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**EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA  
COMMITTEE  
Strategic Forum for International  
S&T Cooperation**

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**Secretariat**

**ERAC-SFIC 1353/11**

**NOTE**

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Subject: Second Report of Activities of the Strategic Forum for International S&T  
Cooperation (SFIC)

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Delegations will find attached Second Report of activities of SFIC (13 February 2010 - 28 February 2011) to the Council and the Commission, as adopted by written procedure on 18 May 2011.

**Second Report of Activities of the Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC)  
13 February 2010 - 28 February 2011**

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## **I. Report summary and conclusions**

### ***Implementing the new partnership for international scientific and technological cooperation***

This document is based on the reporting duties of SFIC as stated in its mandate<sup>1</sup>. Accordingly, progress is reported on achieving the realisation of the objectives of the European Partnership between the Commission and the Member States.<sup>2</sup>

### ***Progress to date***

Since February 2010, SFIC has made the following progress:

- Contributing to a European strategy on international S&T cooperation, notably by
  - o organising a SFIC strategy workshop at the invitation of the SFIC chair: reflexion on SFIC's role and mission;
  - o working on conceptual development of current and potential future cooperation priorities for the EU and its Member States with China and the USA;
  - o providing input with a view to strengthening the role of S&T in summits and bi-regional policy dialogues, notably EU-LAC (Latin America and the Caribbean) and EU-AU (African Union);
- Preparing and carrying out joint action between Member States, countries associated to the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) and the EU aiming at meeting SFIC objectives, notably by:
  - o implementing the India pilot initiative focusing on 'water and bio-resource related challenges' which serves as an example for a common approach for similar initiatives on a range of relevant topics, e.g., with other emerging/BRIC countries;
  - o continuing to work on a thematic pilot initiative on 'energy', by focusing on the strategic cooperation with the SET-Plan (European Strategic Energy Technology Plan);

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<sup>1</sup> Council Conclusions of 2 December 2008 concerning a European partnership for international scientific and technological cooperation. Official Journal of the European Union, C 18, 24.1.2009, p. 11- 13.

<sup>2</sup> An interim report on the state-of-play of ERA including the work of SFIC has been provided by the Belgian Presidency in November 2010; see "Securing the Knowledge ERA", Belgian Presidency Progress Report on the realisation of the European Research Area (doc. 16191/10).

- Fostering the external dimension of the ERA (European Research Area), notably by:
  - o catalysing national as well as EU resources for the implementation of joint action;
  - o strengthening the networking and cooperation among EU and Member States science counsellors in third countries, as well as between SFIC and science counsellors;
  - o seeking regular exchange with other ERA-related initiatives;
- Preparing a work programme for 2011/12.

### ***Outlook for 2011***

In 2011, SFIC will adopt and begin to implement its work programme 2011/12, which is currently envisaged to include the following broad priority areas:

- Contributing to the development of the international dimension of the forthcoming ERA framework;
- Providing recommendations for international cooperation strategies in the context of the Common Strategic Framework for Research and Innovation funding, and the Innovation Union Flagship Initiative, in particular in view of its Commitment 31;
- Developing further the existing Pilot Initiatives (India, China, USA, Energy) so as to contribute to the development of a more coherent European S&T strategy vis-à-vis those countries/in these areas;
- Strengthening the EU and Member States' science counsellor networks;
- Pursuing an effective communication and representation strategy.

Due consideration should be taken of the role of the international dimension in the context of the further development of ERA and its related instruments both at European Union and at national level.

## *Conclusions*

1. Strategy: SFIC has been involved in a broad array of activities, notably pilot initiatives; it now needs to focus increasingly on contributing towards an overarching international strategy for the ERA.
2. Impact: SFIC should build on bilateral and international S&T cooperation programmes of the EU and Member States, particularly as regards the Pilot Initiative with India which has proved the potential for the added value of joint action: European and Indian feedback and efforts within Europe to keep up the momentum after the stakeholder conference in India are evidence of the enhanced perception of Europe as a more strategic, coherent and attractive partner for third countries. In addition, there are examples of SFIC generating an impact on national and EU third country cooperation, thus supporting the realisation of the external dimension of the ERA.
3. Commitment: The new partnership between EU Member States and the European Commission has proved to be a sound basis for developing a EU strategy with third countries, and where appropriate, working towards joint international S&T activities in a ‘variable geometry’ approach. An increasing number of Member States (and countries associated to FP7) are actively involved in SFIC activities in partnership with the Commission. The Council has acknowledged the progress made by SFIC and reaffirmed its support to the work of SFIC.<sup>3</sup>
4. Resources: As was already stressed in last year's annual report, developing SFIC to its full potential and implementing the new common European partnership for international S&T cooperation implies substantial commitment, in terms of people and financial resources. To this end the Council invited Member States and the Commission in May 2010 to consider ways and means to support the implementation of the coordinated and pilot initiatives by SFIC.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Council Conclusions of 26 May 2010 on various issues related to the development of the ERA (doc. 10246/10).

<sup>4</sup> Idem.

