

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

Secretariat

Brussels, 22 March 2021
(OR. en)

ERAC-SFIC 1352/21

NOTE

Subject: SFIC Work Programme 2021-2022

Following the conclusion of the "silence procedure", which ended on 19 March 2021 (COB), you will find attached the final version of the ERAC-SFIC work programme 2021-22

SFIC WORK PROGRAMME 2021-2022
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SFIC is a dedicated configuration of ERAC with the objective to facilitate the further development, implementation and monitoring of the international dimension of the European Research Area (ERA). It does so by sharing information and by consulting between the partners 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 for a and in relation to the EU framework programme for research & innovation.

SFIC advises the European Commission (mainly DG RTD; in some cases other DGs or the External Action Service) on the one hand and the Member States (in particular the Competitiveness Council) and Associated Countries on the other hand. Principal addressees in the MS and AC are ministries responsible for science, technology and innovation and related funding agencies; in some cases also ministries of foreign affairs etc.). Some of the issues covered in SFIC are also of relevance for dedicated STI stakeholder as well as an interested wider public.

The SFIC Work Programme 2021-2022 is based on the mandate as well as the previous and current SFIC work and it has been developed with the input from delegations, in particular from a strategic workshop held on 1st of December 2020 and debates at plenary level. It is developed in the context of combating and recovering from the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic that has also left its mark on international STI cooperation. Furthermore, the Work Programme is marked by a new phase the ERA is entering - with a new communication launched by the EC in September 2020, the Council Conclusions adopted in December 2020 and the development of a renewed governance structure to start in early 2021.

From a practical point of view, SFIC plans a mix of virtual meetings and hybrid meetings with presence in Brussels (depending on the COVID-19 situation). This should allow for the participation of as many delegations as possible.

In 2021/2022 SFIC will further strive at advancing the relevance and impact of its outputs for the dedicated stakeholder groups and increase the related strategic communication and dialogue efforts.

The impact of the work of SFIC should e.g. be visible through

- the integration of an international cooperation dimension in the concrete activities and the governance of the new ERA;
 - the set-up and content of the EC communication of the “Global Approach to research, innovation, education and youth” ;
 - as well as the Work Programmes and the implementation and monitoring of Horizon Europe.
- SFIC will work on four key areas:

- International perspective of the European Research Area including the co-operation within ERAC and ERA-related groups

Here SFIC will give input to the envisaged EC communication “Global Approach to research, innovation, education and youth” - a dedicated workshop is foreseen with the European Commission. SFIC will also elaborate an opinion after the publication of the communication and will work on proposals to foster EC and MS/AC cooperation in INCO. Another important focus will be the input to the discussions and developments regarding the repositioning of the ERA and the related ERA Governance. This includes formulating a vision for INCO in the ERA (incl. foresight) as well as developing concrete cooperation and coordination activities. To enhance the dialogue with the other ERA-related groups dedicated rapporteurs will be named to monitor the work of the groups; The Chair and Vice-Chair of SFIC will follow ERAC as well as the future ERA Forum for Transition, while for the other groups volunteers will be sought (and some delegates have already signalled interest).

- Strategic advice on international S&T cooperation with focus on Horizon Europe (HE) SFIC will monitor the general integration of INCO aspects in HE and seek dialogue with the Strategic Programme Committee of HE and provide tailored input to discussions in this forum, as currently there is no other coordinating body/instrument for the INCO perspective in HE. SFIC will develop and keep updated a simple tool for information for applicants about the concrete possibilities for international cooperation c.f. the HE Work Programme .SFIC will also observe the integration of the international dimension of the European Partnerships and missions and provide recommendations as relevant. Finally, SFIC will seek to intensify cooperation with the EC on strategic country-specific HE issues e.g. by reactivating the cooperation in the Roadmaps with 3rd countries.
- Information exchange and coordination on INCO

SFIC will continue as a forum for exchange on matters related to 3rd country cooperation and for demonstrating the need for and benefit of coordination between the MS/AC and the EC on INCO issues within the ERA setting.

