

ERAC-SFIC 1351/17

NOTE

Subject: Summary conclusions of the 31st meeting of the Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC), held in Brussels on 14 December 2016

The meeting was chaired by Ms. Rozenn SAUNIER (SFIC Chair, FR). Agenda point 4 was chaired by Ms. Iulia MIHAIL (SFIC Vice-Chair, RO).

The Forum drew the following conclusions:

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted with additional AOB (see below).

2. Information from the Chair

The Chair presented her priorities and working methods. She focussed on the active collaboration from delegations and participatory working methods. As her missions she set out

- the SFIC contribution to the ERA roadmap, also in contact with other ERA groups and with a view to the upcoming evaluation of the ERA advisory structures in 2018

- strategic advice to help decision-makers. For this the proactive exchange of information and experiences were also crucial.
- the promotion of MS/AC joint activities, e.g. through communication tools with the help of the Service Facility.
- improve information among MS/AC on main activities in the context of international cooperation, such as upcoming conferences, mutual learning exercises etc. through a regular tour de table.

3. Tour de table of national activities

Delegations presented in a full tour de table national topics of particular interest to SFIC and its range of activities. The SFIC Secretariat invited all delegations to also send written contributions for the SFIC bi-weekly.

In this context the incoming MT Council Presidency presented its programme (see the presentation circulated separately).

Delegations and the Chair welcomed this new format which will be a standing point in future plenaries as well.

4. Administrative/Procedural issues

- a) Biannual activity report 2015/16

The SFIC Secretariat presented the first draft of the biennial activity report.

The Chair invited delegations to provide comments until 25 January 2017 so that the final report could be adopted in the March plenary.

b) Work Programme 2017-18

FR presented a preliminary analysis on the outcome of the ongoing survey. The Chair set out the next steps, which consist of a workshop in January/February, which will be based on a detailed analysis of the survey results. The Chair indicated that at least 15 delegations needed to participate to make the workshop useful. As only few delegations had responded to the doodle concerning the date for the workshop it should be resent with additional dates. The workshop should not take place too late to allow the preparation of the work programme before the SFIC plenary in March.

The SFIC secretariat has circulated a revised doodle. The Chair will come back to SFIC in due time with an updated plan and invitation.

5. SFIC opinion(s)

a) Interim evaluation of H2020

The rapporteur presented the revised report. Different delegations mentioned substantive points, in particular on the issue of widening and the proposed pilot scheme. The Commission offered to present its analysis on the drop in international participation in Horizon 2020 in the next plenary.

SFIC also agreed to submit the opinion to Council and Commission as soon as possible and coordinate with ERAC in view of the joint ERAC opinion on the interim evaluation.

The Chair concluded that FR would circulate a revised draft version and invited delegations to submit comments by the end of 2016. The Commission will be invited to present on the above point in the next plenary.

b) 2nd Commission's Report on international R&I cooperation

The rapporteurs presented the revised report. The discussion mainly focussed on the concept of the Global Research Area (GloRA) with several delegations calling for a further definition political level. Calls were also made for the further differentiate it from ERA Open to the World. The Commission welcomed the discussion, indicated its willingness to engage on it with SFIC and contrasted the concept of the GloRA as a vision with priority 6 for MS activity in INCO and Open to the World as a policy objective at EU level.

The Chair concluded the SFIC would hold in its next plenary a debate on the concept of the Global Research Area. The Chair also invited comments on the draft opinion before the end of the year with a view to a timely adoption by written procedure.

c) Gender and international cooperation (with Helsinki group)

The rapporteur presented the progress made on defining the content of the future opinion and presented an outline of the future opinion. She informed about a roundtable at the Research Executive Agency whose feedback will be taken into account. The objective is to finalise the opinion by summer 2017. AT will send an email with specific requests for contributions. SE volunteered to be co-rapporteur. The Commission thanked the chair and co-chair for their participation in the last Helsinki group meeting and offered to host a meeting if necessary for advancing the opinion.

The Chair thanked SE for agreeing to be co-rapporteur. AT will send a dedicated request for contributions.

6. Service Facility

The Commission informed that the evaluation was finalised and that the contract should be signed in the first half of January 2017. First requests for services can then be launched. This includes the rationalisation of regional activities, communication activities, support to third country NCPs as well as bottom up activities.

The Chair thanked the Commission for the information and concluded that SFIC should prepare a consolidated document with previously identified needs.

7. State of play of Working Groups

– Toolbox

DE presented the preliminary outcomes of the survey (see presentation). NO also updated on the activities of the WG, including a workshop and will organise a workshop next year. The mandate for the WG will have to be extended in 2017 for another year.

– Brazil

The co-chair informed about the work of the Brazil WG. The group will have its next meeting early next year. The WG chair has been invited to a workshop on EU Brazil cooperation. WG will also receive invitations to science councillors meetings. The Commission informed about the agreement between the ERC and CONFAP. First call from ERC garnered interest from 300 institutions, now Brazilian researchers can apply. BE inquired about new destination Europe events in Brazil.

– China

FR informed about the work of the WG and on recent relevant developments in China, including the publication of the technical and scientific aspects of the current 5 year plan.

8. Agreement between the US government and the European Commission on Horizon 2020

The Commission informed SFIC about the administrative arrangement with the US. It allows for US self-funded entities to collaborate with H2020 partners without having to go through the H2020 procedures. The Commission emphasised that the focus was on collaboration and not on participation in H2020 projects. The agreement is not a model for relations with other countries, but a solution to a longstanding problem specific to the US. Discussions about the implementation of that agreement took place.

9. AOB

The Commission presented the main points of the **ERA Progress Report** 2016, which will be published on 20 January 2017 as an online publication (see attached presentation).

AT informed about the seminar on **JPIs on the Global stage**. It highlighted the need for more exchange between JPIs on how they manage internationalisation. AT invited SFIC members/observers to get in contact with programme committee members to understand how it works and how it can be improved. AT will provide a one -pager to be circulated to SFIC.

On the **EU ASEAN funding scheme**, FR reminded that the deadline for submitting letters of intention is January. DE provided the attached written input.

The Chair invited interested delegations to host the **next pre-meeting**.

The Chair informed about the end of the **mandate of the co-chair** in 2017 and invited candidates to come forward. The SFIC Secretariat will send out the necessary information.

The Commission informed about the **EU CELAC SOM** and invited SFIC to send ideas for the agenda asap. The Commission also informed about the next meeting with **China** on 29 March and invited SFIC input, in particular on issues emerging from national dialogues that would benefit from also a European approach.
