

**SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL
RESEARCH COMMITTEE**
Strategic Forum for International
S&T Cooperation

Secretariat

CREST-SFIC 1351/10

NOTE

Subject : Summary conclusions of the 3rd meeting of the Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC), held in Brussels on 21 October 2009

The meeting was chaired by Mr. Volker RIEKE (DE).

The Forum drew the following conclusions:

1. Task Forces

a) Task Force 1: Information sharing

Mr. Gavin COSTIGAN (UK), Chair of this Task Force, presented the report of the Task Force 1. The Task Force had an in-depth discussion about what information should be shared and how to do it. The Task Force recommends the setting up of a joint secure IT tool in the form of an Internet "Sharepoint" (commercially available software). The added value of information sharing would depend critically in the work invested into analysing, synthesising and keeping up-to-date the shared information.

A subgroup could be set up for analysing the information gathered and for presenting synthesised information as well as recommendations to SFIC. DE offered to prepare a prototype of the “Sharepoint”.

Delegations expressed support to the findings of Task Force 1, whilst asking to avoid too heavy workload and build on, for instance, the work of the science counsellors. Several delegations pointed to issues of confidentiality, classification and language issues (each science counsellor currently writes reports in the national language of the Member State concerned). It was clarified that the information gathered is for SFIC itself to help delegations to improve their work.

The question of how to organise meetings, if any, in third countries was also raised. This should pragmatically build upon existing meetings of European counsellors in third countries, which are currently organised by the embassy of the EU Presidency, with the help of the Commission.

The Chair concluded that the mandate of the Task Force should be prolonged until end of 2009 to further develop the "Sharepoint" idea and asked the Task Force to prepare a practical example with a focus on India for the next meeting.

The Chair also asked delegations to check with their ministries the possible availability of human resources to support the work of SFIC, since the collection and analysis of information will be a major task in the future.

b) Task Force 2: Priority setting

Dr. Angeles RODRIGUEZ PENA (ES), Chair of this Task Force, presented a report of Task Force 2, which had evaluated a number of potential options on how to prioritize cooperation with third-country partners in terms of relevant selection criteria, such as a strategic thematic focus, taking also into account a "knowledge-triangle" approach.

As a result, the working method chosen by Task Force 2 was to evaluate India as a hypothetical pilot country and energy research as a hypothetical pilot topic.

Delegations welcomed the work of the Task Force and supported the hypothetical pilot cases "India" and "energy" suggested by the Task Force.

Regarding India, it was noted that pilots should build on a dialogue with India and a number of already existing building blocks for a successful cooperation - workshops, networks, meetings, cooperative research projects, institutional cooperation, transfer of knowledge and innovation - whilst others could be quickly created.

In the discussion, it was also suggested to consider a wider geographical scope. It was considered that lessons learned from cooperation with India will also be applicable to other BRIC countries. In addition, it was suggested to choose soon a pilot country among the industrialised partners and developing regions.

With regard to energy research as a pilot topic, the Task Force has come to the conclusion that the elaboration of a SFIC pilot case in this field requires further analysis. Delegations stressed that "energy" is high on the political agenda, e.g. through the international dimension of the SET Plan and the recently launched EU-US Energy Council. It was also noted that the SET Plan involves a certain complexity in the governance structure which needs to be clarified in the future.

It was generally acknowledged that work should build upon existing mechanisms and that cooperation with other relevant bodies such as OECD should be considered to avoid overlaps and to identify effective channels for multilateral RTD cooperation.

The Chair concluded that Task Force 2 should continue its work until the end of 2009 without excluding possible further extension. In particular, Task Force 2 was asked for the next SFIC meeting in December 2009, to:

- further refine the analysis on a pilot initiative with India, i.e. which concrete topics could be proposed to the Indian partners, and how to best get in contact with the Indian side.
- continue working on the hypothetical "energy" pilot initiative and how SFIC could develop effective links with the SET Plan

As additional pilot activity it was agreed to take the EU-LAC summit as a learning example how SFIC could contribute to and engage in similar international events. The political dialogue process with Africa was agreed to be possibly a relevant topic for 2010.

In view of the strategic level of SFIC's work, the Chair proposed, supported by various delegations, to prepare a short SFIC strategic framework document highlighting:

- the differentiated approach to international R&D cooperation with regard to the main three country groups (industrialized countries, BRIC/O5¹ countries and developing countries),
- the SFIC strategy to apply a step-by-step procedure starting from concrete pilot initiatives involving a variable geometry approach, and
- developing and beginning to implement at least 2 pilot initiatives in the course of 2010 with the pilot initiative on India being the example for BRIC/O5 countries.

The Chair will prepare a draft framework for the next SFIC meeting.

¹ "BRIC": Brazil, Russia, India, China.
"O5": Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa.

2. Networking of science counsellors

Following a briefing on the activities by the science counsellors in various third countries (Brazil, China, Japan and US), the Forum welcomed their active work and encouraged them to continue it. Several delegations pointed out that a "tool box" for activities for science counsellors could facilitate the development of activities, in line with the suggestions made for strengthening the cooperation with the respective third countries. Capitals should actively engage in a good flow of information in both directions and encourage cooperation with science counsellors.

The Chair invited delegations to brief science counsellors on the work of SFIC and encouraged their active involvement in the Forum's activities.

