

**NOTE**

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Subject: Summary conclusions of the 25th meeting of the Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC), held in Brussels on 9 June 2015

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

The Forum drew the following conclusions:

**1. Adoption of the agenda**

The agenda (CM 2758/15) was adopted. The following AOBs were added to the agenda: information on the Sweden-Korea Joint Committee meetings (requested by SE) and information on the meeting of the H2020 - Programme Committee (Strategic Configuration) on 18 June 2015 that will discuss international cooperation issues (requested by UK).

The Chair recalled that the **summary conclusions** of the SFIC meeting of 4 March 2015 had been approved by written procedure as set out in doc. 1356/15.

## 2. Election of the SFIC Chair

The Chair informed delegations that he was elected on 18 June 2013 for a period of two years and indicated his intention to stand for re-election. DE, FI, FR, AT, PT and BE proposed not to start a new election procedure but the extension of the current Chair's mandate due to the current and foreseen developments with the ERA governance.

The Chair concluded by asking the SFIC Secretariat to launch a written procedure for a decision on the prolongation of the current SFIC Chair's term in office for 1 additional year, until 18 June 2016.

## 3. European Research Area: Governance and ERA Roadmap

The Chair informed delegations that the Council (Competitiveness), on 29 May 2015, adopted Council conclusions on the review of the ERA advisory structure and on the ERA Roadmap, also highlighting the fact that the future Luxembourgish Presidency is planning another set of conclusions for December 2015 on the final set up of a new ERA governance. AT stressed the importance of having stronger cooperation with other ERA-related groups, such as inviting GPC to one of the next plenaries.

With regards to the ERA Roadmap and its Priority 6 on international cooperation, the Chair briefed delegations about his participation to ERAC's Working Group on Monitoring the ERA Roadmap and its meeting in Vienna on 8 June 2015, including the choice of a headline indicator for international cooperation (international scientific co-publications with non-EU countries per million of the population). The ERAC Working Group requested the input from SFIC and the Plenary had a first discussion on the proposed indicator: Several delegations were sceptical to accept the choice of such an indicator, as it is too limiting and not at all connected with the work of SFIC nor the practical development and implementation of the external dimension of ERA and the activities under ERA Roadmap - Priority 6. Delegations also rejected the over-simplistic approach of a single indicator and requested either the introduction of the impact and mobility patterns or the creation of a composite indicator/index with various indicators (e.g. Innovation Union Scoreboard).

The Chair concluded by inviting delegations to submit comments or remarks on the indicators debate by 17 June to the SFIC Secretariat, in order for SFIC to provide timely input to ERAC's opinion on the issue, foreseen for the ERAC Plenary in July 2015. Following the interesting debate, the Chair also concluded that the issue of indicators will be on the agenda for the next SFIC Plenary meeting.

The Chair also informed the Plenary that the GPC Chair, Mr. Fulvio ESPOSITO (IT), has been invited to a forthcoming SFIC Plenary meeting.

#### **4. Implementation of the EU Strategy on international R&I cooperation – structured policy coordination**

##### **a) Strand 1: Coordination of EU/MS activities towards China and Russia, including future JSTCC meetings and support to policy dialogues**

The Chair recalled the various discussions at previous Plenary meetings in which both Commission and Member States were asking for a more open and transparent approach vis-à-vis JSTCC meetings and bi-lateral dialogues. Ms. Elisabeth LIPIATOU (Commission) presented an updated background paper for the discussion on Strand 1, in which it was stressed that enhanced coordination regarding bilateral relationships of SFIC Members with third countries should be built around the following key activities:

1. Identify existing bilateral relationships and key events;
2. Identify existing thematic areas with high concentration of cooperation with a third country;
3. Where bilateral innovation dialogues exist, identify priority areas for a third country to improve framework conditions for innovation.

The Commission also informed it is willing to provide a platform for information sharing supporting the relevant SFIC Working Groups through a collaborative space (e.g. CIRCA-bc).

