

EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA
COMMITTEE

Strategic Forum for International
S&T Cooperation

Secretariat

ERAC-SFIC 1351/12

NOTE

Subject : Summary conclusions of the 12th meeting of the Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC), held in Brussels on 16 December 2011

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

Following the signing of the Accession Treaty of Croatia on 9 December 2011, the Chair congratulated the Croatian delegate to SFIC, Ms. Kristina GERBER SERTIĆ, and welcomed her to SFIC, wishing Croatia a constructive and successful participation in the work of the Forum.

The Forum drew the following conclusions:

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted as set out in document CM 5746/1/11. The Commission pointed out their intention to inform about the EU-LAC SOM under AOB.

The Chair recalled that the summary conclusions of the SFIC meeting of 26 October 2011 had been approved by written procedure as set out in doc. 1357/11. The Chair also informed delegates that the SFIC opinion on the ERA Framework (set out in document 1356/11) was approved by written procedure on 21 November 2011.

2. Information on priorities and main events under the upcoming Danish Presidency

- Presentation by DK

Mr. Are STRAUME (DK) briefly introduced the priorities of the Danish Presidency and their main envisaged milestones, including Horizon 2020, EIT and Euratom. All this will be dealt with in a political context influenced by the new Multi-Annual Financial Framework (MFF), EU2020 and Innovation Union, the European Growth Policy and the ERA Framework.

Mr. STRAUME announced that, although there is no specific event in the context of SFIC, all conferences organised under the Danish Presidency have a strong international component.

The stakeholders' event on the India Strategic Agenda is labelled as DK Presidency Associated Conference and it is planned on 31 May - 1 June 2012 with high level participants (DK and Indian Ministers, Commission representatives as well as other high-level representatives).

3. The international dimension of Horizon 2020 and Commission's 2012 planning

Mr. Laurent BOCHEREAU (Commission) presented the international dimension of the Horizon 2020 package, adopted by the Commission on 30 November. He stressed the openness of Horizon 2020 to international cooperation and its mainstreamed approach. The package proposes geographical differentiation between: (1) neighbourhood and enlargement countries; (2) industrialised and emerging economies; and (3) developing countries (regional ties). It also includes clear criteria for association. The list of countries eligible for automatic funding will be set out in the future work programmes. More specifically, the new proposal includes an article on joint calls with third countries or international organisations; it focuses on excellence in the context of mobility and ERC grants and also includes support and coordination actions (INCO-Nets, Bilat projects, ERA-Nets...) within the inclusive, innovative and secure societal challenge.

The Commission also presented its objectives and timelines for the future "Communication on enhancing and focusing international cooperation in Research and Innovation" (expected in September 2012). The Communication will (1) explain the international dimension of Horizon 2020; (2) build on and complete the ERA Framework; and (3) ensure coherence with EU external policies and programmes. The Commission was open to share the first outline with SFIC and build on the SFIC discussions on the development of the European Strategy for International STI Cooperation (or SFIC Strategy for the External Dimension of ERA). SFIC will be a sounding board for the Commission to hear Member States' opinions during the drafting process.

The Commission confirmed the announced timing for the ERA Framework and recalled the closing event of the public consultation on 30 January, to which the SFIC Chair has been invited. The future proposal on the ERA Framework is expected to include a significant international dimension component.

4. Forthcoming strategic workshop

- Presentation of concept paper

Ms. Tiina VIHMA-PUROVAARA (FI) announced that next SFIC Strategic Workshop will take place on 10 and 11 May in Helsinki, Finland. Delegations welcomed the Chair's proposal and agreed on the objective of such workshop: priority setting and prioritisation of SFIC activities and input for the formulation of a European Strategy for International STI cooperation. The strategic workshop will have the specific purposes of (1) defining the added-value of joint European international cooperation; (2) articulate the vision of SFIC and find the main focus areas of SFIC work through the formulation of the aforesaid Strategy; (3) identify a possible thematic approach (societal challenges) to several selected countries; and (4) identify the instruments to implement the Strategy.