In light of the progress made and the findings in this report, SFIC suggests that the Council and the Commission:

- take note of the progress made by the Forum so far, including its proposed coordinated initiatives as well as the priority initiatives proposed by SFIC for 2011-2012;
- support the speeding up of the preparations for a European strategy on international S&T cooperation (building upon the state-of-play of international cooperation in FP7 and definition of criteria for geographic and thematic priority setting, as well as initiatives developed within SFIC);
- encourage further information sharing and, where appropriate, further implementation of the pilot initiatives, in particular the India Pilot Initiative and the foreseen EU/MS-India Ministerial Meeting in Spring 2012;
- support the involvement of SFIC in the further development of the international dimension of the Innovation Union Flagship Initiative;
- provide the necessary political support to reinforce the work of SFIC as an important contribution to the external dimension of the ERA, in particular the ERA Framework.

## II. Background and Mandate

### 1) *Background: Towards a European strategy in international science and technology cooperation*

International cooperation of public research actors and companies plays an increasing role, both for the national competitiveness as well as for new knowledge creation in general. As the S&T potential in a number of world regions is swiftly increasing, the definition of an international S&T cooperation strategy with third countries, and where appropriate joint action between Member States and the EU towards third countries, becomes an important factor in enabling the full exploitation of the potential of S&T for Europe's future. Working effectively together will increase the attractiveness of Europe's research and foster better conditions for investment and acquisitions in key markets. Member States and the EU need to define, to the extent possible, common research and innovation priorities vis-à-vis and with third countries to draw most benefit from coordinated initiatives and actions. There are ongoing initiatives to define common priorities at a European level and bringing third countries into these discussions at an early stage to consider the international dimension will avoid duplication of activity and ensure a coherent approach.

A well coordinated and effectively communicated approach to international S&T cooperation can enable Europe to develop a consistent common position, where appropriate, on key global challenges and will help the European Union to participate more effectively in agenda setting in international fora such as the OECD, and in particular those with a UN focus such as UNESCO, WHO, and the ITU. Europe's foremost challenge consequently is to develop a strategic approach for international S&T cooperation that reflects the new requirements stemming from the changing global landscape.

The ERA progress report of the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU from November 2010 states that “the European Partnership for international S&T cooperation is quickly taking shape” and that “a more coordinated and more consistent approach in international S&T cooperation (between the Member States on the one hand, and between Member States and the European Union, on the other hand) must be fostered, by means of shared information, pilot projects and common agendas. Member States and the Commission should continue their efforts to identify ways and means to support the implementation of coordinated and pilot initiatives by the SFIC. Complementarities, prioritisation and efficiency should be at the core of European research policy. Better policy mixes are called for. More coordination between the different European policies and between European and national, regional and local policies is needed, leading to more coherence in European and Member State research policy on the basis of the subsidiary principle.”<sup>5</sup> SFIC contributes to addressing these needs and will make its contribution in full partnership with other relevant actors at European and national levels.

Many recent policy initiatives at EU, Member State and regional levels have sought to improve the performance of research and innovation systems in the EU. However, the gaps in research, innovation and economic performance that still exist between the EU, its Member States and its major trading partners, as well as the wide disparity in performance levels across Member States and regions is testament to the need to do more if the EU is to continue to be a strong, innovation-led economy. Moreover, the scale of the new challenges presented by the financial crisis, major societal challenges, globalisation etc. underlines the urgency of the situation: there is the need to shift up a gear in the development of a strong research and innovation system capable of powering sustainable economic growth and enabling the EU and its Member States to compete on equal terms with our major economic competitors in the global marketplace. The recent research and technology investments in China and India are seen as a challenge which puts pressure on Europe's competitiveness, but could also offer new opportunities for European researchers and enterprises.

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<sup>5</sup> Securing the knowledge ERA: Belgian Presidency progress report on the realisation of the European Research Area (doc. 16191/10)

Against this background the European Commission adopted the Innovation Union Flagship initiative in October 2010<sup>6</sup>, which will be a key to achieving the goals of the Europe 2020 Strategy<sup>7</sup>. The Innovation Union Flagship initiative proposes<sup>8</sup> that the EU and the Member States treat scientific cooperation with third countries as an issue of common concern and develop common approaches. This should contribute to global approaches and solutions to societal challenges as well as the establishment of a level playing field. The Commission announced to propose in 2012, together with the ERA Framework, common EU/Member State priorities in S&T as a basis for possible coordinated positions or joint initiatives vis-à-vis third countries, building on the work of the Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation. In November 2010 the Council underlined this request.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> COM (2010) 546 final; see also Conclusions of the European Council of 4 February 2011 (doc. EUCO 2/11).

<sup>7</sup> COM (2010) 2020 final.

<sup>8</sup> COM (2010) 546 final, commitment 31.

<sup>9</sup> See Competitiveness Council, Conclusions on Europe 2020 Flagship Initiative: Innovation Union, 26 November 2011 (doc. 17165/10).

## 2) *Mandate*

In the Council Conclusions<sup>10</sup> of 2 December 2008, the Council invited Member States and the Commission “to form a European Partnership in the field of international scientific and technological cooperation with a view to implementing a European strategy and to collaborate within a dedicated configuration of CREST to drive forward the European Partnership for S&T cooperation”.

The main tasks of SFIC are:

- 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;
- where appropriate, coordinating activities of a similar nature implemented by Member States and the Community (in '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.

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<sup>10</sup> Official Journal of the European Union, C 18, 24.1.2009, p. 11-13.

