

EUROPEAN UNION

Brussels, 30 November 2011

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

Secretariat

ERAC-SFIC 1357/11

NOTE

Subject : Summary conclusions of the 11th meeting of the Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC), held in Brussels on 26 October 2011

The meeting was chaired by Ms Riitta MUSTONEN (FI).

The Forum drew the following conclusions:

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted as set out in document CM 4902/1/11. The Chair recalled that the summary conclusions of the SFIC meeting of 20 June 2011 had been approved by written procedure as set out in doc. 1355/11.

2. SFIC opinion on the ERA Framework

The Chair recalled the Council conclusions of 31 May 2011, in which SFIC was called to provide input to the development of a proposal on the ERA Framework and reminded delegations on the procedure followed for the completion of the SFIC opinion (i.e. ERA Framework Table, brainstorming workshop with stakeholders, written comments from delegations, etc).

The Chair presented the input from the Task Force by stressing that clear lines have been followed to develop the SFIC opinion concerning length, style, organisation of the document and clear message while embedding the concept of European Added-Value. The Chair also introduced the concept of "window of opportunities for SFIC", which was shown in a diagram/picture prepared by the Chair and the SFIC Secretariat in order to illustrate how challenges in the external dimension of ERA are related to each other and what is the context in which SFIC develops its role. The Forum welcomed this approach.

During the plenary discussion on the fine-tuning of the SFIC opinion, delegations put forward a number of issues, including the following:

- The need of a shorter paper focusing on recommendations and with a clear political message;
- The implementation of recommendations that should be aligned with national priorities;
- The importance of the European Added-Value concept;
- The role of SFIC as strategy developer;
- The strengthening of linkages with other ERA Groups, in particular GPC and the SGHRM;
- The implementation of the proposed strategy in the context of the Knowledge Triangle.

The Forum agreed on the fact that the SFIC opinion on the ERA Framework will be approved by written procedure following oral comments received during the plenary and written comments received until Friday 28 October (cob). After approval, the document will be sent to ERAC as input for the ERAC opinion on the ERA Framework¹.

3. SFIC working methods and structures

- **Presentation of the reflection paper on "Working methods and structures" and information on potential update of the SFIC Rules of Procedure**

Ms. Tiina VIHMA-PUROVAARA (member of the FI delegation and the 'Priority Setting' Task Force) presented a reflection paper on "SFIC working methods and structures" as discussed at Task Force level. The possibility of updating the current Rules of Procedure on the basis of the reflection paper presented was introduced, highlighting the positive aspects of a potential update. There were no objections from delegations to the proposed update, therefore the Forum agreed to proceed with the update of the SFIC Rules of Procedure. The Chair, jointly with the SFIC Secretariat, will prepare a first draft of the new Rules of Procedure to be discussed first at Task Force level and, later on, at plenary level for discussion and future adoption.

- **Information on forthcoming strategic workshop**

The Chair informed the Forum about the plans for the next SFIC Strategic Workshop, to take place in Finland during the 2012 spring season. SFIC members and observers were invited to the strategic workshop by the Chair. The Forum agreed on the creation of an informal working group, including FI, the Council Secretariat and the Commission for the preparation of the event, mainly dealing with the issues to be discussed (i.e. potential SFIC strategy, priority setting and common methodology). FR and DE expressed their interest in joining the organisation of the event. Input from other Members is welcomed.

¹ Delegations were also informed about the fact that previous draft versions of the SFIC opinion have been already shared informally with the ERAC Vice-Chair.

4. Progress of Pilot Initiatives

a) China

- Presentation of the draft China Roadmap

Ms. Florence LELAIT (FR) presented the draft SFIC roadmap for actions under the China pilot initiative, highlighting its integrated approach and the importance of European Added-Value and progress on mobility and framework conditions during its implementation. The Forum welcomed all the work done. The Chair invited the Task Force (in particular the China core group) to continue working on this basis and to take forward the roadmap based on comments received during the discussion. The Chair also stressed her willingness to build links with the JPI "Urban Europe - Global Urban Challenges, Joint European Solutions". The JPI has indeed already taken first exploratory steps towards China.

DE briefly presented their China-European joint funding initiative (Sino-EU-JFI) as an initiative to set up a joint funding scheme in science, technology and innovation between China and European Member States. This initiative is based on the previous ERANET Co-REACH. SFIC members and observers were encouraged to contribute to this initiative. It was recognised that such initiatives and the development of a SFIC roadmap need to be aligned. In this context, the Chair welcomed the possibility of maintaining informal contacts with funding agencies devoted to China.

- Presentation of the China workshop II programme

Ms. Florence LELAIT (FR) also presented the draft China workshop II programme, to take place on 15 December 2011, back-to-back with the next SFIC plenary meeting on 16 December. The Forum approved the workshop programme and agreed for the China workshop II to focus on the whole spectrum of Framework Conditions (IPR, standards, public procurement, reciprocity and joint cooperation). The Chair invited the Task Force and its core group to finalise the workshop preparations.