The Chair welcomed both SFIC Members and Observers to Helsinki in May.

5. Strategic discussion on information sharing

- Exchange of views

The Chair recalled the importance of information sharing as stated in the SFIC mandate: "*systematically sharing and structuring information on the S&T cooperation activities and objectives (whether ongoing or planned) of the various partners*"¹ as well as the work done by Task Force I - Information sharing during 2009 and early 2010². The Chair emphasised the need of a strategic discussion on information sharing, after nearly 3 years of SFIC existence, to streamline procedures and make its processes less burdensome and more efficient and effective for everyone. Delegations expressed their willingness to use the SharePoint system; however, it should be restructured to make it simpler and more accessible, with a more user-friendly approach. DE, SFIC Secretariat and the Commission are working on this. Members and Observers also highlighted the importance of having well-structured information (bringing added-value, not being a mere collection of information) and making linkages with the existing networks. Information sharing and the SharePoint should focus on priority countries for SFIC. PL called for a guide for Members and Observers on the use of the SharePoint while DE mentioned the need of a SFIC Information Officer as already discussed in past plenary meetings.

Concerning the specific issue of the Science Counsellors (or equivalents), it was highlighted that SFIC Members should take responsibility for conveying information on SFIC activities to their Science Counsellors (or equivalents) and encourage them to work with their peers overseas and other national representatives. Dissemination of information was acknowledged as difficult, mainly due to the different set up of various Ministries and Embassies and their related Science Counsellors. The Commission encouraged SFIC Members to pool the existing network of Science Counsellors from the European Commission and Member States together. They also suggested that Science Counsellors could be used more actively for information collection and processing.

¹ Council conclusions of 2 December 2008 concerning a European partnership for international scientific and technological cooperation (doc 16763/08).

² Final Report of Task Force I - Information sharing (presented at SFIC plenary on 12 February 2010).

The Task Force was mandated to elaborate a 1-page paper on "Information Sharing guidelines", focused on "how" to share information amongst SFIC Members and Observers.

6. SFIC Rules of Procedure

- Exchange of views

Delegations welcomed the draft SFIC Rules of Procedure prepared by the SFIC Secretariat and the Task Force. Some minor modifications were proposed, specifically concerning the number of Task Force meetings (to take place "when necessary") and the Vice-Chair (the Forum agreed that the Vice-Chair should not be from the same country the Chair is). A revised version of the SFIC Rules of Procedure, including the aforesaid modifications, will be prepared for adoption at the next SFIC plenary on 9 March 2012.

7. Progress of Pilot Initiatives

7.1 China

- Feedback from the China workshop II

Sven REMOE (NO) gave feedback on the workshop that took place on 15 December and highlighted its success and achievements. The workshop was a clear example of the usefulness of "going there together", mainly referring to companies/SMEs and countries in their relations with China. There is a great added-value of joint cooperation against companies/SMEs/countries going on their own. It was also pointed out that, when initiating cooperation with China, linking the research and innovation side to industry and trade objectives is essential. Other important remarks Mr. REMOE stressed are (1) China is increasingly providing new regulatory framework conditions, however, these are not well-implemented (mainly in the areas of IP and procurement) and there is need for more education and knowledge on the Chinese side; and (2) China is still depending on foreign technology and innovation practices (and they are keen to receive foreign support on these aspects). A workshop report is under preparation and will be circulated when finalised. The Commission also highlighted the success of the workshop and encouraged SFIC to link its work to that of the Knowledge Transfer group, mainly concerning IPR issues.

- **Exchange of views on China roadmap and agreement on next steps**

Ms. Florence LELAIT (FR) presented the latest version of the SFIC China roadmap for actions, based on input from the Task Force and on an update concerning calendar dates and fine-tuning of some content. Ms. LELAIT presented the roadmap architecture, including a thematic scope (urbanisation -smart cities-, energy, food security, health & ageing, green technologies) and 5 specific axes with particular objectives and tools (What? Who? For what? When?): scale and instruments, mobility, framework conditions, intelligence and visibility. The Forum agreed to take into account input from all Members and Observers to complement the work already done by the China core group and set the deadline for receiving comments from SFIC Members and Observers on Friday 13 January 2012. These should be submitted to the SFIC Secretariat.

