

NOTE

Subject: Summary conclusions of the 27th meeting of the Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC), held in Brussels on 3 December 2015

The meeting was chaired by Mr. Dan ANDRÉE (SFIC Chair, SE). Agenda points 7, 8 and 9 were chaired by Ms. Iulia MIHAIL (SFIC Vice-Chair, RO).

The Forum drew the following conclusions:

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda (CM 4724/15) was adopted. The following AOBs were added to the agenda: South Africa workshop and Lund conference (requested by SE), Science4refugees (requested by AT), update on the marine litter workshop (requested by DE) and debrief of the seminar on EU Innovation Strategy and the Black Sea region (requested by RO). The Chair also announced an additional AOB concerning the recently adopted Council conclusions on advancing gender equality in ERA.

The Chair recalled that the **summary conclusions** of the SFIC meeting of 29 September 2015 were approved by written procedure as set out in doc. ERAC-SFIC 1361/15.

2. ERA governance and ERA Roadmap indicators

The Chair gave an update on recent discussions on ERA governance and informed delegations that the Council (Competitiveness) adopted Council conclusions on the ERA advisory structure on 1 December. As a consequence, SFIC was asked by Council to review its mandate and to propose a new mandate to Council following the "standard clauses" agreed by both ERAC and Council (paragraph 10 of the aforesaid Council conclusions). To this aim, the Chair presented a new draft SFIC mandate to delegations, such document being mainly based on the paragraphs coming from (ERAC's opinion) standard clauses and on the paragraphs coming from the "SFIC opinion on the ERA Governance: Review of the status, the mandate and the reporting lines of SFIC" (doc. ERAC-SFIC 1355/15) as adopted by the SFIC plenary on 4 March 2015.

AT, BE, DE, FI, FR and RO suggested the strengthening of the strategic dimension of the mandate and of the references to the advisory role of SFIC. The Chair recalled that there is very limited room for changes as the bulk of the mandate has been already agreed by ERAC and Council but was open to receive some written comments in view of an updated version.

On indicators, the Chair informed about the adoption of the ERAC opinion on indicators for all ERA priorities (doc. ERAC 1213/15) on 13 November. As discussed in previous plenaries, further work on indicators for Priority 6 is needed. AT suggested an exchange of information to build on national ERA Roadmaps to find complementarities of indicators for international cooperation.

SFIC delegates to submit written comments to the proposal for a new SFIC mandate by 17 December 2015.

The Chair will consider the possibility of a structured exchange of views on indicators on international cooperation (e.g. workshop or agenda point in plenary) to find complementarities amongst the various national ERA Roadmaps.

3. 2nd Report on the implementation of the Commission's international R&I strategy

Maria Cristina RUSSO (Commission) informed SFIC delegates that the 2nd Report on the implementation of the Commission's international R&I strategy is expected for autumn 2016 and will contain a similar structure than the precedent Report. The 2nd Report will present a selection of Multi-Annual Roadmaps (MAR) in an annex to the main report. Compared with the first version the selection will be extended to include also Australia, Mexico, New Zealand, ASEAN, CELAC and the African Union. Ms. RUSSO requested the contribution from SFIC delegates, mainly on what concerns the section on "Synergies with activities of the Member States", and also announced that the Commission is exploring the possibility of organising 3 workshops during the first half of 2016 to receive input from SFIC Members and Observers. In relation to the preparations of the report, Ms. RUSSO announced that the Commission may also involve SFIC during the preparatory phase, which could include input to the draft report or such draft report being tentatively discussed at a forthcoming SFIC plenary meeting.

Delegations mainly welcomed the Commission's approach but had some questions with regard to the impact of the existing MAR (AT), the linkages with the Horizon 2020 Work Programme (FR) and the structure of the report as well as to involve MS/AC for workshop contribution at an early stage (DE).

The Chair concluded by informing delegations that this agenda item will be further discussed at the next plenary on 2 March 2016, as any substantial SFIC input should be given to the Commission before the summer break.