3. Platforms for dialogue

Mr. Alessandro DAMIANI (Cion) reported on existing bi-regional S&T dialogue platforms:

- Euro-Mediterranean Monitoring Committee for RTD Cooperation (MoCo),
- EU-AU Joint Expert Group 8 (Science, Information Society, Space),
- Steering Platform on Research for the Western Balkan Countries (WBC)
- ASEAN-EC S&T policy dialogue (senior officials level)

Mr. Thomas BRANDTNER (General Secretariat of the Council) presented information about European S&T Cooperation with Africa in the framework of the EU-AU 8th Partnership (Science, Information Society, Space). There was a general agreement on the potential interest of this partnership, whilst it was also acknowledged that a number of weaknesses existed, which would need to be addressed: problems of governance, resources, lack of a (virtual) "common pot", limited information exchange.

Delegations also underlined the importance to consider a stronger involvement of SFIC in the EU-AU 8th partnership during the Belgian Presidency (second half of 2010).

The Chair concluded that the possible involvement of SFIC in the effort for the EU-AU 8th Partnership, with regard to RTD cooperation, should be held in mind for a possible topic during the Belgian Presidency in the second half of 2010.

4. Exchange with other ERA-Governance Initiatives: State-of-play in Joint Programming (GPC) and Knowledge Transfer

Mr. Rolf ANNERBERG (SE), Chairman of GPC, informed the Committee about the state of work in GPC. The mandate of GPC focuses on major societal challenges (themes explored include climate change, water and food security, and ageing), and stresses cooperation with existing bodies such as EUROHORCS. GPC will address a limited number of themes, stressing cross-border funding and IPR. Some of these initiatives have a global dimension, and if SFIC would be willing to provide input, this would be welcome. Delegations welcomed the presentation of Mr. ANNERBERG and the work carried out by the GPC Group.

The Chair concluded that the final decision of the Council on GPC-topics must take place, before discussing the international dimension of the topics.

Mr. Klaus UCKEL (DE), Chair of CREST Sub Group on Knowledge Transfer (KT), gave a presentation of the activities of this Sub Group. Delegations welcomed the work of the KT Group, and emphasized its importance for the work of SFIC. Some delegations noted that the "Code of Practice for universities and other public research organisations"² and the practical guidelines with recommendations on IP / KT provisions for bi- or multi lateral agreements could provide useful guidance in the international S/T cooperation regarding aspects of the management of intellectual property in knowledge transfer activities.

² Official Journal of the European Union L 146, 5.6.2008, p. 19–24.

5. Reporting on SFIC

The Chair reported on the state of work, which was challenging because of the constraints on resources. The chair invited all delegations to actively involve themselves in the preparation of the first annual report of SFIC. The matter would be put on the agenda of the December SFIC.

6. Measures to increase visibility of SFIC

The Chair suggested drawing up a list of relevant organisations, to which presentations about SFIC could be made.

The Commission recalled several ongoing or planned activities which help to increase SFIC's visibility: the ERA-Conference that took place in October 2009; a possible Commission Conference in 2010; the Shanghai EXPO in 2010, where EU will have a Pavilion, and where Member States and the Commission should see what concrete initiatives could be taken to reinforce EU visibility. One week would be dedicated to science-related events.

The Chair asked for concrete proposals on this issue for the next meeting.

7. Information on major events

Dr. Angeles RODRIGUEZ PENA and Prof. Gonzalo LEÓN (incoming Spanish Presidency) reported on the planning concerning the preparation of the EU-Latin America (EU-LAC) Summit. The incoming Spanish Presidency envisages to involve SFIC prominently in the preparation of the research cooperation part of this summit, as follows:

- 25-26 February 2010, Buenos Aires: Senior Officials Meeting (SOM);
- 14 May 2010, Madrid: ministerial meeting of EU-LAC research ministers;
- 18 May 2010, Madrid: EU-LAC Summit.

With regard to Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, SFIC could also play an active advisory role, with the concept of MERA (Mediterranean Research Area), now well established and the roadmap being as follows:

- 16-17 November, Casablanca: Monitoring Committee (MOCO) and the establishment of MOCO under the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM);
- 3 and 4 March 2010, Alicante: Senior Officials Meeting (SOM), organised together with Slovenia and dedicated to RTD and higher education;
- The meeting of Research and Education Ministers of the Union for the Mediterranean is scheduled to take place on 26 and 27 April 2010 in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

The incoming Spanish Presidency proposed the following dates for SFIC meetings:

- 12 February 2010, Madrid: SFIC meeting also including EU-LAC and Mediterranean RTD cooperation;
- 28 April 2010, Brussels: SFIC meeting containing an agenda item on the two summits: EU-LAC and EuroMED;
- June 2010, no date yet fixed, Brussels.

The Chair concluded that SFIC should define to which kind of international events it wants to give input. He called for suggestions on how SFIC can get involved in the EU-LAC and Union for the Mediterranean activities during the Spanish Presidency in 2010.

8. Topics for next session

In addition to the follow-up work by the Task Forces, it was suggested to consider the yearly reporting of SFIC, as well as addressing the preparation of the Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Conference and the topics of EU-LAC and EU-AU cooperation.

9. Outlook for 2010

The Chair also highlighted the need for an operational and structured approach for activities of SFIC. A strategy paper on SFIC is needed to clarify the role of SFIC and describe the strategic role of the activities agreed so far.

In order to obtain stronger ministerial awareness and involvement, the SFIC intends to report back to the Spring Competitiveness Council.