

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

Secretariat

ERAC-SFIC 1352/14

NOTE

Subject : Summary conclusions of the 20th meeting of the Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC), held in Brussels on 5 February 2014

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

The Forum drew the following conclusions:

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda (CM 1248/14) was adopted with the China point under AOB moved to point 5 after request from FR, and an order change for points 3 (Multi-Annual Roadmaps) and 4 (Common principles).

The Chair recalled that the **summary conclusions** of the SFIC meeting of 12 November 2013 were approved by written procedure as set out in doc. 1357/13.

2. SFIC Rules of Procedure

The Chair recalled the discussion on working methods and procedures and on potential scenarios that took place on 12 November 2013, with most delegations accepting the new circumstances (i.e. Commission not providing the reimbursement for the Task Force meetings anymore) and supporting the principles to be applied to any scenario and the willingness to have more strategic debates at plenary level. The Chair also announced that input emerging from the scenarios discussion on 12 November had been considerably taken into account, as well as input from the Commission, the Vice-Chair and the Council Secretariat. The Chair also stated that the revised draft presented to delegations is a revision of the Rules with the necessary changes and not a new set of Rules. Furthermore, the Chair informed delegations that, in order to facilitate the discussion, an Explanatory Note of the changes was circulated in advance of the meeting.

FI, PT, DE, BE and FR indicated that they needed more time to examine and discuss the changes in the revised draft and would welcome more representativeness and a reinforced role for the Board: all rapporteurs present in all meetings, and meetings open to all SFIC Members and Observers, in order not to exclude smaller Member States with more difficulties to participate in meetings or working groups. UK, SE, IT, NL and LT supported the revised Rules document. PT expressed concerns as regards the proposed structure which was regarded "too slim". ES expressed their support for meaningful and strategic discussions in plenary meetings.

Ms Maria-Cristina RUSSO (Commission) reaffirmed the commitment of the Commission to work with SFIC in a more strategic way on the basis of the Commission Communication of 2012 reflecting its new strategy in EU international cooperation in research and innovation. The Commission's view is to empower SFIC as a real forum where strategic discussions can take place.

The Chair also announced the intention to have more plenary meetings than in the past, bringing the strategic discussions and decisions to the plenary and not having them in the Board.

The Chair concluded by announcing that a revised version of the Rules of Procedure, already accommodating the points made during the discussion, would be circulated to delegations for their comments in view of a future adoption via written procedure¹.

3. Common principles for international R&I cooperation

– Presentation by Mr Paul Boyle, President of Science Europe

The Chair recalled that the last SFIC plenary on 12 November agreed to invite a representative of Science Europe as a member of the Global Research Council to one of the forthcoming meetings, to give a presentation on the work of Science Europe in the field of common principles.

Mr BOYLE (President of Science Europe) presented Science Europe as the voice of science in Europe, counting with 52 member organisations from 27 countries, mainly focusing on the work of the organisation as well as their different surveys and studies on the state of science in Europe. Mr. BOYLE also touched upon the role of Science Europe as a member of the Global Research Council whose next meeting will take place in May 2014 in Beijing, focusing on open access and funding opportunities for the future.

After the presentation, the Chair stressed SFIC's interest in common principles in order to encourage international cooperation. The Commission also stated that it is closely working with Science Europe and the Global Research Council on the common principles field. Furthermore, the Commission emphasized the importance to link the common principles to ERA.

¹ A revised version of the SFIC Rules of Procedure was distributed to delegations by the SFIC Secretariat on 6 February 2014, with a deadline for written comments on **20 February 2014**.

Delegations posed questions on the actual dissemination of common principles, on particular issues identified in the context of principles for international cooperation, as well as intellectual property questions, amongst others. FR mentioned that they had a list of common principle areas which were taken into consideration by different countries. The Commission also stated their intention to send out a questionnaire to gather information from Member States concerning common principles.

The Chair indicated that an OECD representative will be invited to the next plenary to present OECD's work on common principles.

FR committed to distribute a draft template on common principles to other delegations.

The Commission announced the preparation of a relevant questionnaire to gather information from Member States.

4. Multi-annual roadmaps for international cooperation

- **Presentation of state of play on the Roadmaps preparation by the Commission**
- **Discussion of orientations from priorities with key partners/regions and further contribution from SFIC**

The Chair recalled that the Council conclusions on international cooperation from May 2013 include a section on "roadmaps for international cooperation" and, in particular paragraph 11 "invites the Commission to prepare multi-annual roadmaps for cooperation with the strategic partners of the Union". The Chair also recalled that, in paragraph 21 of the same conclusions, the Council invites SFIC "to contribute to the design and development of the multi-annual roadmaps in collaboration and open discussion with the relevant stakeholders". The Chair indicated that discussions on the process preparation were taken at the last plenary meeting on 12 November 2013, where it was concluded that the SFIC contribution to the roadmaps is an important task for SFIC in the coming months, including a consultation to SFIC Members and Observers launched during the month of November, with two specific questions prepared by the Commission.