4. SFIC contribution to "Open to the world" agenda

The Chair recalled that SFIC is currently well-positioned *vis-à-vis* Commissioner Moedas' agenda focusing on "three Os": Open science, Open innovation and Open to the world, as SFIC's remit is certainly within the latter. In this context, the Chair presented a draft SFIC opinion on "Open to the world" as SFIC's offering to the Commission to strengthen SFIC's current role as a platform for exchange and policy advice, considering the various ongoing SFIC initiatives. Ms. Cristina RUSSO (Commission) welcomed SFIC's pro-activeness and agreed to transmit SFIC's input on "Open to the world" to Commissioner Moedas when ready.

Delegations agreed to have a SFIC opinion on the issue and stressed the importance of SFIC being pro-active and providing input to the Commission. However, delegations also expressed their wishes to have the status of SFIC as a current advisory body clearly understood in the text, asked for a better formulation of the Global Research Area concept and requested the introduction of references to the reciprocity concept as well as to Horizon 2020 instruments, where appropriate.

SFIC delegates to submit written comments to the proposal for a SFIC opinion on "Open to the world" by 17 December 2015.

5. Assessment of SFIC's work for 2016

The Chair recalled the content of the SFIC Work Programme 2015-16 (ERAC-SFIC 1353/15, adopted on 12 February 2015), which highlights SFIC activities for 2015 and 2016. In this context, the Vice-Chair, Ms. Iulia MIHAIL (RO), made a presentation on prioritisation of SFIC activities for 2015-2016, considering the current Work Programme as well as the potential future links to the Policy Service Facility. Ms. MIHAIL (RO) stressed the focus of SFIC on "Analysing and monitoring activities", in particular the following:

- Development of a composite indicator for international R&I cooperation;

- Databases for international R&I cooperation (with possible synergies with the toolbox for international cooperation);
- Impact studies of ongoing joint EU/MS (AC) initiatives and actions.

Delegations made explicit reference to Horizon 2020 National Contact Points (FR) and indicators for international cooperation, including a potential composite indicator (AT, DE and NO).

The Chair concluded by informing delegations that this agenda item will be further discussed at the next plenary on 2 March 2016, in order to provide timely and valuable input to Commission with regard to the Policy Service Facility.

6. Strand 1 - Policy dialogues with third countries

Mr. Konstantinos GLINOS (Commission) gave an update on the following:

a) EU-CELAC

The EU-CELAC SOM (Senior Officials Meeting) was planned for 25-26 November but, due to the high security alert in Brussels, the meeting was postponed to spring 2016. Only 9 Member States had confirmed their participation. The Commission will inform SFIC delegations as soon as a new date is found.

Meanwhile there have been a number of important developments in EU-CELAC cooperation since the last SOM that took place in April 2014. At the EU-CELAC Summit in June 2015 a commitment to create a Common Research Area was reached, and it is documented in the updated 2015 CELAC Action Plan. This was later endorsed by CELAC in September 2015 in Quito during the CELAC STI Ministerial meeting where 1) increasing researcher mobility; 2) proving mutual access to research infrastructures; and 3) strengthened thematic cooperation in common challenges were identified as priorities.

The next SOM should start to translate these commitments to actions.

b) EU-ASEAN

The last EU-ASEAN senior officials meeting (SOM) took place on 5 November focusing on thematic cooperation on water and aquaculture issues (particularly with Vietnam and Thailand), infectious disease preparedness (GLOPID-R), prospects for initiatives related to Mekong water research, and also reaching an agreement for the establishment of a multilateral co-funding mechanism (to be launched in spring 2016). Member States will be asked in the coming weeks whether they would like to participate and provide funding to the scheme. The Commission explained that the co-funding mechanism is not about co-funding projects with the Commission through Horizon 2020, but it is about creating a "EUREKA-like" mechanism through which ASEAN and EU Member States can support joint projects.

c) EU-India

During the EU-India joint steering committee meeting held on 23 November 2015 an agreement was reached about the renewal of the S&T agreement, and thematic cooperation in water, energy, health and other areas was reviewed. In addition, discussions were held with the Indian Department of Science and Technology (DST) and the Indian Department of Biotechnology (DBT) regarding establishing schemes that would allow Indian researchers to participate in Horizon 2020 calls for WP 2016-17 with funding from India.

