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Strategic Forum for International
S&T Cooperation**

Secretariat

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NOTE

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

Delegations will find attached Third Report of Activities of SFIC (1 March 2011 - 29 February 2012) to the Council and the Commission, as adopted via written procedure on 20 April 2012.

**Third Report of Activities of the Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC)
1 March 2011 - 29 February 2012**

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I. Report summary and conclusions

1) *Progress on the implementation of the European Partnership for international S&T cooperation*

This document is based on the reporting duties of SFIC as stated in its mandate¹.

Accordingly, progress is reported on achieving the objectives of the European Partnership in the field of international scientific and technological cooperation ("S&T cooperation") between the European Commission and the Member States, with a view to implementing a European strategy for international S&T cooperation.

In line with its 2011-2012 Work Programme, SFIC has, since March 2011, developed activities related to its mandate and objectives, as follows:

1. Development of the external dimension of ERA: towards a European strategy for international STI cooperation, notably by:

- The **SFIC opinion on the ERA Framework**: SFIC submitted its opinion as contribution to the ERAC opinion on the ERA Framework, in which SFIC strongly recommended the design of a **European strategy for international STI cooperation** with clear European added-value. This strategy would serve as a set of common principles and guidelines for Member States, Associated Countries and the EU in their international STI cooperation activities;
- Developing **common priorities and a common European added-value** for the strategic focus of SFIC's work and the identification of common guidelines for priority setting;
- Fostering **networking and cooperation** with other ERA Groups and related initiatives, EU and MS science counsellors in third countries and key stakeholders;

¹ 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.

- Strengthening the **role of S&T** in summits and bi-regional/bilateral policy dialogues;
 - Enhancing the **visibility of SFIC** (organisation and/or participation in events, development of a SFIC-related website, etc).
2. Development of joint EU/MS (AC) - SFIC initiatives, notably with:
- *India*: Developing the India initiative which serves as an example for a common approach for similar initiatives on a range of relevant topics and with other emerging/BRIC countries. This includes the preparation of a **draft EU/MS-India Strategic Agenda for Research and Innovation (SA)** which identifies important thematic areas of common interest (water, bio-resources, energy, health and ICT) and benefit for enhanced cooperation. The development of the SA is the result of concerted efforts by the Commission, Member States and Associated Countries and was transmitted to the Indian government in November 2011. A joint declaration on research and innovation was signed at the last EU-India Summit on 10 February 2012.
 - *China*: Organising **two SFIC China workshops** on "Approaching China" and on "Framework conditions" aimed at building a common knowledge base, improving joint understanding of the EU/Member States/Associated Countries on STI with China, identifying policy priorities for cooperating jointly *vis-à-vis* China. These two successful workshops led to several recommendations and set the basis for the **SFIC China Roadmap**, the next step towards an EU/MS-China Strategic Agenda for Research and Innovation.
 - *United States*: Developing a more coherent EU/MS approach to the US in science, technology and innovation through a **SFIC workshop on EU/MS-US cooperation** and **SFIC's participation at the Polish Presidency Conference in Washington**. SFIC was also involved in the first event of the "Destination Europe" initiative and the related conference to attract researchers from USA to Europe, which took place on 19-20 January 2012 in Boston. These milestones feed into a **SFIC roadmap** for action towards the US, currently under development.

3. Encouraging increased sharing and structuring of information, notably by:
- Providing input and guidelines to SFIC Members and Observers on information sharing, putting forward **Information Sharing Guidelines** and related actions;
 - Fostering the use of the information system sharing tool for SFIC: the **SharePoint**;
 - Presenting the **EU/MS/AC international cooperation policies, strategies, activities and initiatives** in the SFIC plenary sessions;
 - Producing **workshop reports** of SFIC seminars/events and contributing to **information collection** on EU/MS/AC S&T activities and mobility schemes towards India, China and US.

