

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

Secretariat

ERAC-SFIC 1357/13

NOTE

Subject: Summary conclusions of the 19th meeting of the Strategic Forum for
International S&T Cooperation (SFIC), held in Brussels on 12 November 2013

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

The Forum drew the following conclusions:

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda (CM 5035/13) was adopted, with an additional AOB point on the USA initiative, requested by DE.

The Chair recalled that the **summary conclusions** of the SFIC meeting of 18 June 2013 were approved by written procedure as set out in doc. 1355/13.

The Chair also recalled that the **SFIC 4th Annual Report** was approved by written procedure as set out in doc. 1354/13.

2. Election of the SFIC Vice-Chair

The Chair explained the procedure for the election of the SFIC Vice-Chair as announced by the SFIC Secretariat in an e-mail correspondence to all SFIC delegates. The Chair informed delegations that one candidacy for the position was received: Ms. Florence LELAIT (FR).

Ms. Florence LELAIT (FR) took the floor to present her candidacy putting emphasis on her experience in the work of SFIC and her personal involvement in various SFIC initiatives. There were no objections to the election of the candidate.

Following the presentation of her candidacy, Ms. Florence LELAIT (FR) was elected as new SFIC Vice-Chair for a two-year period.

The Chair congratulated Ms. Florence LELAIT (FR) for her election and encouraged her to continue the fruitful work within SFIC in her new position.

3. Good practices in Member States: Denmark

- **Presentation on Danish Innovation Centers**
- **Discussion**

Mr. Kim BRINCKMANN (DK) gave a presentation on Innovation Center Denmark as a good practice example for other Member States and Associated Countries. Innovation Center Denmark is a partnership between the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Higher Education and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark with the two strategic objectives of strengthening Danish research, higher education and innovation in order to create economic growth as well as marketing Denmark's strengths. Innovation Center Denmark, currently operational in USA (Silicon Valley), China (Shanghai) and Germany (Munich) and opened in 2013 in Brazil, India and South Korea, plays an important role as facilitator of international collaboration. It facilitates networks and partnerships between Danish and leading/promising foreign research and higher education institutions and companies in order to transform knowledge into growth and jobs (i.e. tailored support to innovative SMEs, attraction of young talent to Denmark).

The initiative introduced by Mr. BRINCKMANN was presented as "small and cost-effective" with a clear impact and marketing strategy that can be easily acknowledged also at political level.

Delegations welcomed the presentation and posed some questions in relation to linkages with other national (foreign office) bodies, the number of people and the nature of staff involved.

The Chair encouraged SFIC Members and Observers to present their national best practice examples at one of the future SFIC plenaries.

Following up on the decision made at the previous plenary meeting, to explore the possibility to establish a "compilation of best practice examples from SFIC plenary presentations", the Chair asked the DK delegation to write a one-page summary of the presentation. The SFIC Secretariat will provide a template for this.

4. SFIC's working methods and procedures

- Updates to the 2013-14 Work Programme - Introduction and overview of forthcoming meetings

The Chair recalled that the SFIC Work Programme 2013-2014 was adopted via written procedure on 4 March 2013. However, in order to reflect the subsequent Council conclusions from May 2013, the focus should be on those activities already set out in the Work Programme that were highlighted by the Council conclusions. These should be considered as main agenda items for meetings during 2013 and 2014. Moreover, the Chair indicated his intention to continuously update a provisional meetings table with tentative agenda points for the upcoming meetings as well as a set of calendar tables with milestones for the future months (similar to the current ERAC approach). Such overview should be understood as a "living document" and is meant to be updated regularly with the input from the different core groups and delegates before each plenary as well as with decisions taken in the plenary meetings. The new approach was widely welcomed by delegations, putting emphasis on the events where SFIC could participate and/or contribute with input.

The Chair concluded that SFIC will work on the basis of a living meetings table annexed to the Work Programme (similar to ERAC). An updated table will be submitted to each plenary under Standing Information Points with information on the next two plenary meetings and relevant events.

