

EUROPEAN UNION

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**SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL
RESEARCH COMMITTEE**
**Strategic Forum for International
S&T Cooperation**

Secretariat

ERAC-SFIC 1354/11

NOTE

Subject : Work Programme SFIC 2011-2012

Delegations will find attached the Work Programme 2011-2012 of the Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC) as adopted by the SFIC plenary on 20 June 2011.

SFIC Work Programme 2011/12

This document sets out the Work Programme 2011/12 of the Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC).

1. POLITICAL CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

The Europe 2020 strategy¹, successor to the Lisbon strategy, aims at fostering smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The strategy will be implemented around seven "flagship initiatives", one of which is the Innovation Union², proposed by the European Commission in October 2010 and endorsed by the Competitiveness Council in November 2010. The Innovation Union aims at improving framework conditions and access to finance for research and innovation so as to strengthen the innovation chain and boost levels of investment throughout the Union. The international dimension plays a core role in realising the Innovation Union, e.g. in the context of delivering the European Research Area (see chapter 2.2. of COM (2010) 546) but also in its own right (see chapter 6 of COM (2010) 546).

As regards international STI cooperation, the Innovation Union document proposes that:

*"In 2012 together with the ERA Framework, the Commission will propose common EU / Member States priorities in S&T as a basis for coordinated positions or joint initiatives vis-à-vis third countries, building on the work of the Strategic Forum for International Cooperation. In the meantime, the EU and Member States should act in a concerted manner when engaging in S&T agreements and activities with third countries. The potential scope for "umbrella" agreements between the EU and Member States with third countries will be explored."*³

¹ COM (2010) 2020 final.

² COM (2010) 546 final.

³ The Council also addressed this topic (see Conclusions of the Competitiveness Council of 26 November 2010, doc. 17165/10).

The Conclusions of the Competitiveness Council of 2 December 2008 invited Member States and the Commission to collaborate within a dedicated configuration of CREST (now ERAC) to drive forward the European Partnership for international S&T cooperation. The mandate of SFIC defines its tasks, i.e.:

- *systematically sharing and structuring information on the S&T cooperation activities and objectives (whether ongoing or planned) of the various partners;*
- *pooling relevant knowledge concerning third countries, in particular analyses of their S&T resources and capabilities;*
- *ensuring regular consultation between the partners in order to identify their respective objectives and common priorities in terms of S&T cooperation with third countries ("what and with whom?");*
- *where appropriate, coordinating activities of a similar nature implemented by Member States and the Community, (with variable geometry);*
- *if necessary, proposing initiatives to be implemented with appropriate ways and means;*
- *networking of Member States' and the Commission's scientific advisors in key third countries.*

The Competitiveness Council of 26 May 2010 recalled that the main objective of the Partnership is "*developing a future European strategy for international S&T cooperation and to work towards coordinated positions in view of research-related topics in international summits and fora*".

The Competitiveness Council of 31 May 2011 called on ERAC, its Working Group on Knowledge Transfer (KT) and its dedicated configurations High Level Group for Joint Programming (GPC) and Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC) to *contribute towards supporting the implementation and monitoring of progress of the Innovation Union initiative*⁴

⁴ Council Conclusions 30-31 May 2011

The Work Programme 2011/12 duly reflects this political guidance. The new Work Programme also builds on the first Work Programme for 2009/10⁵, the manifold ongoing activities of SFIC, the discussions by SFIC at the Villa Vigoni strategy workshop on 28/29 September 2010 (as requested by SFIC on 17 September 2010) and at the SFIC meeting on 3 December 2010⁶ as well as on additional contributions received from SFIC members and observers.

2. OPERATIONAL PRINCIPLES

The SFIC is first and foremost a strategic and advisory body in MS/EU international STI cooperation. SFIC activities will be implemented on voluntary basis following the principle of variable geometry. SFIC will match the level of ambition with the resources available when implementing its Work Programme.

SFIC will reinforce links to other ERA groups in particular in relation to third countries. SFIC will take an active role in the realization of ERA and its international dimension, especially by building up synergies with the Framework Programme, contributing towards the international dimension of the next EU Programme for funding of research and innovation, as well as to the future ERA Framework. The added value of SFIC will be created by optimizing the use of national, European and global resources and avoiding duplication of activities.