The Chair also announced that two background documents (South Africa questionnaire and table for bilateral meetings) had been distributed to delegations prior to the discussion. In this context, Ms. Marija MILIVOJEVIC (SE), presented the **results of the South Africa questionnaire** sent to delegations, with the questionnaire as a mechanism for policy coordination and information exchange between SFIC delegations. Ms. MILIVOJEVIC introduced the results of the questionnaire, which had a good turnout (17 delegations answered) and informed about the existence of agreements with South Africa, the bilateral joint committee meetings (of the respondents, most have bi-annual joint committee meetings) and their dates, as well as about areas of cooperation and related activities and possible topics and activities (e.g. potential future workshop) for further information exchange.

AT, FI, PT, FR, UK, NO, DE and Commission complimented the work done by SE on the South Africa questionnaire and considered this as the core of SFIC's work and a clear example of what SFIC can do best in terms of information sharing and coordination. DE underlined the importance of not only continuing the information exchange but also discussing, on the basis of these results, next steps and concrete measures to enhance coordinated policy approaches towards third countries. DE also pointed out the need to link up such joint activities with the Multi-Annual Roadmaps and the ERA Roadmap.

The Chair concluded the discussion on Strand 1 by stating that China, Russia and South Africa will be used as pilots. Based on the South Africa questionnaire, a generic questionnaire will be developed for other countries and applied first to China and Russia with the help of the relevant SFIC Working Groups, as input to future discussions on Strand 1 during the next Plenary. As a follow up to the questionnaire, the possibility of organising a workshop on South Africa in the coming months will be explored.

Commission will make progress with the development and implementation of the collaborative spaces needed via CIRCA.

**b) Strand 2: Input from SFIC on activities in support of policy dialogues**

The Chair stressed the importance of SFIC's input to Strand 2 and his willingness to discuss such strategic issue at each SFIC Steering Board and Plenary meeting, in order to provide timely input to the Commission. DE and FR supported the creation of an ad-hoc Working Group dealing with the Service Facility in support of the strategic development of international cooperation in research and innovation, while AT cautiously pointed out that there are currently many activities requiring attention and there is need of prioritisation, also raising the question whether to merge the work of the Service Facility with the toolbox for international cooperation. NO was against merging the work of the Service Facility with the toolbox for international cooperation, as they are two separate processes. Ms. Anca GHINESCU (RO), supported by the SFIC Vice-Chair, expressed her willingness to become rapporteur for Strand 2 and take over this task, which implies the coordination of SFIC's work vis-à-vis the future Service Facility.

The Chair concluded the discussion on Strand 2 by deciding to appoint a rapporteur for "Policy coordination - Strand 2 - Input from SFIC on activities in support of policy dialogues". Following the interest of Ms. GHINESCU (RO), delegations were asked to propose candidates for the position of rapporteur until 17 June (cob), in the absence of which Ms. GHINESCU will be formally appointed rapporteur for Policy coordination - Strand 2.

The Chair organised a working lunch session in which aspects of Strand 2 and the Service Facility in support of the strategic development of international cooperation in research and innovation were informally discussed, including the type of services, their expected results and impact and the justification of needs and required criteria.

The Commission will provide a summary note on the lunch discussion, and delegations will be asked to submit their comments in writing.

## 5. State of play of Working Groups by rapporteurs

### a) Brazil

Ms. Tiina VIHMA-PUROVAARA (FI, Brazil WG rapporteur) gave an update of the work of the Brazil Working Group, and in particular its work on indicators (with the aim at indicators being simple and mainly for information sharing purposes), the future B.BICE+ events and the country initiatives in Brazil planned for autumn 2015.

The Commission confirmed that the Destination Europe event in Brazil will take place on 17 November in Sao Paolo. For the time being, Commissioner Moedas will tentatively take part. Ms. Domenica BUMMA (Commission) also explained the differences between Destination Europe (a Commission-driven event to attract talent and researchers to Europe with participation from Member States) and the Tour of Brazil events (bottom-up, with a "menu-driven" approach, promoting all possible ways of cooperation), with both activities complementing each other.

The Commission will distribute the foreseen calendar of events for B.BICE+ and provide updated information on the Destination Europe event when ready.