### **III. Detailed progress report**

#### ***1) Contribution to a European strategy on international S&T cooperation***

##### ***a. Organisation of a SFIC strategy workshop at the invitation of the SFIC chair.***

In September 2010 the SFIC chair invited Member States and the European Commission to an informal two day strategy workshop at the Villa Vigoni. The main objectives of the workshop were to discuss SFIC's role with respect to the external dimension of the ERA, as well as the Forum's working methods and potential future priorities. At the end of the workshop, a Chair's summary was presented: future tasks of the Forum should include

- strategic priority setting: the development of a long-term international strategy and in parallel development of pilot initiatives;
- identifying hot spots and strengths to address global challenges;
- being facilitator and platform for coordination of the Commission and Member States partnership;
- improve mutual learning and assuming an information task;

b. Conceptual work on current and potential future cooperation priorities for the EU and its Member States with China and the USA

Both China and the USA have been identified early on as priorities for defining an S&T cooperation strategy for EU and Member States. In order to prepare a strategic priority setting, a number of analytical activities have been undertaken.

At the end of 2009 SFIC considered “developing, in 2010, further pilots with developing and industrialised countries as well as with emerging economies, whilst the implementation of the present activities should be given due priority”.<sup>11</sup> Already in the annual report 2009/10, SFIC indicated that for the emerging/BRIC countries, China and Brazil may be taken into focus.<sup>12</sup> In the case of China SFIC agreed to use an approach which would ensure a smooth and well founded "phasing-in" of different activities and establishing a body of evidence on the Chinese S&T-system, policies and strategies first. Based on reports prepared by the Task Force “Priority Setting” SFIC supported the idea to discuss this work and to exchange information and views on bilateral S&T cooperation with China in a dedicated workshop (May 2011) with the objective to make progress towards a more coherent EU/Member States strategy vis-à-vis China.

In December 2009 SFIC considered that the S&T cooperation with the US has the potential for substantial improvement by adding a strong ERA perspective to the existing bilateral cooperation of SFIC members with the US. Therefore, the US has been chosen as a pilot for industrialised countries with a view to pursue a more coherent European strategy vis-à-vis the US.

As there was no systematic information about bilateral S&T cooperation of the EU and Member States vis-à-vis and with the US available, SFIC considered it appropriate to start collecting information about SFIC members' and observers' cooperation with the US (at governmental level first) through a questionnaire<sup>13</sup> and building on the work carried out by the EU and Member States' Science Counsellors in the US.

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<sup>11</sup> CREST-SFIC 1352/10.

<sup>12</sup> CREST-SFIC 1354/10.

<sup>13</sup> This questionnaire was based on the one developed by the CREST Working Group on 'Internationalisation of R&D' in 2007/08, which served as an efficient model to gather substantive information on EU, Members States' and Associated Countries' S&T cooperation with Brazil, China, India and Russia. It also built on the short questionnaire addressed to the members of the Task Force in 2009 to prepare the SFIC 'India Pilot Initiative'.

This information has been collected and analysed between April and October 2010 and a respective report has been discussed in SFIC.<sup>14</sup>

The main points from the report were:

- Major objectives of S&T cooperation with the US can be summarised into two major groups which is RTDI and competitiveness related objectives – especially support of mobility of researchers and academic staff - and global challenges, politics and diplomacy;
- The most commonly cited examples of S&T cooperation were joint bilateral research projects, bilaterally funded mobility schemes, and joint multilateral calls and programmes;
- Thematic priorities are energy and renewables, health, medicine and pharmaceuticals, environment, and sustainable technologies and resource management;
- Main issues for joint framework settings are removing legal barriers for S&T cooperation, IPR, multilateral coordinated calls with joint priority areas, global challenges and areas of common interest, large-scale investment projects, coordinated mobility schemes;
- Areas of high potential for value added of SFIC initiatives could be energy technologies and sustainable development, global challenges, environment and climate change, ICT, cyber security and future internet services, and advanced technologies.

When developing this initiative SFIC will take ongoing initiatives, such as the Transatlantic Economic Council and the EU-US Energy Council, duly into account in order to identify good practices and to develop a coherent EU/Member States policy.

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<sup>14</sup> IPTS, Report on SFIC questionnaire: S&T Cooperation with the United States of America, October 2010.

c. Strengthening the role of S&T in summits and bi-regional policy dialogues, notably EU-LAC and EU-AU

SFIC started to hold discussions in advance of major Summits / Ministerial meetings in view of identifying the potential to raise the profile of S&T. SFIC has been kept informed by the acting Presidency of the EU Council on upcoming Summits and Ministerial Meetings. In 2010, SFIC contributed towards the S&T aspects addressed at two bi-regional summits, EU-Latin America (EU-LAC) and EU-African Union (EU-AU).

EU-Latin America

SFIC followed in particular the EU-Latin America S&T cooperation, with a Ministerial conference having taken place on 14 May 2010 and a summit on 18/19 May 2010 in Madrid. The summit included a joint declaration for research and technology, containing also suggestions on the possible role of SFIC in preparing input for such processes. In general terms it foresees that SFIC acts as a platform to discuss and to contribute to a possible common European position at a very early stage in the preparation of a summit and also by identifying priorities and strategies. SFIC will contribute to strategic orientations and principles for the new EU-LAC Joint Initiative for Research and Innovation as approved during the Ministerial Conference. The first EU-LAC Senior Officials Meetings (SOM) took place on 28 and 29 March 2011 to adopt a "roadmap" for implementing the Action Plan.