The Commission had discussed with SFIC the reform of the GSO and took into account discussions at the last SFIC plenary as well as the input given by SFIC delegations. No GSO meeting was organised due to lack of high-level participation and of a substantive agenda. Meanwhile, the GSO reform was agreed by India, meaning that the responsibilities of GSO Thematic and Working groups will move to the Platform of Funders (Inno Indigo), while the high level officials may meet in the future on an ad hoc basis to discuss policy issues.

d) EU-China

The EU-China Joint S&T Committee meeting took place the last week of October 2015. This followed several high level policy dialogues with China this year, notably the Innovation Cooperation Dialogue back-to-back with the EU-China Summit on 29 June 2015, Commissioner Moedas's visit to China in September 2015 and the meeting between Commissioner Moedas and Vice-Premier Liu on 14 September.

China's Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) has made a political commitment of 200 million RMB (approx. €30mln) per year as of 2016 in support of Chinese participation in Horizon 2020 projects. MOST engaged to publish two calls for proposals per year as from mid-2016 to co-fund Chinese participation in Horizon 2020 WP 2016-17 as well as an interim call before the end of 2016 in support of Chinese participants already in Horizon 2020 projects selected under WP 2014-15 although the precise timing and execution of the latter is yet to be determined.

The EU and China agreed on a roadmap for reciprocity, which in time should enable EU entities established in China to be eligible on equal terms as domestic applicants to Chinese National Key R&D Projects and National S&T Major Projects. The indicators for monitoring progress on these engagements were not agreed and discussions on this topic will be pursued further.

Overall 20 topics target Chinese participation in Horizon 2020 WP 2016-17, based on agreed priorities in the policy dialogues with China, i.e. 5 topics on Food, Agriculture and Biotechnology in collaboration with the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences; 5 topics on Sustainable Urbanisation and other topics in ICT, Transport Energy and Research Infrastructures.

The Commission also worked closely with the Science Counsellors in Member States to organise the China Tour, which covered 16 cities in China and attracted a large audiences from the Chinese research and innovation communities.

e) OECD Ministerial Declaration in Korea

The OECD Committee for Scientific and Technological Policy held a Ministerial-level meeting in Daejeon, Republic of Korea, on 20-21 October 2015. The meeting, hosted by the Korean government, had the theme of "Creating our Common Future through Science, Technology and Innovation". The outcome of the meeting was the "Daejeon Declaration on Science, Technology, and Innovation Policies for the Global and Digital Age". The topics discussed during the meeting included, amongst others, open science, digitalisation and the rise of Asia as S&T power. There were also break-out sessions on open science and open data with 15 countries participating.

Delegations asked for further information on the co-funding mechanisms as regards the EU-ASEAN and EU-India dialogues and pointed out the recurrent topic of delegations needed to be informed well in advance in order to ensure high level representation at the meetings. DE noted that the number (9) of Member States registered for the EU-CELAC SOM is particularly low when compared to the vast participation of Member States in the ERA-NET LAC.

7. State of play of Working Groups (WG)

a) Brazil

Ms. Tiina VIHMA-PUROVAARA (Brazil WG rapporteur, FI) presented a Roadmap for future work and next steps and gave an overview of the achievements and milestones of the Brazil WG so far. Ms. VIHMA PUROVAARA debriefed SFIC delegations on the successful Destination Europe event in Sao Paolo on 16 November, with participation from BE, DE, DK, FI, HU, PT, UK as well as CH and different EU initiatives. Concerning the WG work, the Brazil group has been focussing on making Europe visible in Brazil, the Tour of Brazil events and exchange of practices. The rapporteur informed SFIC delegations that the future of the WG should be assessed in view of the renewal of its mandate and encouraged other delegations to join the group.

Some delegations referred to the new CSA project INCOBRA and agreed that a new framework for cooperation with such project should be explored.

The Brazil WG was asked to assess its work in view of the revision of the WG mandate and also in the framework of the new INCOBRA project.

b) **Russia**

Ms. Henriette KRIMPHOFF (representative of the SFIC Russia WG, DE) gave an update of the WG work and presented the draft Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) prepared by the Russia WG, which focuses on the following aims (within a time-frame of five years):

- Connecting scientific excellence between Russia and Europe;
- Enhancing cooperation in research and innovation - related activities;
- Raising the mobility level of academic personnel as well as students and innovation actors.

