

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

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Secretariat

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**NOTE**

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From: SFIC Secretariat  
To: SFIC delegations  
Subject: SFIC Communication and Visibility Plan

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Delegations will find attached the SFIC Communication and Visibility Plan, as adopted at the SFIC plenary on 18 December 2019.

## SFIC Communication and Visibility Plan

This document details SFIC's future activities in the areas of communication and raising its visibility.

It is subdivided into four chapters:

Chapter One will give an overview of the plan's objectives and target groups. In Chapter Two concrete communication activities will be outlined. Chapter Three will describe the resources needed to implement these activities. In order to monitor the progress of the plan, in Chapter Four, respective indicators will be defined.

### I. General communication strategy

#### Overall objectives

The ERA review of 2018 (1209/18) found that "SFIC needs to consider ways to increase the quality and impact of its opinions and reports (ERAC Rec. 42)".

Building on the review, ERAC drafted the ERAC Action Plan 2019-2021. It asked SFIC to draft a Communication and Visibility Plan in the second semester of 2019. As requested by ERAC, the aim of this plan will thus be to reach a "higher visibility of SFIC's actions (opinions and reports)."

#### Target groups

As an advisory body on the European Research Area, there are five target groups for SFIC's communication activities:

1. Council of the European Union
2. European Commission
3. Member States and Associated Countries
4. Other actors, e.g. experts
5. SFIC delegates

## II. Communication activities

SFIC delegates agreed to put the following activities into the focus of their external and internal communication:

### **External communication**

#### Regularly updated Power Point presentation about SFIC

SFIC will create a Power Point presentation about its activities in the context of the ERA. SFIC delegates will thus be able to present the forum's activities in other ERA-related groups, at national level and in other international bodies.

#### SFIC minutes – available through the Council website

The official SFIC minutes will be published on the [Council website](#) or a new SFIC website (cf. Information campaign). In this way, they will be available to the members of other ERA-related groups and internationally-oriented actors in the MS/AC as well as in the Commission (cf. information campaign).

#### SFIC reports and opinions – available through the Council website

In order to raise the impact of SFIC's reports, they will be published on the [Council website](#) or a new SFIC website (cf. Information campaign). MS/AC and the European Commission will thus have direct access to them (cf. information campaign).

#### Information campaign

Already now, many SFIC documents are available on the [Council website](#). This, however, appears to be unknown by many national stakeholders as the documents have to be found using a search engine. This problem should be addressed in two ways. First, ERAC is making efforts to restructure the Council webpage that contains information on ERAC, SFIC, GPC and the Standing Working Groups. Still, the number of links that could be used on the webpage is limited and links to the reports and opinions of the groups cannot be included on this page. SFIC-related documents should thus be pooled and constantly updated in a dedicated SFIC site like the one of the [Austrian ERA portal](#). Second, SFIC members will contact their national counterparts in a short, targeted information campaign. They will send and/or present the above-mentioned Power Point presentation and point out what information is available and where it can be found.

### Thematic events – back-to-back with the plenary

Like in the past, future SFIC plenaries will last one day. But they can be complemented by workshops on the previous day. These thematic events on topics of international R&I cooperation will give the opportunity for exchanging views with SFIC's external actors. They might also generate discussions during the plenary meetings among SFIC members.

### Better use of existing online platforms for dissemination

In addition to the Council website, further online platforms will be tested for the publication of SFIC's documents. Two very promising sites in this regard are [DG RTD's International Cooperation website](#) and the website of the Policy Support Facility.

### Contact with other ERA group representatives and further stakeholders

SFIC will strengthen the direct personal exchange with other relevant actors. SFIC will invite representatives of other ERA-related groups for discussions during the SFIC plenaries or the workshops on the previous day. These meetings will also be the place to strengthen ties with external experts, who will be invited as well. In return, SFIC representatives will participate in the meetings of other ERA-related groups and other events organized by experts, the Commission or MS/AC.

### Not to be used: Social media

SFIC discussed, whether social media activities should be another element of communication with external stakeholders. It was decided not to use social media for two reasons. On the one hand, the above-mentioned target groups can rather be reached through e-mail than social media. On the other hand, successful social media communication requires intense interaction with the target group, for which none of the actors under III. would have the appropriate capacities.