## EU-Africa

Based on the conclusions of the Competitiveness Council of December 2008 considering to explore "further cooperation with developing countries as part of the EU's overall S&T strategy"<sup>15</sup> and of May 2010 inviting SFIC to consider its involvement in the preparation of the EU-Africa Summit in November 2010<sup>16</sup>, SFIC acknowledged that there is scope for improving the coherence of the activities with Africa at various levels, including the implementation of the 8th Partnership (science, information society and space). To this end, SFIC formulated a recommendation to the Council to establish a Joint Africa-EU High Level S&T Policy Dialogue in September 2010.<sup>17</sup> The Belgian Presidency of the EU Council presented this to the Competitiveness Council of October 2010 which took note of the recommendation. The EU-AU-Summit in November 2010 in Tripoli finally endorsed a renewed Action Plan for the 8th Partnership and launched a high level S&T policy dialogue, in line with the recommendation of SFIC of 17 September 2010. SFIC will continue to provide input to the development of a high-level EU-Africa S&T dialogue.

## 2) *Information sharing*

The Sharepoint System, an electronic tool for information sharing, has been set up by SFIC Task Force I ("Information Sharing") in 2009 and has been tested in 2010 for better exchanging information among SFIC members that could serve as a basis for developing specific joint pilot initiatives. All SFIC and Task Force members received access. Such an information tool should help to avoid the duplication of efforts by sharing already existing mappings, reports, data collections, etc, and if necessary to complete and amend such information. Task Force I completed its mandate in February 2010. However, further improvement of information sharing procedures, and if necessary also of tools, is foreseen.

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<sup>15</sup> Official Journal of the European Union, C 18, 24.1.2009.

<sup>16</sup> Competitiveness Council, Conclusions concerning various issues related to the development of the European Research Area, Brussels, 26 May 2010, p. 9-10 (doc. 10246/10).

<sup>17</sup> ERAC-SFIC 1356/10.

### 3) *Internal organisation*

As concerns SFIC's internal organisation, SFIC has extended the mandate of Task Force II (“Priority Setting”) in December 2010.<sup>18</sup> The participation of SFIC members and observers in the Task Force will continue to be open-ended and on a voluntary basis. In 2011 SFIC will adapt its working methods and structures as appropriate.

It was also decided that in the event the SFIC chair is not in the position to attend a SFIC meeting, as an intermediate solution the Chairmanship would be ensured by the Presidency.

### 4) *Joint action: SFIC pilot initiatives*

#### a. *The EU/MS-India Pilot initiative on “water and bio-resource related challenges” (IPI)*

Building upon the analysis done in the previous reporting year, EU and Member States as well as associated countries decided to implement the pilot initiative vis-à-vis and with India with a focus on “water and bio-resource related challenges”, whilst being open to expansion to other themes later.<sup>19</sup>

As an important step, SFIC organised in cooperation with the India Department of Science and Technology (DST) a conference on 11 and 12 November 2010 in New Delhi entitled “India-EU and Member States Partnership for a Strategic Roadmap in Research and Innovation”<sup>20</sup>. The new partnership approach between the Member States and the EU provided a clear message at this conference of the EU and Member States ‘speaking with a coordinated voice’.

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<sup>18</sup> Currently participating in the Task Force “Priority Setting”: AT, BE, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, IT, PT, SE, SI; CH, NO, TR; and COM.

<sup>19</sup> Currently the IPI involves the following participants: AT, BE, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, IT, NL, PT, SE; CH, NO, TR; and COM.

<sup>20</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/research/iscp/index.cfm?pg=india-eu-conference-2010>

The conference produced recommendations and identified common activities and instruments for a coherent research and innovation cooperation package to be included in a Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda and roadmap, and implemented by the Commission and the participating Member States vis-à-vis and with the Indian authorities. The conference Chairpersons acknowledged the importance of the event and its recommendations and marked their commitment to go ahead with the development and implementation of a strategic roadmap in research and innovation between India and EU and Member States.<sup>21</sup> The EU-India Summit of 10 December 2010 also recognised the political importance of the EU/Member States-India Pilot Initiative.

Work is going on to implement the recommendations of this conference, for example to synchronising and better coordinating already planned calls and other bilateral cooperation initiatives by means of identifying and jointly developing more integrated forms of cooperation (e.g. "joint call virtual common pot" model, multilateral calls or a "Lead Member State" model). These activities are complemented by establishing a joint calendar of key events and committee meetings. Additionally, a joint information campaign in India is under preparation by the EU and Member States Science Counsellors in Delhi. A strategic roadmap in research and innovation" between India and the EU and Member States, based on the mapping of bilateral cooperation and priority setting, is planned to be drafted by the end of 2011.

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<sup>21</sup> See *Joint Conference Chairpersons' statement* for more details (Annex III).

b. *Pilot Initiative “Energy”*

For the Pilot Initiative "Energy" close interaction with the Strategic Energy Technology Plan (SET-PLAN)<sup>22</sup> has been and will be further sought. SFIC highlighted that energy could be a particularly relevant topic for cooperation with emerging/BRIC economies as well as industrialised countries. However, it was agreed that no parallel structures should be created and that the activities of the EU-US Energy Council should duly be taken into account and synergies exploited where appropriate. To this end, individual information exchange with the members of the SET-PLAN Steering Group at national level has taken place as well as the participation of SFIC in subsequent SET-PLAN Steering Group meetings and vice versa.