### b) China

Mr. Olivier STEFFEN (FR, China WG rapporteur) gave an update on the work of the China Working Group, and in particular on the EU-China S&T Forum organised in Brussels on 28 April by the Commission-funded Dragon Star project (where bilateral cooperation with China on Sustainable Urbanisation was presented), as well as on an informal meeting between SFIC and representatives of the JPI Urban Europe on 27 April 2015 in Brussels. Mr. STEFFEN also announced a planned video-conference (foreseen for 2 July) with the members of the Working Group to take stock of the work done and prepare future stages of the Working Group's work (including the collection of data via a questionnaire in the context of policy coordination - Strand 1 work).

The Plenary also discussed the renewal of the mandate of the SFIC Working Group on China for one additional year.

The Chair concluded with the SFIC Plenary agreement on the renewal of the China Working Group mandate for one additional year, until 9 June 2016. The SFIC Secretariat will send the formal version of the renewed mandate to delegations.

**c) Common principles**

Ms. Julia LEWIS (UK, Common Principles WG rapporteur) presented the draft opinion on common principles as submitted to all delegations for approval while stressing the work of SFIC in the field of common principles and all activities mentioned in the opinion. Ms. LEWIS asked for the mandate of the Working Group on common principles not to be extended and considered that SFIC could work on this field when needed on an ad hoc basis.

The Chair concluded with the adoption of the SFIC opinion on common principles by the SFIC Plenary (with the inclusion of the opinion text + Annex 3 only) and asked the SFIC Secretariat to send the final version of the opinion to all delegations and to the relevant instances.

The Chair concluded that the Working Group on common principles had fulfilled its task as requested by the Council, and the SFIC Plenary agreed not to renew the mandate. Therefore, the Working Group on common principles was discontinued.

**6. India - State of play**

Mr. Konstantinos GLINOS (Commission) presented the state of play of the bilateral EU-India relations in view of the preparation of the Group of Senior Officials (GSO) meeting at the end of September 2015 (or back-to-back with the Carnegie meeting to be held in November 2015, as supported by FR). The Commission acknowledged that the GSO process has not been efficient so far and needs some simplification and future orientations, with the (low) level of representation in meetings being one of the main concerns. Delegations agreed that a new impetus on India is needed and were keen to support to the extent possible the re-launch of the GSO. DE thanked the Commission for the information on the GSO state-of-play and emphasised the need for delegations to substantially support the GSO process by, for instance, sending high senior officials to its meetings.

The Chair invited the Commission to make use of SFIC on issues related to India and the GSO, and also as an information exchange platform (e.g. for further distribution of GSO documents or agendas, etc.).

## **7. Other SFIC initiatives - South Africa / SFIC toolbox on international cooperation**

The **South Africa** point, in particular the results of the questionnaire, was covered under agenda item 4a, as previously explained.

Concerning the **SFIC toolbox on international cooperation**, Mr. Bjørn T. KJELLEMO (NO) presented progress on the initiative, indicating the progress made since the March 2015 SFIC Plenary meeting and the project outline sent, which had been adjusted with input from delegations. AT, CH, CZ, DE, SE and NO have expressed interest in participating in this initiative and in a future SFIC Working Group. Mr. KJELLEMO suggested to aim at adopting a mandate for the future Working Group at the next SFIC Plenary meeting.

The Chair concluded by indicating that a draft mandate of a Working Group on the toolbox for international cooperation will be discussed at the next SFIC Steering Board in view of its potential adoption by the SFIC Plenary on 29 September.

## **8. Indicators and data on FP7 participation: Presentation by the Commission**

Mr. Jürgen SANDERS (Commission) presented the relevant data and indicators on international cooperation with non-associated third countries in Horizon 2020 Collaborative Actions, making the comparison with FP7 data:

- The share of third country participations has declined from 4.7% in FP7 to 2.4% in Horizon 2020, mainly due to the new Rules on funding (no direct funding for industrialised countries);



- The share of EC's contribution has declined from 1.9% in FP7 to 0.6% in Horizon 2020;
- The share of FP projects with at least one third country participant has declined from 19.7% in FP7 to 10.6% in Horizon 2020.