Ms. KRIMPHOFF also stressed some recommendations for the future EU/MS (AC)-Russia cooperation as well as a tentative timetable leading to the adoption of the SRIA by the SFIC plenary. Delegations welcomed the document but were concerned about current EU-Russia relations, and mainly about the status of the SRIA when adopted (AT) as well as the need to involve the Ministries of Foreign Affairs (FI) taking into account current EU-Russia relations. NO pointed out the need to look further at framework conditions and for the SRIA to be more specific on challenges when collaborating with Russia.

SFIC delegates to submit written comments to the draft SRIA prepared by the Russia WG by the end of 2015, in view of a potential adoption by the next SFIC plenary.

Ms. KRIMPHOFF also presented the Questionnaire on S&T cooperation with Russia, including some comments on preliminary outcome and the time schedule on the questionnaire's work. She encouraged those delegations that have not submitted their input to do so.

c) **Toolbox on international cooperation**

Mr. Bjorn Tore KJELLEMO (NO) informed SFIC delegations that two new members (FI and ES) have joined the WG Toolbox on international cooperation and that the WG has decided to nominate him as rapporteur subject to the approval of the SFIC plenary.

Mr. Bjorn Tore KJELLEMO (NO) was formally appointed rapporteur for the SFIC WG Toolbox on international cooperation.

8. **Standing information points**

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

1. Conclusions of the SFIC Steering Board on 10 November 2015, in view of the preparation of the plenary;
2. List of SFIC delegates' contact details.

No comments from delegations were received.

SFIC delegations were reminded to update their contact details until 17 December 2015 if needed.

9. **AOB**

- ***Council conclusions on Advancing gender equality in ERA:*** The Chair announced that the recently Council conclusions on gender equality in ERA include a paragraph in which the Council "invites SFIC and the Helsinki Group to consider developing joint guidelines on a gender perspective for international cooperation in STI".

SFIC will liaise with the Helsinki Group, as appropriate, in the near future to respond to Council's request and welcomed "volunteers" as rapporteur for this task.

- ***Lund Conference:*** A reminder on the Lund Conference taking place on 4 December was given by the SE delegation.
- ***Workshop on marine litter:*** Following the SFIC WG on USA on the issue, DE reminded about the workshop on marine litter and ocean literacy foreseen for 10 December 2015, with links to the G7 research ministerial meeting, to the Galway process as well as to the JPI Oceans.
- ***EU Innovation Strategy and the Black Sea region:*** The Vice-Chair made a short debrief of the international seminar on: “EU Innovation Strategy and the Black Sea Region”, focusing on effective results and expectations of the members of the innovation ecosystem from EU Member States and neighbouring countries from the Black Sea Region concerning the EU strategy “Innovation Union”. The seminar also had maritime literacy as one of the topics.
- ***Tunisia:*** Commission announced that Tunisia has signed its association agreement to Horizon 2020 (which will be in force only after the ratification by the Tunisian parliament). In this context, ES also pointed out that Tunisia will organise the next Euro-Mediterranean 5+5 ministerial conference in early 2017.
- ***Science4Refugees:*** Following the Commission initiative targeted at refugees with an academic and scientific background, AT encouraged SFIC Members and Observers to share similar initiatives in the field, and announced that AT will circulate a table to collect information with that purpose. After the plenary, the AT delegation encouraged SFIC delegations to feed information into the EUA initiative “Refugee Welcome Map” (which can be found at <http://refugeeswelcomemap.eua.be/Survey/Intro>).

- **South Africa:** SE informed SFIC delegates that an information exchange seminar on South Africa will be organised on 1 March 2016 at VINNOVA's office in Brussels, back-to-back to the next plenary meeting.

 - **Research marketing workshop:** NO informed that the Research marketing workshop planned for 2 December 2015 had to be cancelled due to the security alert in Brussels and a new date is soon to be found.

 - **Next meetings:** Delegations were informed that the next SFIC plenary will take place on **2 March 2016**.

 - **Departures:** the Chair thanked Mr. Alexander GRABLOWITZ (DE) and Ms. Marion MIENERT (DE) for their remarkable contribution to SFIC and wished them the best for their future professional endeavours.
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