SFIC's work was presented by the Chair of the Task Force II (ES) in the debate on international cooperation during the SET-PLAN Presidency Conference on 4 June 2010 in Madrid. On 15 and 16 November 2010 the next SET-PLAN Presidency Conference took place in Brussels. Objectives of the international cooperation day of the conference were, firstly, to improve the coordination in Europe when participating in international fora and, secondly, to discuss 'best practices' in international cooperation at Member States, industrial, and research organisation level – both with the final objective to look at benefits for international cooperation in the SET-PLAN. SFIC has been represented by the Danish delegate in agreement with the SFIC Chair by contributing to the 'best practices'-session where an overview of SFIC's different approaches and its working methods has been given. SFIC will further contribute to the SET-PLAN Strategic priority setting within the context of international cooperation.

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<sup>22</sup> COM (2007) 723 final.

## 5) *Fostering the external dimension of the ERA*

An important aspect towards a European strategy for international S&T cooperation is common priority setting and the better coordination of existing measures. To this end, SFIC is constantly identifying areas in which coordinated or joint initiatives provide added value compared to bilateral activities.

### *Providing national as well EU level resources for the implementation of joint action*

In 2010, both on national and EU level, existing resources were directed towards the implementation of SFIC objectives. Austria and Norway provided resources for their experts in order to undertake analytical work in the preparation of a SFIC initiative with China. The European Commission provided resources for the organisation of the Stakeholder conference in India as well as for the analytical work in preparation for the SFIC initiatives with the US and with China. The Commission assumed the Secretariat for the Task Force and the India Technical Group. Germany, chairing SFIC until February 2011, provided resources for the organisation of the informal strategy workshop at the Villa Vigoni in Italy.

### *Strengthening the networking and cooperation among EU and MS science counsellors in third countries as well as between SFIC and science counsellors*

The work of science counsellors is an element to develop the European partnership and joint or coordinated activities of the Member States and the EU, e.g. through the so-called 'mirror group' of science counsellors in Delhi contributing to the implementation of the India Pilot Initiative. As regards the strengthening of the networking of science counsellors, SFIC intensified the involvement of science counsellors in discussions about a particular target country and in the preparation of the pilot initiatives, distributed to science counsellors relevant SFIC documents as a matter of course, and invited EU science counsellors in particular to meetings of the Task Force "Priority Setting".

SFIC has welcomed the important work science counsellors already pursue in partner countries and encouraged them to continue and intensify their activities. SFIC, however, pointed out that SFIC members need to actively engage in a good flow of information in both directions and encourage cooperation with their respective science counsellors.

### *Seeking regular exchange with other ERA-related initiatives*

SFIC strives to ensure that its activities concerning international science and technology cooperation are coherent and complementary with those of the four additional ERA initiatives<sup>23</sup> of 2008. As most of the Joint Programming Initiatives have a global dimension intensified exchange with SFIC is expected to generate synergies. Mutual exchange of information was also sought with the ERAC Working Group on Knowledge Transfer (KT). SFIC will endeavour to ensure a regular exchange and coherence of measures with these ERA-initiatives and lend its support and expertise as regards the development of the international dimension of these initiatives.

There is an increasing cooperation between the ongoing INCO projects as part of the Capacities Programme of FP7 and SFIC activities. The ERA-Net with India (New Indigo) will contribute in 2011 to the further implementation of the SFIC pilot initiative with India, the INCO-Net with the ASEAN countries (SEE-Net) proposed to support SFIC activities with ASEAN, as did the INCO-Net with Sub-Sahara Africa (CAAST-Net) with respect to the implementation of the EU-AU S&T related cooperation.

### *Mutual learning about delivery of SFIC objectives at national and EU level*

The realisation of the ERA requires that Member States include a European dimension in their national S&T policies, including their international cooperation. A key role for SFIC in this respect is to provide a platform for mutual learning about the European dimension in national policies as well as to act as a nucleus to design and implement joint action among SFIC members. In 2010, the first impacts of SFIC on national and EU level could be observed, thus supporting the realisation of the external dimension of the ERA:

For DE, the cooperation with Africa in S&T is a priority in the current legislative period. A new cooperation strategy is currently under preparation, which will include a strengthening of bilateral activities, the use of SFIC for seeking EU wide joint action as well as multilateral activities such as the establishment of health innovation centres under the G8 umbrella.

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<sup>23</sup> (1) researchers' careers and mobility, (2) research infrastructures, (3) knowledge sharing and (4) joint programming. (Commission Green Paper of 4 April 2007 - The European Research Area: New Perspectives, COM(2007) 161 final).

For FI, especially cooperation with the BRIC countries in the field of water and bio-resource related challenges as well as in climate change, energy and global health issues are of great importance. In the current SFIC period of 2011-2012 Finland will further develop its bilateral S&T&I cooperation with countries currently in the focus of SFIC activities such as India, China and US and welcomes the joint activities with these countries also on EU level.

FR develops the international dimension of its national strategy for research and innovation, which focuses on the reinforcement of S&T cooperation with the BRICS and developed countries in Asia (Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Singapore). Each priority takes into account the participation of France and the targeted country in FP7 projects. FR considers the articulation between the national and the European level as very necessary and valuable in priority setting with those countries.