- Networking and communication with stakeholders

SFIC will strive to broaden the stakeholder base e.g. towards organisations like the OECD, the Joint Research Centres, Global Science Forum, EUREKA, EIT, COST, ENRICH, UNESCO, ASEAN or ASEM as well as to the Science Counsellors active in the relevant third countries; The social media activities via LinkedIn and the information on era.gv.at will be continued.

Moreover, SFIC will continue to work on horizontal themes as well as on specific countries or regions. In this respect, the following themes as well as countries/regions have been prioritized:

Themes	Countries / Regions
Continuing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Science Diplomacy (Task Force) • Innovation (integrative approach) 	Continuing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Africa (Working Group) • China (currently via EU-KNOC)
New themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow-up of the Bonn declaration • Knowledge Triangle in INCO • Strategic autonomy of the EU 	New countries/regions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USA • Indo-Pacific Region • UK

With view to the resources available among the delegates in SFIC, the topics will be tackled through different means - --from Working Groups and Task Forces to ad-hoc groups, the organisation of workshops, or dedicated stakeholder dialogues etc.

Timeline				
Areas of action	1 st semester 2021	2 nd semester 2021	1 st semester 2022	2 nd semester 2022
<p>1. International perspective of the European Research Area including the co-operation within ERAC and ERA-related groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop and contribution to the Global approach communication • Opinion on the Global approach communication • Contribution to the various ERA reform strands (expert group, ERA Forum for Transition, Pact on R&I) as relevant • Appointment rapporteurs ERA-related groups • Report ERA-related groups in the Plenaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribution to the various ERA reform strands • Proposals on fostering EC and MS/AC cooperation in INCO • Opinion on the future ERA Governance as needed • Report ERA-related groups in the Plenaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribution to the various ERA reform strands and implementation ERA reform as relevant • Report ERA-related groups in the Plenaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribution to the various ERA reform strands and implementation ERA reform as relevant • Report ERA-related groups in the Plenaries

<p>2. Strategic advice on international S&T cooperation with focus on Horizon Europe</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact with the Strategic Programme Committee (SPC) • HE INCO promotion activities including a tool for information on INCO-possibilities in the HEU Work Programme • Input to the OECD recommendations on INCO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis HE for the SPC • HE INCO promotion activities • INCO perspective of European partnerships* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring INCO in the first calls for HE (particularly scope and mode of participation of third countries) and Analysis for the SPC* • HE INCO promotion activities • INCO perspective of European partnerships and missions* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpretation of monitoring of INCO in the first calls for HE and if necessary strategic advice/opinion on it. • Monitoring of the impact of association agreements on HE, especially with view to the new category D) of countries.
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<p>3. SFIC as a Forum for information exchange and coordination on INCO</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TF Science Diplomacy • WG Africa • Innovation enhancement • EU-KNOC (MS only) • Follow-up of the Bonn declaration • Knowledge Triangle in INCO • USA • Indo-Pacific Region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TF Science Diplomacy • WG Africa • Innovation enhancement • EU-KNOC (MS only) • Follow-up of the Bonn declaration • Knowledge Triangle in INCO • Strategic autonomy • Indo-Pacific Region • USA • UK 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WG Africa • Innovation enhancement • Strategic autonomy • Knowledge Triangle in INCO • Indo-Pacific Region • USA • UK 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indo-Pacific Region • UK
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4. Networking and communication with stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online / Social Media activities • Strategic workshop with Science Counsellors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online / Social Media activities • Strategic exchange with selected stakeholder groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online / Social Media activities • Strategic exchange with selected stakeholder groups e.g. with Science Counsellors (TBC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online / Social Media activities • Strategic exchange with selected stakeholder groups
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* based on the information provided by the European Commission through its monitoring