Next steps for the Forum are the definition of priority themes (to be prepared by the Task Force), the organisation of a meeting with national funding agencies (DE announced the delay of the SINO-EU-JFI workshop, for it to be aligned with SFIC work), a workshop on mobility and the adoption of the China roadmap as a "living document" in the next SFIC plenary meeting.

On another note, NO informed the Forum about the publication by MOST of the Chinese 5-Years-Plan as well as a specific 5-year plan for international S&T cooperation. An official English translation is now expected.

7.2 USA

- **Feedback from 12th December Washington event**

PL introduced the Washington event and, thereafter, the Chair invited Mr. Are STRAUME (DK), Ms. Ana NEVES (PT, Task Force Chair) and Ms. Sigi GRUBER (Commission) to present their views and impressions from the event. The conference reconfirmed the already strong transatlantic relationship, stressing that the EU/MS-US cooperation builds on strong links, rich experiences and well established relations. EU and US enjoy an impressive number of common initiatives (e.g. TEC, Energy Council). However, even though there are numerous platforms for collaboration, some challenges

still remain to be tackled, mainly in the economic, environmental and social fields. Mr. STRAUME stressed that these complex challenges call for open minded talent and creative solutions - especially during “interesting budget times”. Based on the conference and the interventions, a joint vision shared by EU/MS and the US emerged with:

- A need of a global market of scientists, based on a pool of researchers with global experience;
- A need of global partnerships between the US, the EU and its Member States in order to effectively tackling existing and future challenges;
- A need of global S&T programs with shared peer-reviewing systems and ethical principles;
- A need to have the shared global responsibility of welcoming the emerging science nations, in order to build a global science community based on true partnerships.

The work SFIC is currently doing in Europe as well as the one carried out by the Science Counsellors of the Member States and the EU in Washington is meant to accompany this and contribute to keep up the momentum and to create a new research and innovation ecosystem across the Atlantic. The Forum welcomed the feedback from the Washington event and endorsed this commitment as a true opportunity to strengthen the collaboration between the US, the EU and its Member States.

- **Endorsement of next steps**

FI presented a proposal for the next steps as regards the USA pilot initiative. The focus should be on developing a joint roadmap with a thematic and pragmatic approach towards enhanced STI cooperation with the USA. Such roadmap should gather all topics and themes together (e.g. health, energy, biotechnology, women) with its implementation being monitored at EU and MS level. At the same time, US research funding agencies should be approached as well as industry and SMEs, following an attractiveness campaign and professional research marketing strategies.

The Chair invited the Forum to build on the discussions and continue the work under the USA initiative by mandating the Task Force to draft a roadmap on how to develop an ambitious EU/MS-USA joint Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda.

The Commission also reminded delegates about the awareness raising campaign launched for 2012-13 and the "Destination Europe" High-Level Conference (20 January 2012) in Cambridge, Massachusetts (Boston event) and the MIT Career Fair (21-23 January 2012).

7.3 India

- Feedback from EU-India S&T Cooperation days event in Vienna and next steps

The Commission reported back from the EU-India S&T Cooperation days in Vienna and informed that AT is preparing written conclusions. A videoconference with the Indian counterparts from the Department of Science and Technology (DST) is planned for January 2012. SFIC Members and Observers were encouraged to attend this conference themselves or send their Science Counsellors based in Brussels. The consultation of the Strategic Agenda now needs to be widened to cover different stakeholders. SFIC was invited to engage with those national representatives who attended the Delhi meeting last year. The India core group is organising a meeting with experts on 15-16 February and nominations for experts were welcome. SFIC was also invited to express their opinion on the continuation of the NEW INDIGO project.