- Exchange of views based on potential scenarios

The Chair introduced his paper on future scenarios for SFIC as a basis for discussion for potential changes to the SFIC working methods and procedures, putting emphasis on a changing context marked by the Council conclusions from May 2013.

Ms. Maria-Cristina RUSSO (Commission), attending her first plenary meeting as the new Director for International Cooperation at DG Research and Innovation, was welcomed by the Chair. She re-confirmed the importance of the role of SFIC as outlined in the Commission Communication on international cooperation. Ms. RUSSO highlighted that the aim of reviewing the working methods and procedures is to make the work of SFIC more effective and to re-shift the balance of activity from the Task Force back to the plenary meetings. Ms. Russo also announced that the Commission will stop the reimbursements of travel costs for Task Force meetings as of 2014, to streamline the SFIC procedures with practices in other ERA-related groups. The Commission considers that SFIC has now reached a maturity level where the financial kick-off support should no longer be needed.

During the discussion, delegations supported the proposed principles (to be applied to any scenario, e.g. involve more actively Members and Observers, nomination of rapporteurs and correspondents, creation of ad hoc groups with a clear mandate and timeline, strengthening the interaction with the stakeholder community) as a way to enhance the impact of SFIC and make its work more efficient and effective. Some principles will have to be clarified and flashed out in some more detail, e.g. the role of correspondents. The scenarios proposed were the following:

- *Scenario 1 - Current scope:* Business (almost) as usual - An active Task Force preparing SFIC meetings and proposing initiatives and activities;
- *Scenario 2 - Steering scope:* A more active plenary having strategic debates with clear outcome and launching and steering initiatives;
- *Scenario 3 - Extended scope:* A SFIC with stronger links to the political agenda and further commitments by Member States.

SE, DK, PT and ES as well as the Commission supported scenario 2 as a good basis for SFIC's future work, with the creation of a Steering Board with a reduced number of people for the preparation of strategic debates at plenary meetings. AT and FI would prefer a combination of scenarios 1 and 2, with the Task Force/Steering Board following SFIC initiatives while, at the same time, preparing the debates for the plenary. Some delegations considered the idea of a SFIC Policy Officer under scenario 3 as "not feasible". DE considered the improvement of the linkages with Horizon 2020 and S&T agreements more important than any SFIC governance structure. CH referred to the involvement of Associated Countries. DE and FR expressed some concerns about a new revision of the Rules of Procedure.

The Chair concluded that most delegations accepted the new circumstances and the new context for SFIC, with support to the principles to be applied to any scenario and the willingness to have more prepared debates before plenary meetings. The Chair decided not to have new SFIC Rules of Procedure but to revise the current ones with any necessary changes. A revised version of the SFIC Rules of Procedure will be presented at the next plenary on 5 February 2014.

On a related note, the Commission confirmed that the next (and last following current procedures) Task Force meeting will take place on 9 December 2013.

5. Multi-annual roadmaps for international cooperation

- **Commission's presentation on process preparation**
- **Feedback from delegations**

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" while, 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".

Ms. RUSSO (Commission) informed delegations that until now the Commission has been focusing on the preparation of the Work Programmes 2014-2015. The work on the Roadmaps has just started and the 1st Progress Report on the implementation of the Commission's strategy for international cooperation (including the Multi-Annual Roadmaps) is expected for the first half of 2014.

Mr. Marnix SURGEON (Commission) presented an outline of the Multi-Annual Roadmaps and gave some details about the preparation of the Roadmaps, foreseeing very concise documents (2 to 5 pages) prepared for different countries and regions. The Commission put emphasis on the role of SFIC in contributing to section 5 'Synergies with Member States activities' of the template distributed.

Delegations welcomed Commission's information and posed questions with regard to the linkage of the Roadmaps to the Horizon 2020 Work Programmes, the countries/areas covered by the Roadmaps as well as the related calendar. The Commission informed that the work on the Roadmaps has gone hand-in-hand with the preparation of the 1st Work Programme for Horizon 2020 and the Roadmaps will help stir future Work Programme developments. Roadmaps will be prepared for R&I partner countries and regions of the EU. Moreover, Ms. RUSSO (Commission) suggested to launch a consultation of SFIC Members and Observers to contribute to the 'Synergies with Member States activities' section and proposed the 15 December 2013 as deadline for receiving input from delegations.