As regards the EU/Member States-India Pilot Initiative on water and bio-resources related challenges the European Commission has taken several commitments to contribute to its implementation:

Firstly, it contributed with EUR 0.1 million to the organisation of the conference "India – EU and Member States partnership for a strategic roadmap in research and innovation - focal theme: water and bio-resources related challenges" on 11 and 12 November 2010 in Delhi. Secondly, the FP7 INCO work programme 2011 (published in July 2010) included actions of a total of EUR 0.9 million to promote a wide-range networking of scientific research communities and stakeholders from Europe and India as well as the establishment of linkages between EU research institutions and projects or programmes active vis-à-vis and with India. It also included the "INCO-LAB activity"<sup>24</sup>, which amongst other major partner countries also targeted India, and the activity related to India has an available budget of EUR 2 million.

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<sup>24</sup> This activity aims at opening the activities of the joint institutes to researchers from at least 3 different Member, States and Associated Countries other than those owning the facilities; increase the scientific cooperation between researchers from the Member States and Associated Countries and those of the host country through the involvement of additional researchers in ongoing research activities as well as in the preparation of new joint projects via the organisation of joint seminars, summer schools and similar activities, preparing the way for opening the institutional arrangement of the joint institutes to additional Member States or Associated Countries governments/ministries, research organisations.

The "INCO-HOUSE" activity is a feasibility study funded with a budget of EUR 0.25 million per project. This latter complements the INCO-LAB activity and aims at identifying the conditions for opening the institutional arrangement of joint institutes funded by one or several Member States and Associated Countries in India to other Member States.

Thirdly, the Commission in 2010 agreed with the Indian Department of Biotechnology (DBT) to initiate a "Partnering initiative" on bio-waste and biomasses with a budget of EUR 1 million from each side.

Furthermore, the ERA-Net *New INDIGO* has since last year established a multi-country cooperation with India involving six EU Member States. In the 2010 call with the Indian Department of Biotechnology (DBT) 13 multilateral projects were funded. In 2011/2012 new calls in the area of water related challenges are scheduled both with the Department of Science and Technology (DST) and with DBT as partners.

Annex to the Annual Report of SFIC 2010

**Review of ERA-related groups: statement of SFIC Chair**

In December 2009, the Council invited Member States and the Commission to initiate a review of the ERA related groups before the end of 2010 (*Council Resolution of 3 December 2009 on the enhanced governance of the European Research Area*).

In December 2010 ERAC launched an internal debate about the foreseen review and Ms Jane Peters (UK) was appointed as Rapporteur. On behalf of the ERAC Steering Board the Rapporteur prepared and distributed a questionnaire on all four concerned ERA groups, including SFIC.

During its meeting of 23 February 2011, ERAC took note of the report prepared by the Rapporteur on the replies of the questionnaire. In addition, the chairs of the concerned ERA groups were asked to give their opinion of their respective group. It is foreseen that the Council adopts conclusions on the ERA group review in May 2011. As dedicated configuration of CREST/ERAC, SFIC presents its findings on the review in the context of its annual reporting requirements.

This annex to the annual report of SFIC presents the main findings of the ERA group review. It follows the main elements of the ERAC questionnaire. Eventually, some general conclusions are drawn.

The findings are based on the responses from 12 Member States (AT, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, NL, PT, SE, SI and UK) two associated countries (CH, NO) and a letter from the Director-General of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Research and Innovation expressing the views of the Commission on the ERA related groups. This represents responses shared with the SFIC Chair and almost 40% of SFIC members (27 MS, 10 AC and the EC).

The first part of the ERAC questionnaire is asking about the past effectiveness of SFIC. All responses show that SFIC has not yet delivered the objectives as set out in the original mandate. Most SFIC members argue that due to the long-term nature of SFIC's work, a full delivery of the original objectives can not be expected already after two years. A number of responses refer to the information sharing objective, which should be generally improved. In addition, more work on a European internationalisation strategy should be undertaken. All responses state that the mandate of SFIC was sufficiently clear from the outset and that SFIC activities are clearly aligned to meet the objectives. The level of Member States' participation is seen by some responses as generally decreasing, with a general lack of resources and a sometimes unclear division of labour between SFIC and Task Force II 'Priority Setting' as possible reasons. Some responses describe a first impact of SFIC activities on delivering the ERA, both on national as well as European level. However, most responses recall in one way or the other that one has to consider that the European Partnership for international S&T cooperation is still a new and ongoing process and therefore is still constantly evolving.

The second part of the questionnaire is asking about the future role of SFIC. Questions here include issues such as validity and potential revisions of the mandate. All responses state that the mandate remains valid, but some revisions should be considered due to the changed political environment, especially in the context of the Innovation Union Flagship initiative. Most responses call for a continuation of SFIC, especially due to the long term nature of its objectives. Some responses call for a stronger cooperation with other ERA groups and especially with ERAC or a stronger focus on strategic issues.

The third part of the questionnaire deals with adaptations needed. Most responses do not see currently any need for adaptations in the membership of the group but see room for improvement with regard to the involvement of the wider research community or other ERA groups and ERAC.

The fourth part of the questionnaire is dealing with governance issues. All responses underline that the current governance model proved to be working effectively. Again, some responses call for a closer interaction with ERAC and with the related Programme Committee for FP7. Due to the difficult economic situation in most Member States, a number of responses call for a general need to streamline ERA activities as much as possible.