8. Good practices for internationalisation of SMEs research & innovation

The Chair recalled the importance of building bridges between different areas and policy domains to mainstream research and innovation practices, mainly by strengthening the linkages between science and industry in order to bring ideas into the market and foster the competitiveness of European companies.

Ms. Almudena CARRERO (ES) presented the Spanish national framework and its concrete measures for supporting the internationalisation of SMEs, based on Spain's National Strategy for Innovation and the overall objective of making full use of the knowledge potential from Spanish SMEs. Through the *Internacionaliza* programme, governmental support allows SME to exploit their research results internationally, which is accompanied by the supporting role of specialised Technology and Innovation offices around the world (CDTIs).

Following the presentation from ES, the Chair also informed the Forum about the DG Enterprise Communication on "Small Business, Big World - A new partnership to help SMEs seize global opportunities" which opens a new window of opportunity for SFIC in this respect. The Forum agreed to invite the DG Enterprise Deputy-Director General and SMEs Envoy, Mr. Daniel Calleja Crespo, to the next SFIC plenary on 9 March 2012. He will present the Commission Communication and is meant to engage on a dialogue with SFIC to create links between science, innovation and industry, building on the idea of the European Science House already discussed in SFIC under the China initiative. The SFIC Secretariat was requested to distribute the aforesaid Commission Communication to all SFIC delegates.

9. AOB

- **Debriefing from the 1st Senior Official Meeting EU-Africa on Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Policy**

Ms. Ana NEVES (PT, European co-Chair of P8) debriefed SFIC Members and Observers about the EU-Africa SOM meeting that took place in Addis Ababa on 10-11 October 2011 following the decision made at the Tripoli Summit of 2010 within P8. Even though there was some imbalance in participation (31 African countries and 14 EU Member States), the meeting was an occasion of very active and relevant engagement of all the participants and turned out to be an important milestone in the EU-Africa STI dialogue. The related Terms of Reference were adopted. The SOM will be co-chaired by the African Member State holding the chairmanship of AMCOST and, from the EU side, by the Commission. Due to non-equality at level of chairmanship (AMCOST versus European Commission) that was raised by several EU Member States (previously and during the meeting), a solution was found through the setting-up of a bureau which will support the SOM Chair.

PT underlined the high level of the nominated African Senior Officials, their full engagement in STI and in influencing their governments to increase R&D expenditures to 1% of GDP. On the other hand, PT highlighted that several African countries regretted that STI is still not a priority on African governmental agendas, and Europe should help to point out how STI are pillars for the structural development of both

economies and societies. Among other things, a working group was set up to discuss new funding sources to support the P8 projects, whose results should be revealed and discussed in the next SOM.

The next SOM will take place in October-November in Europe. Member States were encouraged to actively participate in EU-Africa activities. ER asked for the potential articulation between the P8, the S&T SOM and the INCO-projects CAAST-Net and ERAFRICA.

- **EU-LAC**

The Commission reported on the outcome of the EU-LAC SOM meeting. The EU-LAC SOM adopted the implementation roadmap prepared on the basis of the Madrid Summit Action Plan and agreed on its working modalities. The SOM established 4 working groups, co-led by one country from each region to enhance bi-regional cooperation by focussing initially on the following pilot activities. The chosen themes are bioeconomy, biodiversity and climate change, ICT for meeting societal needs and energy. A working group on cross-cutting issues will explore modalities for combining funding from different sources and analyse best practices in cooperation.

The next EU-LAC summit has been postponed to the beginning of 2013. However, the next EU-LAC SOM meeting is scheduled for 20-21 March 2012 in Concepción, Chile and an "Innovation workshop" is planned for 19 March 2012. Member States were encouraged to actively participate in EU-LAC activities.

- The Commission also recalled the invitation to SFIC to nominate speakers and report about successful and related cooperation programmes in the context of the organisation of the EU-Mediterranean conference to be hosted in Barcelona (Spain) in April 2012.

The Chair announced the date for the next plenary meeting: **9 March 2012**.