

EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA
COMMITTEE

Strategic Forum for International
S&T Cooperation

Secretariat

ERAC-SFIC 1355/13

NOTE

Subject : Summary conclusions of the 18th meeting of the Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC), held in Brussels on 18 June 2013

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

The Forum drew the following conclusions:

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda (CM 3144/13) was adopted.

The Chair recalled that the summary conclusions of the SFIC meeting of 19 March 2013 were approved by written procedure as set out in doc. 1353/13.

2. 4th SFIC Annual Report

- Presentation of draft report

The Chair informed delegations that the first draft version of the 4th Annual Report was prepared by FI and the SFIC Secretariat and was discussed at the Task Force meeting on 24 April 2013. Following comments from delegations, a draft final report was prepared in view of the plenary of 18 June.

FR, DE and SE had some comments on the Annual Report. The comments were discussed in the plenary and agreements were found to incorporate such comments in the final version of the report.

The Chair concluded that an updated version of the report will be distributed to delegations and adopted via a quick written procedure.

3. Election of the SFIC Chair

The Chair outlined the specific procedure for the election of the SFIC Chair, taking into account articles 2 and 8 of the SFIC Rules of Procedure, as indicated in the e-mail sent to all delegations by the SFIC Secretariat prior to the meeting. After describing the procedure, the Chair indicated that two candidacies had been received, those of Ana Cristina NEVES (PT) and Dan ANDRÉE (SE). Before the vote, the two candidates had the possibility to make an oral intervention and delegations asked the two candidates' views on issues such as SFIC's operation, concrete actions to involve and engage more Member States and the Plenary-Task Force relationship and to develop relationships with the ERAC and the other ERA groups, amongst others.

Following the vote, Dan ANDRÉE (SE) was elected as new SFIC Chair for a two-year mandate and took over the chairmanship of the meeting.

4. Follow-up on Council conclusions on International Cooperation

- Discussion on next steps for SFIC

The Chair recalled that the previous Chair (Ms. Riitta MUSTONEN, FI) provided input to the Council decision-making bodies during the process of adoption of Council conclusions on International Cooperation, following a consultation exercise amongst SFIC Members and Observers and also following Task Force discussions. The Chair also informed that the Irish Presidency, on 30 May 2013, adopted Council conclusions on "Enhancing and focusing EU international cooperation in research and innovation: A strategic approach"¹.

The discussion focused on paragraphs 19 to 23 of the Council conclusions, which have an explicit reference to SFIC and its work, in particular to SFIC's contribution to the Horizon 2020 multi-annual roadmaps (paragraph 21); to the development of common principles for the conduct of international cooperation in R&I (paragraph 22); as well as to the continuation of efforts towards sharing of information and best practices (paragraphs 22 and 23).

The Chair invited the Commission to present to SFIC the drafts/elements of the Horizon 2020 multi-annual roadmaps for international cooperation well in advance for a constructive debate at the SFIC plenary of 12 November 2013 and a potential preliminary discussion at Task Force level. This process should enable SFIC to give an early strategic advice to the Commission. FI also proposed to use the Peer Learning Activity as a very concrete and fruitful way to develop SFIC's contribution to the Council conclusions follow-up process. UK mentioned the importance of involving stakeholders and whether it should be at EU and/or national level.

The Forum agreed that the Task Force on 17 September 2013 will prepare the plenary discussion on the Horizon 2020 multi-annual roadmaps and the common principles for the conduct of international cooperation activities in view of the SFIC plenary on 12 November 2013. The Task Force will also look into the potential adaptation of the SFIC Work Programme 2013-2014 to accommodate the tasks outlined in the Council conclusions.

¹ Doc. st10318/12.

5. SFIC's role in contributing to ERA monitoring

- Discussion on SFIC contribution to the process

The Chair informed the Forum that the 1st ERA progress report is to be published in September 2013 for discussion at ERAC (on 10 October 2013) and at the Council. As there is no SFIC plenary before the ERAC meeting, there is a tight schedule for SFIC's contribution.

Following comments from SFIC delegates, the Chair concluded that the most effective way to contribute to the process is for SFIC delegates to get in touch with their ERAC colleagues to provide input to the ERAC country fiches, providing content and visibility to the international dimension.

6. Good practices in Member States

- Presentation by SE (Vinnova)

Mr. Joakim APPELQUIST (VINNOVA, SE) made a presentation on the Swedish experience on international cooperation and the work of VINNOVA, the Swedish Governmental Agency for Innovation Systems. Sweden considers S&T collaboration as a general policy tool to get access to knowledge, talent and co-development opportunities in a framework where bottom-up is the rule: almost all international R&I activities are initiated by the stakeholders without the involvement of funding bodies. VINNOVA is at the heart of R&I policy-making and implementation. One of the main goals is to give policy advice to the relevant Ministries (i.e. Enterprise, Education and Research) giving a solution to challenges while putting in place the incentives to have companies involved with a long-term perspective (while avoiding funding of short-term projects).

VINNOVA is currently focusing its bilateral activities on 4 priority countries: China, India, Brazil and Japan, amongst other international cooperation activities and networks.

Mr. APPELQUIST's PowerPoint presentation was distributed to delegations after the meeting.

The Chair encouraged any other SFIC Member and Observer to present its best practice examples at one of the future SFIC plenaries. The compilation of best practice examples from SFIC plenary presentations will also be explored.

7. SFIC initiatives

- China: Update from Task Force discussions and information from the Commission (Urbanisation workshop and High-Level Innovation Cooperation Dialogue)

Ana Cristina NEVES (SFIC Vice-Chair/Task Force Chair, PT) gave an update on the work carried out on the China initiative based on the Task Force discussions, and informed delegations about the Task Force's recommendation to consider the current work on the SFIC initiative completed with the acceptance of the short version of the SRIA. The SRIA represents an advice to MS, AC and the Commission on areas for joint initiatives vis-à-vis China.