The Commission confirmed that it aims to circulate the draft Multi-Annual Roadmaps during January to have a fruitful discussion at the 5 February 2014 plenary meeting. SFIC delegates welcomed the suggestion for a consultation, but asked for some guiding questions and an indicative list of countries and regions to provide the right input. Some delegations also asked for a regular presentation on the implementation of the strategy for international STI cooperation in Horizon 2020.

The Chair concluded that the contribution to the roadmaps is an important task for SFIC in the coming months and announced the launch of the consultation to SFIC Members and Observers (with deadline on 15 December 2013) as an essential step for preparing the plenary debate on the Multi-Annual Roadmaps for international cooperation on 5 February 2014.

6. Common principles for international cooperation

– Presentation of scoping paper

The Chair recalled that the Council conclusions on international cooperation from May 2013, in its paragraph 13, recognise the importance of developing common principles in the field of international R&I cooperation, while in paragraph 22 the Council invites SFIC "to contribute to the development of common principles for the conduct of international cooperation in research and innovation". Following discussions at the Task Force on 17 September 2013, SE, DE and UK had worked on a scoping paper. Ms. Julia LEWIS (UK) presented the scoping paper on common principles to the SFIC plenary, highlighting the need to identify: (1) who the global players are, (2) which standards are used, and (3) gaps where SFIC and its Members and Observers can add value while avoiding duplication of efforts. Delegations recognised the scoping paper as a first important step on the common principles discussion.

The Commission will actively cooperate with the group working on this topic and stated its interest to also address some of the obstacles which hamper third country participation in the Framework Programme, and invited SFIC delegates to share their experience in this regard.

The Chair proposed to invite a representative from Science Europe as a member of the Global Research Council at either the February or May 2014 plenary to give a presentation on the work of Science Europe in the field of common principles.

Any comments on the scoping paper were agreed to be sent to the SFIC Secretariat by 19 November 2013.

The Chair also encouraged any SFIC Member and Observer to join the group of delegations working on the scoping paper (UK, DE, SE and Commission).

7. Presentation of 1st ERA progress report

– Presentation by the Commission

Ms. Fabienne GAUTIER (Commission) gave a presentation on the first ERA Progress Report, which for the first time provides comparable data on national policies for all Member States (and 3 Associated Countries) for the five ERA priorities. Next steps are to prepare the 2014 report which will assess the progress made compared to the baseline established by the 2013 report. The key conclusions of the report state that further advancing on national & EU research policy and performance will require commitment from national authorities, the Commission and stakeholder organisations. Delegations regretted that the report did not deal with international cooperation. The Commission reconfirmed that it is both mainstreamed in the 5 ERA priorities and remains an essential part of ERA while being also represented by the separate Commission Communication on international cooperation.

– **Discussion on SFIC's contribution to the process**

The Chair recalled the SFIC Chair's opinion submitted to ERAC, to which the main messages received from SFIC delegates were included. The Chair also proposed that, in order to have more visibility, the SFIC Chair's input to ERAC would be adopted as a formal and short SFIC opinion, which would then be formally transmitted to the Council and the Commission as well as to ERAC. After some reformulation of the "conclusion" section with the introduction of new wording referring to "towards the integration" of the "international cooperation monitoring mechanism", the SFIC plenary adopted the SFIC opinion on the first ERA Progress Report. The Commission expressed a scrutiny reservation, which was lifted on 20 November 2013.

The Chair recalled the discussions at the last plenary on 18 June 2013 about SFIC's role in contributing to the ERA monitoring process. He proposed that, instead of creating a specific core group monitoring international aspects of ERA, a more appropriate approach would be to appoint 1 or 2 volunteers to participate in the ERAC ad hoc working group on monitoring the ERA, embedding the international dimension to its work. Following the request from the Chair, the DE delegation volunteered to follow-up and liaise with the ERAC ad hoc working group on monitoring the ERA.

