

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

Secretariat

Brussels, 15 July 2019
(OR. en)

ERAC-SFIC 1354/19

NOTE

From: SFIC Secretariat
To: Delegations

Subject: Summary conclusions of the 41st meeting of the Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC), held in Brussels on 12 June 2019

The meeting was chaired by Ms Rozenn Saunier (FR).

1. Adoption of the agenda

2. Tour de Table

a) Presentation of recent INCO developments

The chair informed the committee about the ERA action plan and the 5 measures specifically relating to SFIC. One workshop per year will be dedicated to the follow up of the recommendation in the ERA action plan to engage with stakeholders. For this purpose, a networking workshop will be added to the SFIC work programme for 2019-2020. On gender issues, the cooperation with the HRM SWG is ongoing, though at lower level. This issue will be a point on the agenda either in December 2019 or early 2020. The outcome of the Genderaction project might provide impetus for SFIC activities.

The chair informed the committee that as of the next meeting interpretation will no longer be provided. Concerning the quantity and quality of meeting documents, as well as their distribution, the chair asked the delegations for comments and invited them to provide feedback by email.

The vice-chair provided feedback from the ERAC plenary. She highlighted the discussion on the strategic impact of ERA, in particular as regards the implementation of SDGs and inclusiveness. Feedback requested from SFIC on the questionnaire by the ERAC Ad-hoc Working Group on the future of ERA by the end of June. The questions have been circulated on 12 June by the SFIC Secretariat. The deadline for SFIC members is 14 June.

Concerning the discussion on NAPs, the vice-chair reported that ERAC considered that differences in the Member States' approaches makes a comparison difficult.

RO and FI presented outcomes and plans respectively of their EU Council presidencies.

Following these presentations the traditional tour de table took place. Contributions by delegations will also be circulated to the committee in a dedicated SFIC bi-weekly.

COM reported from the Commission-SFIC informal workshop on "National and EU Strategies for International R&I Cooperation" where 7 SFIC delegations participated. All interventions considered the workshop to have been useful. Suggestions in particular called for a better description of the workshops to facilitate the identification of appropriate participants. The SFIC vice-chair regretted the limited participation of SFIC delegations, despite repeated calls over recent years from SFIC delegations about wanting to advise the Commission.

Delegations that expressed a view supported to organise other workshops of this kind.

The chair concluded that the most appropriate format should be found to ensure the highest possible participation and impact.

3. Future of SFIC

a) SFIC visibility/communication

The HU delegation presented the results of the task force and posed questions on what communication actions SFIC should undertake. RO raised the issue of who is responsible for making information public on social media. The chair invited the rapporteur to provide a synthesis of the questions, which will be submitted to SFIC delegations for responses within two weeks. It was agreed that SFIC's communication actions should be in line with the ones agreed at ERAC level.

b) Revision of the SFIC mandate

The chair presented the approach taken to provide ERAC with a short statement on the SFIC mandate in view of an eventual modification (WK 6591 2019). At the moment, it will not be proposed to change the mandate.

The Committee validated the document and agreed to transmit it to ERAC.

c) SFIC work programme 2019-2020

The rapporteur (AT) presented the new approach to a more streamlined work programme (WK 6590 2019). As proposed by the Chair under item 2 a), networking with stakeholders will be added as an activity in the second half of each year. Slight modifications to the preamble were requested by the Commission.

With these additions the work programme was validated by the Committee. It will be transmitted to ERAC for information.

d) SFIC impact

The chair informed the committee about the activities on improving the impact of SFIC. The text as presented in document WK 6592 2019 was validated and will now be submitted to ERAC.

4. SFIC activities in the context of the ERA

a) ERAC monitoring process

The FR delegation presented the process, analysis and conclusions of the self-assessment of NAPs as they concern ERA priority 6.

The chair concluded that the collection of NAPs (for priority 6 in particular) would be circulated to SFIC in the form of a living document, which would be updated when new/revised NAPs become available.

The chair also announced that she would send an email to each delegation that did not provide feedback in order to better understand the non-responses.

5. Information on the Mutual Learning Exercise

The FR delegation (as SFIC rapporteur) informed the committee about the MLE which had taken place in early June in France. The rapporteur asked delegations for their feedback on the MLE, also to provide feedback to the 4 experts nominated for the MLE.

Intervening participating delegations were all positive on the MLE. PT informed the plenary that all the documents concerning this MLE are available on the MLE website (<https://rio.jrc.ec.europa.eu/en/policy-support-facility/mle-national-strategies-and-roadmaps-international-cooperation-research-and>). NL asked whether it was still possible to participate in the MLE.

The vice-chair concluded that it was a very inspiring exercise and looked forward to the next two events in Romania and Sweden.

6. Working groups / thematic task forces

a) Benchmarking Working Group

The FR delegation provided an update on the work of the WG. In particular the rapporteur called on all delegations to respond to the survey. The proposed timeline is to collect data before the summer, analyse it over the summer and discuss the draft in the next plenary in view of validation of the final report at the last SFIC plenary in 2019.

The vice-chair concluded that the survey link and excel sheet will be re-circulated by the Secretariat and that non-responding countries will be encouraged to respond to the survey.

b) China

A number of delegations (DE AT FI NL RO NO FR) expressed interest in principle in joining the proposed new task force.

Intervening delegations requested more details on the scope and objective of the new task force, in particular in difference to the 'old' China WG before deciding on whether to join the TF. Other delegations raised points on cybersecurity, intellectual property, approaches to partnerships etc. as issues to be addressed by the TF. AT made a plea to proactively contribute as SFIC to the discussion on China's next 5 year plan. The Commission underlined the need for focused and clear objectives for this new Task Force

The vice-chair concluded that until the next SFIC plenary the existing interest in a task force on China will be outlined in a paper and invited the committee to look at the JRC report the link to which will be circulated after the meeting by the Secretariat.

c) Science diplomacy

The AT delegation gave a short presentation. The Committee agreed to organise a workshop, including if possible EEAS participation, on 3 October. A more elaborated concept for the further work and goals of the task force would then be presented and discussed at the next plenary on 4 October, based on the workshop on 3 October, touching also upon the role of Science Diplomacy in Horizon Europe.

A number of delegations intervened on the concept of science diplomacy, on the involvement of MFAs and on the topics to be addressed through SFIC.

Delegations were asked to provide input to the information paper with view to chapter 3 regarding the “Role of Science Diplomacy in the Member States and Associated Countries” for a further exchange of initiatives and best practise.

Moreover the rapporteur informed delegations that SFIC representatives are invited to take part and actively contribute to a networking meeting organised by the S4D4C project on “Towards a European Science Diplomacy Roadmap” taking place in Berlin on 10 October 2019.

d) Africa

DE and ES will provide input for the next SFIC plenary in view of possibly launching a TF on Africa. PT FR ES CH AT EE UK FI are potentially interested in joining this TF. COM raised the question on the scope of this TF (all Africa?, AU?, South Africa?) and underlined the need for focused and clear objectives.

7. Any other business

Next SFIC dates: 4 October, 18 December.

The mandate of the SFIC Chair will end in October. The Chair invited to submit candidatures for the future chair of SFIC by 15 July. The SFIC Secretariat will circulate information on the process and deadlines.