Ms. MARIA-CRISTINA RUSSO (Commission) gave an overview of the state of play on the Roadmaps preparation at the Commission's side, based on the Commission's document submitted to delegations. Ms. RUSSO (Commission) thanked those delegations who had provided inputs while, at the same time, pointing out that contributions from Member States to the consultation exercise had been rather limited. To move forward on the Roadmaps process preparation, the Commission announced that it plans to host a workshop on the Roadmaps preparation with Member States representatives on 26 March 2014. The Chair and SFIC delegates welcomed the organisation of such a workshop. Ms. EVELINA SANTA-KAHLE (DE) also mentioned the possibility for Germany to organise a follow-up workshop in autumn if further discussions were needed.

Delegations welcomed the Commission's document and questioned the Commission's approach on the process for identifying priority countries and thematic areas, as it was not directly related to the input from previous SFIC work, mainly in relation to the content of Strategic Research and Innovation Agendas for India and China.

Ms. RUSSO (Commission) clarified that it is possible for SFIC Members and Observers to contribute with inputs to the Roadmaps documents as they are still work in progress, and changes thereto are still possible. The Commission took note of the comments and will provide the relevant documents accordingly in advance of the workshop preparation.

The Chair welcomed the announcement of the workshop in March 2014 and asked the Commission to circulate the relevant documents in advance of the meeting.

5. Follow-up on SFIC initiatives or other EU-Member States activities

BRAZIL:

The Chair recalled that, as agreed in the last plenary, the Brazil core group was mandated to work on a paper focusing on the next steps. Ms. TIINA VIHMA-PUROVAARA (FI) gave a presentation on the SFIC-Brazil Roadmap and the proposed Action Plan by presenting the recommendations included in the paper developed by the Brazil core group, namely:

1. Making Europe visible in Brazil including the organisation of Destination Europe events;
2. Sharing of information;
3. Using the whole knowledge triangle: education-research-innovation;
4. Supporting the development of a European initiative to enhance the European participation to the Science without Borders programme;
5. Establishing a European-Brazilian GSO.

Delegations welcomed the paper developed by the core group. SE announced the nomination of a delegate to join the core group and expressed the need to look at the issue of education further. DE expressed the view that recommendation n° 5 should become the priority. FR asked for extending the connections with B.BICE+.

Ms Domenica BUMMA (Commission) welcomed the efforts of the core group and referred to the Commission's on-going policy dialogue with Brazil which is complementary to the interest of Member States, underlining the importance of prioritizing and assessing the feasibility of the actions proposed by the Group. SFIC Members and Observers were also informed of the Tour of Brazil that the EU delegation in Brazil is organising for the 3rd quarter of 2014.

The Chair concluded re-stating the importance of the Brazil initiative and that work should continue with focus on the two first priorities. The next plenary will take stock on progress made under this initiative.

Those interested in participating in the Brazil initiative should get in touch with Ms. VIHMA-PUROVAARA (FI).

USA:

The Chair informed SFIC Members and Observers about the Destination Europe event that took place in December 2013 in San Francisco, with a successful organisation by the Commission and the participation of remarkable speakers. The Chair encouraged SFIC delegates to encourage their countries to take part in these events.

Ms. Mary KAVANAGH (Commission) welcomed the support of the SFIC Steering Group and announced that, following evaluation exercises and comments from participants, events will in the future focus on a 1-day programme and will also try venues such as university campuses. The next event is preliminary foreseen for October 2014 at Georgia Tech in Atlanta (US).

The Commission also referred to a "Destination Europe branding" which could be considered for other countries and initiatives supported by SFIC, such as Brazil.

The Chair concluded that SFIC can facilitate the communication between Member States and the Commission as regards the organisation of these events and the Vice-Chair suggested that the Commission could discuss with Member States before deciding on venues and locations for future Destination Europe events.