SFIC Secretariat will distribute the adopted SFIC opinion on the first ERA Progress Report.
DE delegation will follow-up and liaise with the ERAC ad hoc working group on monitoring the ERA.

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

BRAZIL: Discussion on workshop recommendations

The Chair recalled that the plenary was debriefed on 18 June on the results of the successful SFIC Brazil workshop that took place on 17 June 2013. SFIC agreed that the report from the workshop should be published on relevant websites.

Ms. Florence LELAIT (FR) gave a presentation on the workshop recommendations, including next steps on the way forward for the Brazil initiative. DE suggested that the Destination Europe initiative could also be suitable for Brazil. The Commission highlighted Expo in Milano (IT) in 2015 and the World Cup in 2014 as two major events where joint EU/MS/AC activities vis-à-vis or with Brazil could be explored.

The Chair concluded that the Brazil workshop report will be published on both the Consilium and the relevant Commission website.

The Brazil core group was mandated to work on a paper focusing on next steps to be presented to the next Task Force meeting on 9 December 2013 and to a forthcoming SFIC plenary.

RUSSIA

The Chair informed that the Task Force on 17 September 2013 agreed to propose to the plenary the set-up of a core group to start discussing the content of a potential Russia initiative. He noted the importance of the momentum due to the soon-to-be-launched EU-Russia Year of Science at the end of November. Mr. Alexander GRABLOWITZ (DE) presented an updated concept note prepared by DE on a potential SFIC initiative with Russia.

The Chair concluded that a core group, led by DE and with participation from FI, FR, PL, NO and the Commission, is set up with the mandate to prepare a concept paper for a potential SFIC initiative with Russia. Such paper will be presented at the 9 December 2013 Task Force meeting in view of a further discussion at a forthcoming plenary.

CHINA

The Chair recalled the update given at the 18 June plenary on the work carried out on the China initiative. Ms. Florence LELAIT (FR) presented four different options for further work, from an annual follow-up of EU-MS/AC STI cooperation with China or a joint workshop, to implementation through Horizon 2020 or joint calls. All options were discussed and the Chair expressed the importance of a SFIC decision on next steps.

The Chair asked the China core group, led by FR, to prepare a focus paper on developing the presented options with specific actions to be discussed at the Task Force on 9 December 2013 and at a forthcoming plenary. Other delegates are invited to join the core group for this task and, if so, they should contact the FR delegation directly.

INDIA: Commission debrief on first GSO meeting

Mr. Laurent BOCHEREAU (Commission) presented the main outcome of the first meeting of the Group of Senior Officials of the Indo-European partnership. The meeting took place in Brussels on 8 October 2013. The GSO meeting agreed on the Terms of Reference and also confirmed the three thematic groups on water, energy and health, calling for two extra groups on ICT and bio-economy to be established.

The SFIC plenary took note of the first GSO meeting with India. The Chair announced that there will be information points on India and the related activities at forthcoming meetings, when needed.

9. Standing information points

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

1. EU-Russia Year of Science
2. New agreement between Sweden and South-Africa
3. Short summary of the Eastern Partnership conference and declaration
4. EU-Africa HLPD meeting on 28-29 November 2013
5. Destination Europe event in San Francisco

The Chair also encouraged delegations to share information on their activities or agreements (as the new agreement between SE and South Africa) as Standing Information Points and informed delegations about his participation on the Eastern Partnership conference, where SFIC and its work were presented. Finally, the Chair informed delegations that he has been invited and accepted to participate in the Destination Europe event in San Francisco.

10. Any Other Business

The following AOB points were presented:

- ***USA initiative:*** the DE delegation announced the organisation of a workshop planned for the spring 2014 on marine and arctic research activities with the USA. The workshop would bring together participants from major EU and national initiatives with a clear international dimension.
- ***Next plenary meeting:*** the Chair informed that the next SFIC plenary will take place on Wednesday 5 February 2014.