



Council of the
European Union

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RECH 20

NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Permanent Representatives Committee/Council
Subject: Draft revised mandate for SFIC

Delegations will find in the annex the draft revised mandate for SFIC (Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation).

DRAFT REVISED MANDATE FOR SFIC
(STRATEGIC FORUM FOR INTERNATIONAL S&T COOPERATION)

Objective

1. The Strategic Forum for international S&T cooperation (SFIC) is a dedicated configuration of ERAC that facilitates the further development, implementation and monitoring of the international dimension of ERA, with focus on the external dimension of the European Union and Member States' research and innovation activities, by the sharing of information and consultation between its members (Member States and the Commission) with a view to identifying common priorities which could lead to coordinated or joint initiatives, and coordinating activities and positions vis-à-vis third countries and within international fora.

Main activities

2. SFIC, as ERA-related Group responsible for international S&T cooperation as well as responsible for ERA Roadmap Priority 6 on international cooperation, will focus its activities on:
 - Providing strategic and timely advice on international S&T cooperation;
 - Developing and implementing appropriate joint strategic approaches and actions for international R&I cooperation on the basis of national priorities (in line with ERA Roadmap - Priority 6);
 - Providing input for the implementation and further development of the ERA Roadmap;
 - Cooperating with and, when relevant, reporting to ERAC and other ERA-related Groups by contributing to the mainstreaming of the international dimension in the other ERA priorities;

- Systematically sharing and structuring information and good practice on international R&I cooperation activities and objectives, including those derived from bilateral S&T agreements with third countries by Member States, Associated Countries and the Union;
- Pooling and sharing relevant knowledge concerning third countries as well as ensuring regular consultation between the members in order to identify their respective objectives and common priorities in terms of R&I cooperation with third countries, also in line with the Multi-Annual Roadmaps process and relevant policy dialogues;
- Information exchange and networking with scientific advisors in key third countries.

Organisation

3. SFIC shall meet regularly, up to four times per year. The meetings will normally be held in Brussels;
4. SFIC shall be attended, where appropriate, by high level representatives of Member States and the Commission;
5. SFIC shall be open, as appropriate, to the countries associated to the EU's Framework Programme for Research and Innovation;
6. The Chair and Vice-Chair of SFIC shall be elected from among the representatives of Member States in SFIC by a majority of its component Members for a period of three years (which is renewable once). In so doing, they shall have due regard to gender balance and other aspects of diversity;
7. Delegates of Member States and Associated Countries are present in SFIC as formal representatives of their country, not as individual experts, and should ensure appropriate co-ordination with national representatives in other ERA-related Groups;
8. The Secretariat for SFIC is provided by the General Secretariat of the Council;

9. The primary role of the Secretariat is to assist SFIC in its operation. In particular, it assists the Chair in the preparation, conduct and follow-up of meetings, including the circulation of provisional agendas and of related documents, and the drafting of summary conclusions of meetings;
10. The Commission shall support the work of SFIC within the remit of its competence;
11. SFIC may set up sub-groups to deal with questions relevant to its mandate. These must have a clear purpose and mandate and be of limited duration;
12. In agreement with the ERAC Steering Board, SFIC shall draw up rules of procedure that are coherent with those of the other ERA-related Groups. The requirement for coherence in rules of procedure does not include any voting rules, which are solely a matter for SFIC.

ERA coordination

13. In order to reflect the importance of advice on policy and implementation across the full spectrum of research and innovation in the framework of the governance of the European Research Area (ERA) and with a view to the coherent and effective implementation of ERA and to ensure European added value, all ERA-related Groups shall cooperate with and support ERAC to cover all the ERA priorities;
14. SFIC shall develop its own work programme, draw up its own agendas, carry out its activities and produce its deliverables according to its mandate and the ERA Roadmap. The relevant aspects of the draft work programme, including the timing of work, the scheduling of meetings and the planning of communication with the Council, shall be discussed within the ERAC Steering Board and comments by the ERAC Steering Board shall be taken into account. The Chair of SFIC shall ensure the substance of these discussions is systematically reported back to SFIC;

15. To ensure overall coherence among the ERA-related Groups and to avoid gaps or duplication in the coverage of ERA priorities, the SFIC work programme shall be discussed within the ERAC Steering Board and a report of these discussions presented to ERAC before the adoption of the work programme by SFIC. Within this framework, SFIC takes sole responsibility for the content of the advice it provides;
16. The Chair of SFIC will serve on the ERAC Steering Board along with the Chairs of the other ERA-related Groups;
17. SFIC's mandate shall be assessed when necessary, but at least every three years, by ERAC in line with ERAC's agreed procedure for this exercise, and recommendations shall be made to the Council on whether the mandate needs to be revised or repealed in order to reflect progress in the implementation or updates of ERA Priorities.

Reporting

18. SFIC shall report to the Council and to the Commission every two years on progress and impact on its main activities;
19. SFIC shall submit a concise annual report to ERAC, providing a timely strategic and operational overview of research and innovation issues that are relevant to the development of the ERA Priority for which it is responsible and on the impact of its activities on the achievement of that Priority. This shall be provided in good time for ERAC to prepare its own annual report to the Council. It shall also ensure more generally, through the Steering Board or otherwise, that other ERA-related Groups are aware of developments in its area that are relevant to the wider work of ERA.