

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

Secretariat

ERAC-SFIC 1355/10

NOTE

Subject : Summary conclusions of the 6th meeting of the Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC), held in Brussels on 28 April 2010

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

The Forum drew the following conclusions:

1. SFIC annual report

The Forum adopted the SFIC annual report, as set out in doc. CREST-SFIC 1354/10.

2. Task Force 2: status on preparation of pilot initiatives and progress on other activities

a) The "India Pilot Initiative"

The DK delegate (Mr. Are STRAUME) introduced the topic by presenting the progress made in the Task Force "priority setting"/India Group on implementing the India Pilot Initiative. A Concept Paper describing the objectives, principles and potential activities under the pilot initiative was circulated before the meeting.

SFIC endorsed the report of the Task Force/India Group, while stressing that in the course of the implementation of the India pilot initiative, the Task Force / India Group should continue to refine and clarify the focus and strategic objectives in cooperation with the Indian partners. The results of the fact finding mission of the India group in June should serve here as a basis.

The Task Force/India Group has been tasked to continue working on the implementation of the pilot activities, including looking into possibilities how to organise the policy dialogue with India with respect to its substance and to the level of representation.

The need to address the Indian partners formally had been recalled. In respect to possible high level events the Chair stressed the need to ensure close liaison with the Belgian Presidency notably also via the Belgian SFIC members.

b) The "Energy Pilot Initiative" and interaction with the SET-Plan/ EU-US Energy Council

Mr LIBERALI (CION DG Research, Co-Chair of the SET-PLAN Steering Group) gave a presentation on the state of play of the Strategic Energy Technology (SET) Plan, in terms of the governance of the SET Plan as well as the activities under way, in particular its international dimension. He recalled the joint meetings between SFIC and the SET-PLAN Steering Group in March 2010 and the possibility of involving SFIC in the development of the international cooperation strategy under the SET-PLAN. He informed the Forum that a broad discussion with relevant stakeholders had been under way as regards the international dimension of the SET-Plan, led by the Spanish and the incoming Belgian Presidencies. To this end, a Presidency conference will be organised on 3/4 June in Madrid to start the discussions about the development of an international cooperation strategy of the SET-PLAN. The discussion between June and November will culminate in a Presidency conference in November this year which will be entirely devoted to international cooperation.

SFIC reconfirmed that "energy" is a core theme the Forum needs to work on due to its importance as a global challenge. It was noted that it would be important for the SET-PLAN to know what activities, priorities and instruments for international cooperation exist at Member States' level. SFIC could help to gather this information which would help to develop the international dimension of the SET-PLAN. The Task Force has been requested to develop

this pilot initiative further, especially with regard to a SFIC role beyond the discussed support to information collection on international S&T cooperation activities in the field of energy.

c) Approaching the US: Presentation of US questionnaire by individual SFIC Members

The questionnaire was circulated to the delegations. The deadline to send replies has been extended to 7 May 2010. The ES Presidency reminded delegations that information gathered through the questionnaire is important for future discussions in SFIC on the US.

d) Other activities of the Task Force

The activities of the Task Force in relation to China were presented by Mr. M. Horvat (AT expert). The Forum endorsed the approach as suggested by the Task Force. In particular delegations supported the proposed step-by-step approach ("phasing-in of measures") with a view to establishing a body of evidence on the Chinese innovation system first. The Task Force was asked to continue with its work.

The ES Presidency suggested applying this approach also to Brazil. The Task Force was invited to look into this proposal.

3. Follow-up to Task Force 1 recommendations (Information sharing and human resources)

The Chair informed the Forum that the issue regarding the availability of resources for the central management of the Sharepoint tool (recommendation 3 of the report of TF1) had not been finally solved yet. The Chair will consider, therefore, how this issue could be brought to the attention of Ministers.

Until a final decision has been taken, the International Bureau of the BMBF will offer support in handling the technical part of the Sharepoint and the Commission offered to initially handle the information. The Commission will prepare a non-paper for SFIC to this effect.

4. Interface with international for a: OECD Initiative "New approaches and governance mechanisms for multilateral cooperation in science, technology and innovation to address global challenges"

Mr. Per KOCH (Norway), chair of the steering group, presented the above OECD initiative. SFIC welcomed the presentation of the project and stressed its importance for the Forum's work. SFIC will stay in close contact with the project. Delegations expressed interest in having another presentation when results of this initiative are available.

5. Joint Programming

The Spanish Presidency presented the state of play of the Joint Programming Initiative, in particular as regards the selection of new themes and the work on the voluntary guidelines for framework conditions in support of the implementation of JPIs.