3. OBJECTIVES

As laid out in its mandate, SFIC's overall objective is "*to facilitate the further development, implementation and monitoring of the international dimension of ERA*". To this end and with a view towards an EU and its Member States international long-term STI cooperation strategy, SFIC in 2011/12 will:

- identify criteria for collaboration and put forward common priorities vis-à-vis third countries/regions;

⁵ Doc. 1356/09.

⁶ Doc. 1351/10.

- where a clear European added-value can be identified, propose coordinated or joint initiatives vis-à-vis and with third countries/regions, by improving the link between the Framework Programme, existing and future national research programmes and the SFIC objectives and activities;
- contribute towards supporting the implementation and monitoring of progress of the Innovation Union initiative⁷, and provide input to the development of the ERA Framework⁸;
- when STI issues are items of summits, bi-regional dialogues and international fora, contribute to the identification of activities vis-à-vis and with third countries when appropriate;
- improve information sharing and consultation between the SFIC members and EU, involving their Science Counsellors, and other stakeholders;
- enhance the visibility of the international dimension of ERA.

4. PLAN OF ACTIVITIES

The Plan of Activities translates the objectives into a concrete work plan to be pursued during the next two years. The Plan reflects SFIC's strategic mission and carefully balances ongoing SFIC⁹ initiatives with new activities deriving from recent policy developments, such as the Innovation Union flagship initiative.

SFIC – as an advisory body to the Council and the European Commission – will play an important role in developing the international dimension of the forthcoming ERA Framework.

⁷ In line with the Council Conclusions of 26 November 2010

⁸ Council Conclusions on the European Research Area (ERA) of 30-31 May 2011

⁹ doc. CREST-SFIC 1354/10; "Securing the knowledge era: Belgian Presidency progress report on the realisation of the European Research Area", November 2010.

4.1. Supporting development of the European strategy for international STI cooperation

SFIC will define objectives/principles for cooperation and identify geographic and thematic priorities on the basis of:

- analytical work on strengths, weaknesses and opportunities of research with the targeted country or region;
- a state-of-play of the cooperation of the targeted country/region with the SFIC members/observers and other relevant STI partners (USA, Japan, emerging economies etc.).

For each initiative the relevant terms of cooperation (incentives, cooperation instruments, funding, calendar...) will be elaborated.

SFIC will enhance the visibility of ERA and stakeholder involvement in SFIC activities. SFIC will encourage information sharing through the appropriate platform, on the right content and with sufficient resources to this exercise¹⁰. To reinforce consultation between the SFIC members, they are encouraged to present Member States' international STI cooperation policies and strategies and best practices in the SFIC meetings.

SFIC will seek strong coordination with other ERA and Innovation Union initiatives and respective groups through mutual exchange of information and joint meetings. To this end SFIC facilitates the further development, implementation and monitoring of the international dimension of ERA focusing on the following points:

- Contribution to the definition and the development of an international STI cooperation strategy (common priority setting) for the European Research Area based on articulation between the EU strategy and the strategies of the Member States¹¹;
- The strategic priorities of SFIC should be in line with the global challenges identified in high level political processes (e.g. summits);

¹⁰ Including the work done through ERAWATCH.

¹¹ As referred to in the conclusions of the Competitiveness Council of 26 May 2010.

- As strategic advice and common priority setting for international S&T cooperation is a cornerstone of SFIC's mandate, a parallel development of a manageable number of existing and future initiatives, practical measures and constant analytical work should be sought;
- Seeking stakeholder involvement and consultation, including the encouragement of SME participation in international cooperation, by mainstreaming innovation in international cooperation initiatives.

4.2. Implementation and consolidation of ongoing and planned activities

Member States and the EU are already engaged in a number of activities which should be continued to further develop and implement the European Partnership for international STI cooperation. SFIC will contribute, as appropriate, to STI policy dialogues with third countries and contribute to European activities and positions within summits, bi-regional dialogues and international fora.