The Chair considered that the work done on the SRIA can feed into the Horizon 2020 multi-annual roadmaps discussion. During the next plenary meeting, SFIC will consider the necessary adjustments to the SRIA in this context.

Ms. Riitta MUSTONEN (FI) and the Commission reported from the successful Urbanisation Workshop in Beijing, China (30-31 May 2013) and the Commission also informed about the preparation of the High Level Innovation Cooperation Dialogue expected to take place in conjunction with the EU-China summit in November 2013.

- India: Information on development on the governance structure

The Commission presented recent developments on the India initiative, in particular in relation to the governance structure: the creation of the Group of Senior Officials and the setting up of thematic groups. The first meeting of the Group of Senior Officials of the Indo-European partnership is planned for 8-9 October 2013 in Brussels. Invitations would soon be sent to the Representations for nominations of high-level delegates for the meeting. The thematic groups on water, energy and health are advancing in their preparation of the joint Indo-European Strategic Research and Innovation Agendas to be adopted by the Group of Senior Officials at their first meeting.

The Chair noted that no action is needed at the moment.

- United States: Destination Europe and debrief from Galway event

Ms. Sigi GRUBER (Commission) gave an update on the Destination Europe initiative and explained the relevant preparations for the next meeting, to take place in San Francisco at the end of 2013. So far the Commission has co-organised four different events, each one with a different programme focus; all four were a way of testing what could be a good programme for capturing both EU and Member States interest when presenting Europe's excellence. Against this background, DE and FR are contributing with some proposals to re-shape the format of the Destination Europe event in view of the future meeting.

The Chair encouraged delegations to send any comments they may have on the formulation of the next event directly to the Commission within 10 days after the SFIC plenary. The Commission also invited SFIC delegates to express their interest, with the same 10 days delay, in joining the steering team for the next Destination Europe event.

The Commission also informed SFIC about the 2-day event 'The Atlantic: a Shared Resource' in Galway, which took place in during May 2013.

The Commission invited SFIC delegates to express their interest in joining the Atlantic Ocean cooperation initiative with USA and Canada launched at the aforesaid event.

IT expressed its strong interest in participating.

- Brazil: Debrief from the workshop

Ms. Brigitte DECADT (BE), as host, and Ms. Tiina VIHMA-PUROVAARA (FI) gave a debrief on the results of the SFIC Brazil workshop that took place on 17 June 2013 and stressed the opportunity for increased information sharing on the EU side about Brazil, the significance of finding win-win scenarios for EU/MS-AC cooperation with Brazil, the importance of the sustainability of cooperation efforts and the prioritisation of themes (e.g. bio-economy).

A workshop report is under preparation and it will outline the resulting recommendations for the next steps of the SFIC Brazil initiative.

The Chair suggested that it would be useful if the report also could include a summary of ‘best practices’.

The workshop presentations and the background document are available on the Commission website: <http://ec.europa.eu/research/iscp/index.cfm?pg=sfic-brazil>

8. Information about other EU-Member States activities

- EU-Africa High Level Policy Dialogue preparation

Ms. Nienke BUISMAN (Commission) gave an update on the upcoming second meeting of the EU-Africa High-Level Policy Dialogue on Science, Technology and Innovation, tentatively to take place on 28-29 November 2013. This meeting is meant to have a more concrete outcome (e.g. a roadmap/action plan, focus on 2 to 3 priority areas and a clear indication of implementation responsibilities). SFIC delegates encouraged the Commission to continue to inform SFIC regularly so as to improve the information flow to and from all actors at national level. The positive impact of the ERAfrica project was highlighted.

- Feedback from EU-CELAC SOM

Ms. Sigi GRUBER (Commission) provided feedback from the last EU-CELAC Senior Official Meeting and proposed to discuss the unbalanced presence of Member States attendance *vis-à-vis* the number of representatives from the CELAC region at any of the upcoming Council Research Working Party meetings. Next EU-CELAC SOM is scheduled for the first week of April 2014.

9. Any Other Business

- **Standing Information Points:** The Chair informed delegations about the two standing information points distributed prior to the meeting, including: the SFIC Task Force minutes from April 2013 as well as a questionnaire prepared by Technopolis on European Added-Value as part of one of the studies they are conducting for the Commission.

- **EU-Russia Year of Science:** The Commission briefly informed SFIC Members and Observers about the future EU-Russia Year of Science in 2014. The tentative launch date is scheduled for 25 November 2013. The BILAT project for Russia is likely to provide the Secretariat. Ms. Erja HEIKKINEN and Mr. Marko LAILO (FI) were nominated as SFIC representatives to the steering group for the EU-Russia Year of Science.

 - **Next Joint Steering Committee meetings:** the Commission informed delegations about the next 2013 dates for the Joint Steering Committee meetings: Japan (21 June), South Korea (26 June), Russia (28 June) and Mexico (25 September).

 - The Chair noted that a number of requests had been put forward for ‘**Best practice and information sharing**’ (e.g. US, Brazil and EU-Africa) and that the Forum should have a discussion on how to approach this need, e.g. through Mutual/Peer Learning Seminars, workshops etc. and intends to put this on the agenda for future meetings.

 - The incoming Presidency (LT) informed about the **Presidency conference:** High Level Eastern Partnership Summit, 30 September – 1 October 2013 in Vilnius.

 - **Next plenary meeting:** the Chair informed delegations that the next SFIC plenary will take place on Tuesday 12 November 2013. NL, supported by DE, expressed its willingness for the SFIC plenary not to clash with the COST CSO meeting in November.
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