### Conclusions:

The responses from SFIC members and observers confirmed the validity of and need for SFIC. Due to the long-term nature of the mandate and its objectives, SFIC should in general continue taking into account the following points:

- As a Member States driven configuration and with the European Commission as an equal partner, the quality and effectiveness of SFIC depends on the commitment of Member States and the European Commission. SFIC should consider ways to generally ensure a high level of commitment.
- SFIC should identify the right balance between strategic work on the development of a European S&T internationalisation strategy and concrete activities leading to a visible impact on both national and EU level.
- The important objective of information sharing should be improved as a necessary basis for strategy development and the possible preparation of joint or coordinated activities.
- The cooperation between SFIC and ERAC should be improved.

*Conclusions by the Chair: the Villa Vigoni Paper*

*Role and Vision of SFIC*

SFIC is an Advisory Body to the Council of the EU and has an ambitious mandate to:

- 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 Partnership between the Member States, the European Commission and the Council continue to be committed to implement this mandate. This mandate is still not fully accomplished: SFIC is developing concrete pilot actions but has not yet worked on developing an international S&T cooperation strategy for the EU and the Member States.

The implementation of SFIC's mandate requires a constant refinement and reflection on its role and vision, including the upcoming review of the ERA initiatives and the new ERAG mandate need to be taken into consideration when refining SFIC's role and vision.

**Common priority setting** for international R&D cooperation is the cornerstone of this mandate. The common priorities should stem as much as possible from prior analytical work, whilst recognising that political factors (science diplomacy) play an increasing (and often unpredictable) role in priority setting. Against this background, it seems that a parallel development of existing and future pilot initiatives, practical measures and constant analytical work is the more pragmatic approach in the process to adopt a roadmap towards an international long-term strategy.

The strategic priorities of SFIC should be in line with (and be supportive of) the **Global Challenges** identified in high level political processes, such as the EU 2020 Strategy, the Innovation Union Communication or the GPC. The SFIC's role then consists of the further elaboration and fine-tuning of their international dimension with regard to regional and thematic aspects. Important **issues to keep in mind** for this further elaboration include:

- The identification of geographic and thematic hot spots/strengths that make collaboration with the particular areas attractive. They may differ significantly across partner regions and themes but they constitute important elements of cooperation. The continuity and persistence to assure longer term benefits and impacts, which is facilitated by the adequate investment of human and financial resources.
- The interaction between science diplomacy (policy driven priorities), science policy and stakeholders. Effectiveness and impact improve if there is interaction between the political dialogue and the science policy dialogue.
- The increasing recognition of the role of science in evidence based international policy making. Therefore SFIC's scope should extend beyond the pure R&D field at both national and EU level and also contribute to sectoral policies. The involvement of SFIC in bi-regional dialogues/summits is one way of supporting coordination between policy fields.

SFIC is a *platform* where Commission and the Member States can orient themselves and align and coordinate their activities and policies in international research cooperation. The added value of a European intervention compared to individual bilateral agreements must clearly be spelled out.

In order to fulfil this role SFIC should take into consideration the *international dimension of all ERA initiatives* and the framework programme. In particular, SFIC should contribute to the GPC process, when appropriate, with developing the international dimension of the JPIs.

Finally SFIC has an *information task* collecting and reporting about international research cooperation strategies of the member states and the Commission. Progress is visible in that respect but in the future more information sharing and better processed information is needed to be used for evidence-based decisions. Science counsellors, Commission and national thematic directorates as well as ministries and DGs have a role to play as both providers and users of relevant information. Identifying ways to cooperate with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Embassies is thus another task, which would facilitate SFIC to accomplish its mandate.

*Mutual reinforcement*, which is the rationale behind the existence of SFIC, can be improved through the systematic presentation of member states' international S&T cooperation policies in the SFIC meetings.

### ***Working Method and Governance***

SFIC delegates have a clear task now, more than in the past, to promote interministerial cooperation at the national level to comply with the SFIC role and vision mentioned above. This *horizontal policy coordination* applies equally to the Council and Commission services. This type of coordination is an internal process, which needs to be discussed and agreed (or not) internally in each country and the Commission. It may be politically challenging but any progress in this domain will facilitate the work of SFIC.

Work can only be effective, if the parties involved have a clear interest in the design and outcomes of any new activity. They have to allocate resources to be continuous and persistent. This inevitably leads to variable geometry participation. However, efforts are needed to increase *the inclusiveness* by highlighting the added value of participation, selecting priorities that are relevant for many member states and thus possibly attracting as many countries as possible. Equally, efforts are needed to attract the science community and other stakeholders.

To be successful SFIC activities are expected to go beyond mobility and awareness raising and result in *real research cooperation*. Depending on the partner country and the challenge to be tackled this can take any form from the whole spectrum of research cooperation: risk-loaded basic research, blue sky research, applied research, development demonstration and technology transfer. In this process SFIC delegates need to cooperate and seek commitment and ownership by their respective thematic directorates. International R&D directorates funding and possibilities are leverage factors expected i.a. to help increase the impact of thematic research.

In terms of *internal governance* it is important to keep high level participation and interest in SFIC. Preparatory work is needed to give SFIC delegates the necessary background and information that leads to substantial discussions and decision making. Although no new structures are needed it is clear that the decision making has to be prepared by a supporting structure (e.g. Task Force, Working Group) in advance.