SFIC will develop EU/MS strategic partnership vis-à-vis and with:

a) India¹²

The initiative aims to establish the basis for a common Member States/EU-India Strategic Research Agenda and comprises a series of instruments for enhanced European Commission/Member States cooperation vis-à-vis and with India. These range from light networking activities to synchronising priorities, timing and content of calls/initiatives. In the work period 2011/12 SFIC will foster the development of the EU/Member States-India Strategic Research Agenda as well as a roadmap for research and innovation, e.g. including enhanced mobility schemes and instruments to encourage SME-cooperation by appropriate existing instruments. The SRA/research and innovation roadmap will be implemented by the European Commission and the Member States vis-à-vis and with the Indian authorities.

¹² The EU-India Summit on 10 December 2010 endorsed this initiative by welcoming "*the new dynamic India-EU and Member States research and innovation partnership for more coordinated cooperation to tackle major societal challenges*".

b) People's Republic of China

With regard to China, SFIC endorsed in 2010 possible short-, medium- and long-term measures to identify potential approaches for achieving more consistent STI cooperation vis-à-vis and with China in areas of common interest in the future. In 2011/12 SFIC will develop a joint understanding among its members on how to approach China more strategically with the objective to make progress towards a more coherent EU/Member States strategy vis-à-vis China. SFIC will organise workshops or similar activities to facilitate this activity.

c) The United States

The USA has been identified as a pilot for industrial countries. In 2010 SFIC collected information on its members' and observers' bilateral STI cooperation through a questionnaire. An analysis of the replies showed a wide variety of approaches. In 2011/12 SFIC will pursue more analytical work to gain an insight into the different policies, practices and strategies and their particularities in order to identify good practices and to develop a coherent EU/Member States policy. SFIC will identify possible short-, medium- and long-term measures for achieving more consistent STI cooperation with and vis-à-vis the US in areas of common interest in the future. In developing this initiative SFIC will interact closely with other EU/MS initiatives and structures addressing STI cooperation with the USA, such as the SET-PLAN, the EU-US Energy Council and the Transatlantic Economic Council (TEC).

d) Seeking for stronger involvement in the follow-up of summits and in STI dialogues with third countries

SFIC is an advisory body in the field of STI in the context of bi-regional dialogues, summits and international fora. Therefore SFIC will contribute, as appropriate, to the preparation of activities and positions on STI issues vis-à-vis third countries.

e) Developing geographical or thematic initiatives

The initiation of new activities needs to take into account the availability of resources at national and EU level as well as the work of other ERA-related groups. Potential candidates for new geographical initiatives are Brazil, Russia, Japan, Africa and the ASEAN countries. However, approaching new countries, regions or themes would require a thorough information collection and analysis.

Thematically, SFIC will continue to work on the "Energy Pilot Initiative" in close coordination with the SET-PLAN. SFIC will interact with the SET-PLAN (and its bodies, in particular the SET-PLAN Steering Group) to reinforce synergies between the two initiatives, for the purpose of mutual learning and to avoid duplication of activities. The findings and deliverables of FP7 funded projects, such as INCO-Nets, ERA-NETs and BILATS should also be taken into account when defining the priorities for international cooperation.

4.3. Analysis and monitoring

Monitoring, analysing and assessing the impact and effectiveness of international STI cooperation policy measures, including indicator development and screening when needed, will strengthen evidence-based policy-making, better priority-setting and strategy building. This task should be further developed during this work period, in particular in the context of ongoing and future pilot initiatives. These initiatives will also be supported by identifying the needs for studies and planning for such.

The required analytical work should include systematic information exchange between SFIC partners, mapping of the state-of-play of cooperation with a target country or region, defining objectives/principles for cooperation, and identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and obstacles of cooperation with a targeted country or region.