The Commission concluded that the reduction of participation has generated some pro-active approach and corrective measures to overcome the situation. Delegations welcomed the presentation by the Commission but were also alerted by the drop of third country participation, thus emphasising that SFIC and the Commission should support solutions leading to a participation increase.

Delegations were keen to further discuss the issue of indicators/data as well as potential corrective measures to increase third country participation at future occasions.

**9. Keynote speech: "The importance of internationalisation": Presentation by Mr. Anders Lönn, State Secretary for Higher Education and Research, Sweden**

Mr. Anders LÖNN (State Secretary for Higher Education and Research, SE) gave an overview of his government priorities in the research field, considering internationalisation and international cooperation as "very high" on his government's list of priorities, as they are essential for everyone but even more important for smaller countries.

Mr. LÖNN considered SFIC as "an excellent forum for exchanging information and best practice, learning from each other and also working together". In this context, he highlighted the current and future work on structured policy coordination and policy dialogues, the new planned Service Facility for international cooperation as well as the work of the SFIC Working Groups and other initiatives such as South Africa and the SFIC toolbox for international cooperation.

Mr. LÖNN also stressed that the main responsibility for international cooperation lies with the researchers themselves but governments have a role to play in ensuring that the conditions for researchers are as optimal as possible. He concluded by expressing his hopes that the next Research Bill in Sweden, to be presented next year, will have a significant internationalisation component.

## 10. Standing information points

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

- Eastern Partnership;
- Japan;
- Africa High-Level Policy Dialogue.

No comments from delegations were received.

## 11. Any Other Business

- **Euro-Mediterranean ministerial conference 5+5 in March 2015:** ES informed about the Ministerial conference on STI and education in the context of the 5+5 dialogue (ES, FR, IT, MT and PT + Algeria, Mauritania, Tunisia, Libya and Morocco), that took place on 23-24 March 2015 in Madrid. The Conference adopted a Ministerial declaration and conclusions with actions for the next two years. The next meeting is planned for the 1<sup>st</sup> half of 2017 in Tunisia.

The SFIC Secretariat will distribute the Ministerial declaration and conclusions adopted at the conference to delegations.

- **Sweden-Korea Joint Committee meetings:** SE informed other SFIC Members and Observers about its Joint Committee meeting with Korea in a good exchange of information.

- **Information on the meeting of the H2020 - Programme Committee (Strategic Configuration) on 18 June 2015:** UK informed about the next meeting of the Horizon 2020 - Programme Committee (Strategic Configuration) as the meeting will discuss international cooperation issues, and encouraged delegations to get in touch with their Programme Committee representatives.
- **Eureka/Korea event:** The CH delegation informed delegations about the successful Eureka/Korea Days 2015 under Swiss Eureka Chairmanship.
- **Directive on conditions of entry/residence of third-country nationals:** The Chair and the Commission informed delegations about the proposal for a Directive on conditions of entry/residence of third-country nationals and encouraged delegates to follow the file and coordinate nationally as it will affect the issue of how to keep researchers in Europe.
- **INCO Conference in Beijing, 17 June 2015:** The Chair informed delegations that he has accepted an invitation to give a presentation at the INCO Conference in Beijing. Mr. Olivier STEFFEN (rapporteur of the China Working Group, FR) will also be present. A meeting with the S&T attachés based in Beijing is also foreseen for 16 June, with both the Chair and Mr. STEFFEN also attending.
- **Presentation of SFIC Annual Report 2014 at RECH WP:** The Chair debriefed delegations about his attendance to the Council Research Working Party on 11 May 2015, in which the SFIC Annual Report 2014 was presented. The Chair considered this approach as "very useful" for ERA-related groups, as there was an interesting and fruitful discussion and interaction with Working Party members.
- **Next Plenary meetings:** the Chair informed delegations that the next SFIC Plenary meetings are meant to take place on Tuesday **29 September** and **Thursday 3 December 2015**.