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From: Presidency
To: Permanent Representatives Committee/Council

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Subject: Preparation of the Competitiveness Council on 29 November 2016
Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Implementation of the strategy for international cooperation in research and innovation
- Exchange of views

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In 2012 the Commission issued its strategy¹ for EU international cooperation in research and innovation (R&I) which was welcomed by the Council². The strategy supports the objectives of strengthening the EU's R&I excellence, attractiveness and economic and industrial competitiveness, tackling global societal challenges, and supporting the EU's external policies.

¹ Doc. 14000/12

² Doc. 10318/13

2. The scale, scope and urgency of societal challenges requires tapping into the best brains available worldwide and collaborating across disciplines and sectors at global level to find effective solutions to challenges such as infectious diseases, sustainable food security, clean energy and climate change.
3. European researchers need access to talent and knowledge outside the EU, and European companies need to be active in the growing markets.

Science and research cooperation have remarkable uniting powers; they can be used to build bridges in times of conflict, to reach mutual understanding of complex issues, and to develop shared strategies for good stewardship of our planet. A more extensive use of science diplomacy as an instrument of external policies should be considered.

II. BACKGROUND

4. The first progress report on the strategy³, issued in 2014, notably called for: (1) improving framework conditions for international cooperation, global approaches to tackle global challenges more effectively, and improving synergies with Member States policies; (2) better integration of international cooperation in Horizon 2020; and (3) improving synergies with EU external policies.

On 13 October 2016, the Commission published its second progress report⁴.

5. The report shows that framework conditions for worldwide cooperation in R&I have been improving, but that additional efforts are necessary. The report highlights: work with industrialised countries and emerging economies to be able to fund projects from different sources; interactions with other policies to review immigration regulations; and efforts through multilateral sectoral fora to establish rules on data openness and reciprocal access.

The Commission clearly advocates a stronger partnership with Member States.

³ Doc. 13219/14

⁴ Doc. 13288/16

6. SFIC and the Research Working Party have exchanged views on the Commission's second progress report and have raised the following issues:

- Visions of a 'Global Research Area' and of an 'ERA open to the world' are not the same and a debate is necessary to clarify the relationship of the two concepts.
- Regarding international participation in Horizon 2020, the quantitative focus of the report needs to be complemented with more qualitative indicators, focussing on the impact of international research and innovation efforts.

The role of industry in driving innovation with non-associated international partner countries seems underdeveloped, and international cooperation is more successful in basic research than in closer-to-market innovation activities.

- Science diplomacy, as a concept and as a policy, needs to be further defined.

III. CHALLENGES AHEAD

7. We have common challenges ahead of us. Openness to the world must be further promoted as a strategic priority for the EU while keeping the principles of mutual benefit and optimal scale and scope.
8. Collaboration among Member States and with EU institutions is necessary to develop appropriate framework conditions, including through SFIC. The multiannual roadmaps for targeted international cooperation are a highly useful tool for this. Furthermore, increased engagement in international or multilateral fora is crucial.
9. Efforts are also necessary to address the drop in international participation in Horizon 2020 and to improve information and communication on the potential of the EU in international cooperation in R&I.
10. Finally, science diplomacy and research cooperation could be part of the toolbox and used more extensively in support of the EU's external policies.

IV. QUESTIONS FOR THE EXCHANGE OF VIEWS

The Presidency invites the Council (“Competitiveness - Research part”) on 29 November 2016 to address the following questions:

Question 1: What priority framework conditions should be put in place by Member States and by the EU to boost international cooperation in research and innovation??

Question 2: What measures should be taken by the Member States and the Commission to strengthen international participation in Horizon 2020?

Question 3: How could science, technology and research cooperation contribute to supporting the EU Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy and promoting science diplomacy objectives?