## **Internal communication**

### SFIC bi-weekly for internal communication

Between plenaries, SFIC delegates will continue to receive updates on SFIC's work through the bi-weekly SFIC newsletter. This newsletter provides information on plenary results and the preparation of upcoming meetings. It also points to SFIC-relevant events and developments such as STI calls with third countries. In the future, this newsletter will also be sent to the ERAC delegates.

### Teleconferences, videoconferences for task forces, between plenaries

The decisions taken in the plenaries are being implemented by dedicated task forces. These are supposed to deliver their results in one of the following SFIC meetings. Task force members thus have to coordinate their work while physically working in their home countries. The most frequent tools used for this are teleconferences and videoconferences.

### **III. Responsibilities**

The main actor for the realisation of the aforementioned activities will be the SFIC secretariat. It will be responsible for updating the content of the SFIC Power Point presentation, for drafting and sending the SFIC newsletter and for uploading reports and minutes on the Council website.

The responsibility for the organisation of thematic events and joint meetings with other actors lies with the SFIC Chair, the Steering Board and the secretariat.

SFIC delegates themselves assume responsibility for drafting the reports and organising their work within task forces.

### **IV. Indicators of achievement**

In order to evaluate the achievements of this plan, four different types of indicators could be used:

1. Input, 2. Output, 3. Outcome and 4. Impact indicators.

Input indicators could measure aspects like the person months invested into a certain report or the number of task forces installed. In order to assess the quality of these activities, input indicators would have to be matched with respective output indicators (efficiency evaluation). However, as the table shows, input indicators are seldom applicable to SFIC's communication activities.

Output indicators very clearly measure SFIC's productivity by the number of e.g. publications or public events.

Outcome indicators evaluate the success of the respective activities. For instance, they would count the amount of SFIC documents downloaded on the Council website or the number of SFIC publications quoted in Council Conclusions.

Impact indicators would measure the contribution of SFIC's communication activities to overarching goals of international R&I cooperation in the context of the ERA.

As the table below shows, input and impact indicators are seldom applicable for evaluating the success of SFIC's communication activities. Each activity will thus be measured by output and/or outcome indicators.

**Each activity will be evaluated on a yearly basis by the SFIC secretariat using the indicators described in the table. The results will be outlined in SFIC's annual reports.**

## V. Conclusions

The following table summarises SFIC's future communication activities. Indicators in grey will not be used, only for background information.

Kind of information	Target Group	Information channel	Responsibility	Input indicator	Output ind.	Outcome ind.	Impact ind.
<b>External communication and visibility</b>							
Regularly updated ppt about SFIC	Council, COM, MS/AC	Council website or new SFIC website	Secretariat		Ppt produced and uploaded (y/n)  Yearly update (y/n)	Number of downloads on Council website  Number of events where presentation was shown (difficult to measure in MS/AC)	
SFIC minutes	Council, COM, MS/AC	Council website or new SFIC website	Secretariat		Minutes produced and uploaded (y/n)	Number of downloads on Council website	
SFIC	Council,	Council	Task	Person	Number	Number of	

Kind of information	Target Group	Information channel	Responsibility	Input indicator	Output ind.	Outcome ind.	Impact ind.
reports and opinions	COM, MS/AC	website or new SFIC website, existing on-line platforms, namely PSF website	force members, Secretariat (for upload)	months invested into report	of reports per year	downloads on Council website, number of quotes in Council Conclusions	
Information campaign	MS/AC	National meetings, e-mails and newsletters	SFIC delegates		Campaign carried out (y/n)	Approximate number of persons reached	
Thematic events	MS/AC, other actors	Thematic events – back-to-back with the plenary	Chair, Secretariat, Steering Board		Number of public events per year	Number of external participants	Number of participants from third countries
	Council, COM, MS/AC	Better use of existing on-line platforms	COM			Number of SFIC documents downloaded from these platforms (if data is	



Kind of information	Target Group	Information channel	Responsibility	Input indicator	Output ind.	Outcome ind.	Impact ind.
						available)	
	other ERA group representatives, other stakeholders	Joint meetings			Number of joint meetings	Number of external participants	Number of participants from third countries
<b>Internal communication</b>							
SFIC bi-weekly	SFIC delegates, ERAC delegates	e-mail	Secretariat		Number of newsletters	Number of recipients	
Task force-related information and coordination	Task force members	Teleconferences, videoconferences	Task force members	Not applicable; Quality of a task force cannot be measured by the intensity of communication, but solely by the output produced, e. g. the quality of a report, see above.			