CHINA:

Ms. FLORENCE LELAIT (FR) explained the progress made on the China initiative, with the China core group examining the options presented at the last plenary. FR presented the proposal to organise a workshop between EU-MS-China probably in June 2014 in Brussels in the margins of the Joint Steering Committee of the EU-China S&T Agreement. The programme of the workshop is not yet defined and Ms. LELAIT (FR) asked for suggestions from SFIC Members and Observers. The Commission indicated that the Joint Steering Committee foreseen for June 2014 is still to be confirmed. Moreover, the Commission also informed that the DragonStar project will hold an event in 2015, therefore, if there was no China event organised by SFIC during 2014, the Commission would look into the possibility of combining a SFIC China workshop with the DragonStar event.

ES asked for further information on the dates, topics and actors involved and DE expressed the need to agree on the topics to be covered at the workshop. BE expressed the view that probably one event on China would be enough. NO expressed their interest in joining the group.

The Commission indicated that the Joint Steering Committee foreseen for June 2014 is still to be confirmed. Moreover, the Commission also announced that the DragonStar project will hold an event in 2015, therefore, if there was no China event organised by SFIC during 2014, the Commission suggested that the SFIC China work could feed into the DragonStar event.

The Chair asked SFIC Members and Observers to provide feedback on the future workshop priorities and encouraged them to liaise with colleagues in the capitals to develop concrete proposals. Any input must be sent to Ms. Florence LELAIT (FR) by 15 March 2014 and the China core group will synthesize the input in view of the next SFIC plenary.

6. SFIC's contribution to the ERAC ad-hoc group on the EMM

Ms. EVELINA SANTA-KAHLE (DE) presented the state of play of the work of the ERAC ad-hoc working group on Monitoring & European Semester regarding the ERA Monitoring Mechanism (EMM), which made the first steps to include international cooperation in their work. An ERAC opinion from January 2014 of the first European Research Area Progress Report contains a specific conclusion recommending the integration of the international dimension into the ERA Monitoring Mechanism. However, so far the difficulty has been on finding the relevant indicators to deal with international cooperation.

The Chair asked SFIC Members and Observers to liaise closely with their respective ERAC delegates on this issue. The Chair also noted that the Council conclusions on ERA progress prepared by the Presidency include a paragraph on international cooperation. The Chair also informed members that he will participate in a meeting with all other Chairs of the ERA-related groups to exchange impressions on coordination aspects and preliminary discuss the future review of the ERA governance.

7. Presentation of the results of the study "Basic principles for effective STI Agreements"

Mr DEREK JAN FIKKERS (Technopolis Group) presented the main results of the study, which focused on developing an understanding of STI agreements and exploring the potential scope of umbrella agreements with the implicit goal of contributing to common principles and guidelines for the conduct of international cooperation on research and innovation. Mr. FIKKERS announced that the main findings of the study can be summarised as follows:

- Agreements differ very significantly between USA, EU and MS;
- Policy dialogues and visibility get only little attention while IPR gets too much attention;
- There are many poor evaluations and reviews;
- More common principles can contribute to impacts.

Mr. FIKKERS also made additional observations, in particular the following:

- Bilateral participation at project level has increased although reciprocity impacts are still low;
- Mobility of researchers increases very slowly;
- Awareness amongst policy makers and the STI community is rather limited;
- Bilateral policy dialogues get little attention.

The Chair asked the Commission to distribute the final report once completed.

8. Standing information points

The Chair informed SFIC Members and Observers that the following Standing Information Points have been sent to delegations:

1. The SFIC Work Programme 2013-14 draft provisional meetings table;
2. Three documents related to the EU-Africa High Level Policy Dialogue and the meeting that took place in Brussels on 28-29 November 2013;
3. An information point on Horizon 2020 - NCPs in Third Countries;
4. Note on EU-CELAC STI activities;
5. Draft minutes of the last Task Force meeting on 9 December. The Chair indicated that any comments on the minutes should be sent to the Commission (Mr. Christopher GAUCI) no later than 12 February 2014.

There were no comments on the afore-said documents.

9. Any Other Business

The following AOB points were presented:

- **Russia:** the DE delegation explained the set up of a Russia core group and the organisation of a meeting of the core group in Bonn (Germany) at the end of February.
- **Next plenary meeting:** the Chair informed that the next SFIC plenary was scheduled to take place on 13 May 2014. However, the Hellenic Presidency informed SFIC delegates that this date coincides with the informal Competitiveness Council in Athens dealing with Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in research and innovation so a change of date was being considered. The Chair informed SFIC Members and Observers that within a week the final date of the SFIC plenary would be communicated².

² On 13 February 2014, the Hellenic Presidency confirmed that the next SFIC plenary meeting will take place on **Monday 19 May 2014**. SFIC delegates have already been informed via e-mail by the SFIC Secretariat.