Due to the importance of the mobility issue, the Forum decided to organise another workshop specifically on the topic during next year. Such workshop could be broader and include the perspective of mobility not only *vis à vis* China but also towards other countries (i.e. Russia, Brazil).

b) USA

- Endorsement of concluding statements from US workshop

The Chair presented the concluding document emerging from the SFIC US workshop held on 18 and 19 October at Germany's Permanent Representation. Such document can be used as SFIC input for the Conference under the auspices of the PL Presidency on transatlantic collaboration in Washington on 12 December 2011. The Forum agreed to consider the document as a "workshop summary", which will be used for the Washington event. The Task Force was invited to build on this document for the preparation of future work under the USA initiative. The TF was mandated to draft a short document with the main recommendations for SFIC.

- Information from Polish Presidency on the December Washington event

Ms. Magdalena BEM-ANDRZEJEWSKA (PL) presented information on the 12 December Washington conference: "Science and Technology Landscape in a Changing World - Enhancing US Collaboration with the EU and its Member States". The event will consist of a 1-day conference with around 100 to 150 participants.

The list of speakers is meant to be finalised by the beginning of November, but it will include Minister Kudrycka (PL) and high level officials from the US, Member States and the European Commission (e.g. Robert-Jan Smits -Commission- has been invited to attend the event as a speaker and would possibly participate).

- Presentation of the "Raising the attractiveness of Europe initiative" and Boston event

Ms. Sigi GRUBER (Commission) presented the idea of a "Raising the attractiveness of Europe initiative" in line with commitment 30 of the Innovation Union. To kick-off the initiative, the Commission will organise a high-level conference on 20 January 2012 in

Boston back-to-back with the MIT/ Boston Career Fair (on January 21-23). The objective is to give a clear message to the US S&T community that Europe can offer attractive possibilities for research and career development. Commissioner Geoghegan-Quinn and Professor Dingwell (Secretary General of the ERC) have announced their attendance. Members States were invited to join into this initiative and to consider it part of the SFIC USA pilot initiative.

c) **India**

- **Draft EU/MS-India Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda**

Ms. Sigi GRUBER (Commission) presented the draft Strategic Agenda for Research and Innovation Agenda (SA) for India as well as the envisaged next steps included in the document. The document so far reflects only the European point of view and needs to be extended to take into account also the Indian position. The short term goal is to finalise the SA by May 2012, before the DK Presidency Associated Conference planned on 31 May - 1 June 2012 with high level representatives (DK and Indian Ministers as well as Commissioner Geoghegan-Quinn among others). The Forum welcomed and endorsed the work carried out so far. However, it is worth noting the Forum did not endorse the document and its content as such. It was stressed that the papers do not necessarily reflect the views of MS which did not participate in the work of the India technical group. The India technical group was invited to continue its work, discuss the documents with the India side to incorporate the Indian perspective and revise and improve the document accordingly.

5. Information points

- **Information on EU-ASEAN Year and presentation of the related DE activities**

Ms. Sigi GRUBER (Commission) briefly presented the engagement of the Commission towards the EU-ASEAN year of Science through a series of planned actions, notably including a big Innovation Conference in Brunei in 2012. From the Commission side, DG RTD and DG DEVCO are leading the work.

The DE delegation (Mr. Gerold HEINRICH) also gave an introduction on Germany's contribution to the EU-ASEAN Year, which builds on ongoing activities but increases their impact and visibility by earmarking them under a joint umbrella. FR also mentioned a variety of actions (workshops, science-related conferences and events such as *La Fête de la Science* in France, etc.) that could contribute to the EU-ASEAN Year. SFIC members were invited to follow the example and coordinate their initiatives with the ASEAN region under the umbrella of the Year.

- **Information on EU-Mediterranean Conference**

Ms. Sigi GRUBER (Commission) informed about the EU-Mediterranean Conference taking place in Barcelona in spring 2012 (around April-May, date tbc). The Commission encouraged Member States to propose speakers and information about successful cooperation programmes with Southern Mediterranean countries.

6. Any Other Business

The European Commission informed about the upcoming events as well as some additional information points:

- Joint Steering Committees with: USA (4 November), Chile (8 November), Mexico (17 and 18 November), Brazil (21-22 November), Tunisia (end of November) and South Africa (1st week of December 2011);
- SOM on global infrastructures in South Africa (9 and 10 November);
- The first EU-Africa SOM meeting took place in Addis Ababa on 10 and 11 October.
- On 11 October 2011, Moldova signed an Association Agreement to become Associated Country to the Framework Programme 7.

The Chair announced the date for the next plenary meeting: **16 December 2011**. Plenary dates for the first half of 2012 are still under consideration.