their vote to another SFIC Member by notifying this fact in writing to the SFIC Secretariat before the meeting. Where a vote is taken, any SFIC Member may also act on behalf of not more than one other Member. Any minority views of the Members shall be recorded.
3. The presence of representatives of a simple majority of the SFIC Members is required to enable the SFIC Plenary to adopt a formal decision or opinion.

¹ This provision emphasises that the main aim is to take decisions by consensus. Only when a vote will be requested, the majority rule will apply.

4. Decisions agreed by the Forum shall be implemented by Members and, as appropriate, by Observers, following the principle of variable geometry.
5. In urgent cases, opinions of the Forum may be adopted by means of a written procedure, by a simple majority of its Members. On the initiative of the Chair, the Forum may act by means of a simplified written procedure called 'silence procedure'². Such written procedures shall be set in motion by the Secretariat. The time limit of written procedures shall be set out by the Chair according to the urgency of each case. The Secretariat shall establish that the written procedures have been completed.

Article 9

WORKING GROUPS AND RAPPORTEURS

1. Working groups shall be created when decided by the SFIC plenary.
2. Working groups are responsible for the implementation of tasks or SFIC Work Programme items for a fixed time-period and following a clear mandate by the SFIC Plenary.
3. Working groups shall be chaired by a rapporteur, who shall be a SFIC representative or alternate from a SFIC Member or Observer. The rapporteur shall be responsible for the functioning of the working group and will ensure its management and duly report to the Plenary. In fulfilling its role, the rapporteur shall liaise with the Vice-Chair to provide the necessary information and documentation to the Steering Board.
4. In addition to reporting in Plenary, working groups shall liaise regularly with all other SFIC Members and Observers to seek input and feedback on their tasks.
5. The membership of working groups shall be open to all SFIC Members and Observers and/or experts, where appropriate.

² In that case, the decision shall be deemed to be adopted at the end of the period laid down by the Chair depending on the urgency of the matter, except where a simple majority of the SFIC Members objects.

6. The Commission shall actively contribute to the work of the working groups.
7. The SFIC Secretariat will keep membership lists of working groups and may circulate relevant documents for the work of the working groups as well as provide procedural advice on documents produced by the working group, when needed.
8. The Forum may also appoint a single rapporteur or expert from any SFIC Member or Observer to deal with specific issues relevant to its mandate.

Article 10

PUBLIC ACCESS TO DOCUMENTS AND INFORMATION SHARING

1. The proceedings of SFIC shall be confidential.
2. Only documents with ERAC-SFIC number shall be published unless otherwise approved by the SFIC Plenary.
3. To facilitate information sharing, the Forum may appoint Correspondents, who will be responsible for keeping SFIC informed about the activities of other relevant groups and/or stakeholders³ to which they have strong links.
4. An IT SharePoint System or equivalent may be efficiently used to ensure the information flow between all SFIC Members and Observers and to foster the involvement of all SFIC Members and Observers on any ongoing process.
5. The Commission, DG Research and Innovation, will actively disseminate information within the Commission regarding SFIC actions and initiatives.

³ For example, ERA-related Groups (ERAC, GPC...), Science Europe, Global Research Council, etc.

Article 11

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION

1. To increase the impact of its activities, SFIC may develop, accordingly with its Work Programme, an effective communication and promotion plan linked to its ongoing and planned activities.