4.4. Information sharing, communication and representation

Information sharing and consultation between SFIC partners and other stakeholders will be strengthened to support priority-setting, strategy building and better coordination. To enhance impact of its work SFIC will include an effective communication and promotion plan in its ongoing and planned activities. To this effect, SFIC will during 2011/12 intensify its efforts regarding communication and representation through measures, such as:

- Write strategic documents on international STI cooperation e.g. analysis reports on geographic or thematic initiatives;
- Promote the international dimension of ERA jointly with the FP7, notably its INCO programme. To do this a clear vision is needed of the EU funded international STI projects. An enhanced dialogue and a strengthened information sharing is also needed between SFIC and the INCO Programme.
- Further strengthen the network of EU and Member States' Science Counsellors and counsellors in charge of science, research and innovation;
- Organise conferences and workshops (related to the Pilot Initiatives), involving major stakeholders, as appropriate, in close cooperation with the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU ("Presidency Conference");
- Be systematically represented at major events and conferences addressing issues that are in the remit of SFIC's activities;
- As appropriate, contribute to the organisation, processing and follow-up of possible Ministerial Meetings between the EU, its Member States and third countries, in particular in the context of the Pilot Initiatives;
- Consider a stronger contribution and visibility of SFIC in bi-regional dialogues and summits, e.g. by SFIC members also being members of Senior Official Meetings;
- Develop tools for greater stakeholder involvement and better visibility and transparency of SFIC, which could include e.g. a dedicated website. In that context the role of an established prototype of an IT Sharepoint System will be evaluated¹³.

¹³ The Task Force "Information Sharing" operated between June 2009 and February 2010. The group produced three reports (see doc. CREST-SFIC 1351/10; doc. CREST-SFIC 1352/10; CREST-SFIC 1353/10).

5. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORK PROGRAMME

The Competitiveness Council of 26 May 2010 invited both Member States and the Commission to "consider ways and means to support the implementation of the coordinated and pilot initiatives". When implementing its Work Programme, SFIC will explore new ways and means to encourage Member States and the European Commission to mobilise existing and new resources to achieve the objectives set to SFIC, taking into account the availability of resources.

For the implementation of its Work Programme, SFIC will establish the appropriate working structures.

The Annual Reports of SFIC to the Council and the Commission in spring 2012 and 2013 will take stock of the state-of-implementation of the Work Programme and the progress made.

SFIC will inform the European Research Area Committee about its activities.

For the list of forthcoming SFIC meetings and events and the proposed agenda items see annex Annual Action Plan for 2011/12.

SFIC Action Plan 2011-2012

SFIC meetings and strategy workshops								
Provisional agenda items								
	SFIC meeting 20/6/2011	US workshop organised by DE Brainstorming ERA Framework	SFIC meeting 26/10/2011	China Workshop , IRP Working conditions, Brussels	SFIC meeting x/2/2012	SFIC meeting x/4/2012	Strategy workshop in Helsinki x-x/6/2012	SFIC meeting x/10-11/2012
Procedural items	Adoption of the SFIC Work Programme		ERA Framework SFIC contribution SFIC working methods and structures Criteria for setting priorities		Innovation Union and global cooperation ERA Framework Common strategic Framework	Visibility of SFIC ERA Framework Common strategic Framework		Preliminary Work Programme for 2013/14
Thematic or Geographical Initiatives	China: Roadmap based on the workshop findings India: State of play USA: DE presentation UK: Presentation on Science and Innovation network		China: Roadmap II & approval of the China WS II programme USA: Priority Setting I MS presentation on Brazil		USA: Priority Setting II Brazil: Priority Setting I MS presentation on Russia	China: State of Play India: State of Play USA:		Brazil: Priority setting II Russia: Priority setting I

Task Force Meetings													
	15/4/2011	20/5/2011	7/7/2011	6/9/2011	7/10/2011	x/11/2011	x/1/2012	x/4/2012	x/7/2012	x/9/2012	x/10/2012	x/11/2012	
Items to be prepared for SFIC plenary		WP	ERA framework	ERA framework	Working methods	Innovation union	Priority setting US	CSF		Priority setting : cooperation analysis Brazil		Assessment/monitoring of SFIC	Priority setting Russia: cooperation analysis
Summits and bi-regional dialogues (incl. STI SOMs) - to be completed by the Commission													
		USA 15-16 Sept			Brazil end 2011 / first half 2012			China April 2012	India 2012	EU-LAC SOM 2012			
Milestones for reporting													
Annual Report for Council							Annual Report for Council						
ERA groups Chairs		ERA groups Chairs											