The Forum acknowledged the fact that, given the global societal challenges tackled by the GPC, third countries might be interested in linking into the process.

6. ERA indicators

The Commission gave a presentation on the state of play in the development of core ERA indicators. As regards the international dimension of the ERA, the main question is which variables would be most relevant as regards the development of a synthetic indicator based on co-publications and adding other dimensions of internationalisation, such as co-patenting, mobility and funding cooperation.

During the debate, delegations in particular underlined the need for an indicator for innovation as well as for composite indicators related to international cooperation.

7. Major events

a) Information by acting and incoming Presidencies

The Spanish Presidency informed the Forum that the EU-LAC S&T Ministerial Conference will take place in Buenos Aires on 14 May. A Joint EU-LAC Initiative for Research and Innovation will be discussed by the S&T Ministerial Conference for endorsement at the EU-LAC Summit on 18 May in Madrid.

The Forum was also informed that the 2nd Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Higher Education, Research and Innovation, which was to be held in Brdo, Slovenia, on 25 and 26 April, had been postponed due to the air traffic disruptions caused by the Icelandic volcano ash cloud.

The incoming Belgian Presidency confirmed that it would continue to lend support to SFIC across SFIC's entire work programme. So far, Belgium foresees an active participation of SFIC in the forthcoming EU-AU summit. The Belgium delegate informed the Forum of the tentative dates that have been scheduled for SFIC meetings.¹

b) Information on joint S&T meetings with India (Commission, DE)

The Commission informed the Forum that during the joint S&T meeting with India, held in March 2010, the following topics of mutual interest for potential cooperation were mentioned: water, affordable health care and renewable energy. Indian representatives also expressed interest in sharing the information on innovation between the EU/Member States and India. SFIC noted that The Joint S&T Committee between India and the Commission took place in parallel with the India-German Joint S&T Committee which offered the opportunity to present a strong and coordinated EU-DE position vis-à-vis India.

¹ The dates presently envisaged are 17 September and 3 December 2010.

c) Strategy-Workshop in September; planning of meetings

The Chair informed the Forum of his plans to organise a joint informal strategy workshop at Directors level to take stock of the work done so far by SFIC and to look into ways how to proceed with the work in the future. Thematic proposals for this workshop coming from the delegations are welcome and should be communicated to the SFIC Chair.

8. Procedural issues

a) Observers

The Forum agreed that in the event SFIC addresses issues requiring an EU position, e.g. in international summits or other events where internal EU rules apply, a discussion can be held between the EU Member States and the Commission only (i.e. SFIC Members only), if one SFIC Member signals in advance such need. This is in line with the SFIC rules of procedure and with the current practice in CREST.

In such cases the Chair should identify in advance, in consultation with the parties concerned (Presidency, Commission), which agenda items would be for SFIC Members only, and indicate this in the provisional agenda. The Chair will inform the observers in advance of such plans.

b) Vice-chair

The Forum supported the proposal of the Chair that in the event he is not in the position to attend a SFIC meeting, as an intermediate solution the Chairmanship would be ensured by the Presidency.

A number of delegations stressed that it would be useful to discuss, in one of the future meetings, the need of electing a Vice-Chair of SFIC as well as his possible tasks and responsibilities. The Chair offered to prepare a proposal on how to address this issue in the future, respecting the current ERA governance discussion.

9. Bi-regional summits: information / update

a) EU-LAC (see point 7(a))

It was stressed that in the future a procedure should be put in place as regards SFIC's involvement in the preparation phase of such summits, in particular with a view to providing a timely input. It was suggested that Task Force 2 should develop a proposal how SFIC will contribute to the implementation of the agreed Joint Research Initiative.

b) EU-Africa

The Commission reported on the proposed S&T policy dialogue at senior officials level which would take place once a year and would be co-chaired by the EU and the African Union. A draft concept note for the establishment of a Joint Africa-EU High Level S&T Policy Dialogue Platform has been circulated to SFIC delegations before the meeting by the Commission. The policy dialogue could be launched at the November EU-Africa summit.

Furthermore, The Belgian Presidency will liaise with Task Force 2 during its next meeting on 23 June in order to discuss options for SFIC's involvement in the preparations and implementation of the forthcoming EU-AU summit.

c) Union for the Mediterranean

(see point 7(a))

10. Any Other Business

German delegation proposed that the Commission should report during the next SFIC meeting about the FP 7 work programme 2011 on international S&T cooperation as well as about preliminary results of the ongoing mid term review of the international S&T activities of FP7.