

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

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Secretariat

Brussels, 23 January 2018  
(OR. en)

ERAC-SFIC 1352/18

**NOTE**

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From: SFIC Secretariat  
To: ERAC SFIC and ERAC SWG GRI Delegations  
Subject: ERAC SFIC and ERAC SWG GRI opinion on developing joint guidelines  
on a gender perspective for international cooperation in Science,  
Technology and Innovation

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Delegations will find annexed to this Note the ERAC SFIC and ERAC SWG GRI opinion on developing joint guidelines on a gender perspective for international cooperation in Science, Technology and Innovation, as adopted by written procedure.

**SFIC and SWG-GRI opinion on developing joint guidelines on a gender perspective  
for international cooperation in Science, Technology and Innovation (STI)**

*1. Introduction:*

The Council Conclusions<sup>1</sup> from 1 December 2015 on advancing gender equality in the European Research Area acknowledge that “Gender equality in science will contribute to diversity, excellence and quality in outcomes and make research more responsive to social and societal challenges that are a shared responsibility between women and men. Making use of all talents and creating equal opportunities for men and women is not only a matter of fairness, but it is also an issue of economic efficiency. Embracing gender equality will contribute to EU competitiveness and to growth and job creation”. This is not only true for research and innovation taking place in the European Union but is also relevant for international STI cooperation activities. Therefore the Council Conclusions also include a specific reference stating:

*12. INVITES the Commission and Member States to consider including, among others, a gender perspective in dialogues with third countries in the area of science, technology and innovation (STI). INVITES SFIC and the Helsinki Group to consider developing joint guidelines on a gender perspective for international cooperation in STI.*

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<sup>1</sup> Doc. 14846/15.

2. Process:

The Strategic Forum for International Science and Technology Cooperation (SFIC) and the Standing Working Group for Gender in Research and Innovation (SWG GRI, former Helsinki Group) have agreed to set up an ad-hoc group for coordinating the joint work in fall 2016. The group agreed that more knowledge was needed regarding the current state of play and integration of gender aspects at national government level as well as at national research funding organisation/programme management level. A respective survey was conducted with the aim of finding out whether and in what way Member States and Associated Countries include gender perspective within their international aspects of STI policies and co-operations.

3. Results:

Based on the results of the survey and the related report approved<sup>2</sup>, SFIC and SWG GRI:

NOTE that the inclusion of gender aspects in formal bilateral and multilateral agreements for international STI co-operation both at government and funding agencies/programme management level is rather low;

RECOGNISE that in the context of the often complex international STI co-operations, gender issues currently play a secondary role in related agreements as well as in work programmes and joint activities and BELIEVE that more effort still has to be made to explain the added value and potential benefits of including gender to the above;

WELCOME the intention of a number of countries to be willing to give gender aspects in international STI co-operation more consideration and UNDERLINE that additional resources e.g. through sharing best practices and receiving examples of other countries / organisations, special training of staff and increased political support, need to be provided;

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<sup>2</sup> Doc. WK 13642/2017.

TAKE NOTE that with respect to the gender aspects being taken into account in international STI co-operation, they seem to be either taken-up as a general guiding principle or they are included as specific aspects within cooperation activities (e.g. formulation of evaluation criteria, encouragement of female participation in research teams and evaluation panels, striving for gender balance in management boards, scientific boards etc.);

OBSERVE that in most countries and funding organisations no specific targets or goals are linked to gender issues in international STI co-operation and where these targets exist they are, in a majority of cases, linked to overall organisational strategies rather than specific international cooperation strategies;

REALISE that gender aspects in international STI cooperation may need to consider specific issues, such as the underrepresentation of women in certain scientific fields and research areas, cultural differences etc. while at the same time for a number of current societal challenges (climate, poverty, health) the gender dimension is important and that international cooperation activities (in bilateral as well as multilateral activities) have the potential to be a positive example for integrating gender aspects;

APPRECIATE that a number of countries are making effort to monitor gender issues on STI co-operation in national as well as international contexts and ACKNOWLEDGE that there seems to be a degree of uncertainty as to how to best set-up monitoring systems including meaningful indicators for gender related aspects in international STI cooperation;

CONCLUDES that there is not sufficient information currently available so as to develop relevant guidelines for integrating gender issues in international STI cooperation at this stage, and additional steps are necessary before this can be achieved.

#### 4. Recommendations:

SFIC/SWG GRI INVITE the EU Member States and Associated Countries to consider taking additional measures with a view to better integrating gender issues in international STI cooperation. This concerns the agreement level as well as the operational level (work programmes, joint calls etc.) for both governmental institutions and research funding / programme management institutions.

SFIC/SWG GRI BELIEVE that there is a clear scope within the EU collaboration framework to start working on common guidelines as best practices, concrete examples and a potential common approach would be appreciated by many countries. This would not only support them in operative terms but such a European-level approach would also produce greater commitment and drive from a political point of view.

SFIC/SWG GRI INVITE the European Commission to consider taking up these issues (both gender equality and gender-related research in projects) within their further international cooperation initiatives and dialogues and in the context of their internationalisation strategy and activities within the next EU Framework Programme, and ENCOURAGE the inclusion of “gender aspects” in the evaluation of the calls involving project partnerships with non-EU partners, as appropriate.

SFIC/SWG GRI in addition ENCOURAGE established gender expert groups, networks and projects working in the area of gender in science, research and innovation as well as in international research cooperation to consider the survey results in their further work and to explore ways to raise awareness and improve uptake at all levels.

SFIC/SWG GRI ARE READY TO CONTINUE playing an active role in further integration of gender issues in international STI cooperation and the development of related guidelines e.g. through the involvement in workshops, expert groups etc.