*SFIC's choices are guided primarily by their potential impact.* Visibility derives primarily from the SFIC achievement, but is also needed to prove the Partnership's ability to define common priorities and implement joined initiatives. Research cooperation, also internationally with 3rd countries, remains in shared responsibility of European Commission and Member States. Joint activities of Member States with international partners in variable geometry can achieve the visibility and level of representation the involved parties agree upon.



Conference  
11-12 November 2010



## India-EU and Member States Partnership for a Strategic Roadmap in Research and Innovation

*Focal theme: Water and Bioresources Related Challenges*

### Chairpersons' Statement

The conference mobilised policy makers, administrators and stakeholders of research and innovation for exploring new ways and mechanisms for India-EU and Member States to work together more effectively and realise more fully the societal benefits flowing from the 2007 India-EU Science and Technology Ministerial Conference *Delhi Communiqué*.

It took stock of good practices in bilateral and multilateral cooperation initiatives, programmes, institutional entities and tools existing between India and the EU/ Member States and identified ways forward for a collective response in resolving global societal challenges. The solutions for water and bio-resources related challenges have been identified by all partners as one of the priorities for the development of a strategic roadmap in research and innovation cooperation.

The conference mapped out ideas and put forward recommendations (a blueprint) for the development and implementation of a strategic roadmap in research and innovation between India – EU and Member States based on:

- More effective and coordinated India-EU and Member States research and innovation activities.
- More efficient use of existing and future resources and instruments to support strategic cooperation of India-EU and Member States in addressing global societal challenges.
- Identifying **together** through appropriate mechanisms and dialogues ways to address global societal challenges, such as water related challenges, including their health, food, environment and industrial innovation related aspects.

Dr. T. Ramasami, Dr. A. Pauli and V. Rieke, the chairpersons of the event, thanked the participants for their valuable contributions and welcomed the *alliance initiative*

of this conference, which marks the beginning of the India-EU and Member States Partnership in research and innovation through new mechanisms.

They considered that the conference should be the starting point for similar events dealing with other global challenges, such as climate change, energy and food security, and global health in future.

They underlined that the recommendations of this conference will feed into the development and implementation of the strategic road map in order to build on the objectives laid down in the 2007 India-EU Science and Technology Ministerial Conference *Delhi Communiqué* as well as to further reinforce cooperation. They stated that they will continue to provide political momentum to the India-EU/Member States strategic partnership in research and innovation.

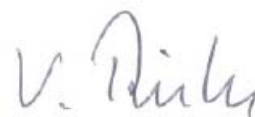
*Signed at Delhi on 12 November 2010*



*Dr. T. Ramasami*



*Dr. A. Pauli*



*V. Rieke*

*Secretary*

*Department of  
Science and Technology  
Government of India*

*Deputy Director General*

*Directorate General for Research  
European Commission*

*Chairman of the  
EU/Member States  
Strategic Forum for  
International S&T  
Cooperation*

*Main suggestions/recommendations which emerged from the conference sessions*

*Participants:*

1. Recognised the importance of **working together** in S&T&I as a basis for finding the most efficient, sustainable and affordable solutions to global societal challenges, notably by
  - highlighting the need to continue to exchange information on existing and future activities as a first important step for better coordination of future bilateral and multilateral activities;
  - emphasising the importance of identifying ongoing and future research needs and priority areas for India – EU/Member States collaborative research and innovation projects and activities in order to fulfil the mandate emanating from the Dehli Communiqué;
  - considering a more coherent and structured approach in S&T cooperation by synchronising priorities, topics and deadlines for bilateral/multilateral activities, by pooling existing resources (including funding programmes) and professional expertise from India and EU and Member States in view of launching coordinated and co-funded actions and initiatives;
  - identifying the type of collaborative or institutional instruments best suited for implementing the India-EU/Member States strategic road map in research and innovation.
2. Acknowledged the broad principles<sup>1</sup> of the India Pilot Initiative prepared by the European Commission and the Member States in the framework of the Strategic Forum for S&T International Cooperation (SFIC) and reaffirmed the need to implement it.
3. Welcomed the EU 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme for Research and Development funded measures, schemes and initiatives geared to foster the strategic India-EU/Member States partnership, such as:
  - the *NEW INDIGO* ERA-NET scheme, an important coordination tool for the partnership approach, as well as the Network of European researchers abroad – Euraxess-Links India initiative, etc.

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<sup>1</sup> Laid down in the concept paper on the India Pilot Initiative

- the "*Partnering Initiative*" which is being launched by the European Commission together with the India Department of Biotechnology, whose aim is to support enhanced networking and multilateral cooperation between India – EU/ Member States programmes in the field of bio-waste, bio-energy and biomass,
4. Recognised the importance of flow of knowledge through enhanced mobility of researchers from Europe to India and from India to Europe and stressed the added value such mobility brings when researchers abroad stay connected with their home country. Mobility and the networking of researcher should therefore be promoted and supported.
  5. Welcomed the richness of bilateral EU Member States – India cooperation in research and innovation, ranging from joint/coordinated calls to bilateral institutional entities. Such bilateral cooperation, along with the EU-India bilateral cooperation, form an essential element of this new India-EU/Member States Partnership.
  6. Acknowledged the mutual interest in continuing exchanges on best practices in innovation policy and innovation support with a view to strengthen cooperation, as for instance on clusters.
  7. Underlined the importance of connecting Indian and European small and medium enterprises to stimulate and promote development of innovative products and services as well business cooperation.