2) *Outlook for 2012*

In 2012, SFIC will continue implementing its work programme for 2011 and 2012 through the following activities:

1. Contributing to the international dimension of ERA by supporting the development of a European STI strategy on international cooperation as well as by providing recommendations in the context of the Innovation Union (in particular Commitment 31);
2. Planning and organising a SFIC strategic workshop at the invitation of the SFIC Chair in Helsinki (to take place on 10-11 May 2012), which will contribute to the development of a European strategy for international STI cooperation;
3. Making progress with the existing SFIC Initiatives (India, China, USA) aiming at a more coherent European S&T strategy with and *vis-à-vis* these countries;
4. Proposing coordinated or joint initiatives with country-specific or thematic focus when a clear European added-value can be identified;

5. Facilitating prior coordination when STI issues are items of summits, bi-regional/ bilateral dialogues and international fora. In this respect, SFIC is envisaging guidelines and a joint set of proposed concrete actions;
6. Improving information sharing and consultation between SFIC Members and Observers, including the EU/MS/AC science counsellors and a wide range of stakeholders;
7. Increasing interaction with other ERA groups (i.e. initiating a meeting with the Chairs of the other ERA Groups, organising joint workshops, etc) and relevant stakeholders, as well as building on existing EU level thematic initiatives;
8. Enhancing the visibility of the international dimension of ERA;
9. Pursuing an effective communication and representation strategy.

3) *Recommendations*

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

1. Take note of the progress made by the Forum so far, including its proposed coordinated initiatives as well as the priority areas put forward by the SFIC Work Programme for 2011-2012;
2. Support the design of a European strategy for international STI cooperation proposed in the SFIC opinion on the ERA Framework, as a substantial contribution to the external dimension of ERA;

3. Encourage further implementation of the EU/MS joint initiatives towards India, China and the US, with the appropriate support to complement and reinforce the already existing bilateral activities with these countries;
4. Encourage further information sharing amongst SFIC Members and Observers and invite the respective Ministries, Commission Directorate-Generals and science counsellors to share information and knowledge with their counterparts systematically, as far as possible;
5. Support the involvement of SFIC in the further development of the international dimension of the ERA Framework, the Innovation Union Flagship Initiative and of Horizon 2020 - The Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (and one of the key instruments for the ERA);

II. Detailed progress report

1) *Development of the external dimension of ERA: towards a European strategy for international STI cooperation*

Science is global. International STI cooperation plays an increasing role in contributing to the quality of European research, the strengthening of the economic, industrial and technological competitiveness of Europe as well as the development of the research-innovation-education knowledge triangle. STI cooperation is also fundamental to increase the well-being of European citizens and to help them dealing with their day-to-day issues while tackling societal challenges. As cooperation in science and research on a global scale is becoming increasingly important, European science, technology and innovation are shaped by different trends influencing both the present and future scenarios:

- The globalisation of STI activities, which calls for a global STI policy platform;
- The changing level-playing field with the emergence of new STI superpowers (BRICS, Korea, Singapore, etc.) with whom Europe needs to cooperate but also compete with;
- The need to access knowledge from in and outside Europe and to remain competitive on a worldwide scale;
- The need for a global STI cooperation to address grand and societal challenges;
- The need for optimal foreign market access and related support.

As the STI potential in a number of world regions is rapidly increasing, the definition of an international STI 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 STI for Europe's future. Working effectively together will increase the attractiveness of Europe's research and innovation environment and foster better conditions for investment and acquisitions in key markets. In order to compete globally, Europe and its Member States must bridge the gap in performance levels within Europe and with its main competitors if the EU is to remain a strong, smart and sustainable innovation-led economy. The future European strategy for

international STI cooperation will contribute to fill this gap and to place the European Union and its Member States at the centre of the global STI scenario.

The following sections present the different milestones accomplished by SFIC directed towards the realisation of a European Strategy for international STI cooperation as well as any other activities that contribute to the development of the external dimension of ERA.

a. SFIC opinion on the ERA Framework

Through the SFIC opinion on the ERA Framework², SFIC proposed to make the aforesaid European strategy a reality. Following the Council conclusions on the development of the European Research Area (ERA) through ERA-related Groups of 31 May 2011³, SFIC undertook the task of preparing a contribution to the ERAC opinion on the ERA Framework. The specific aim of this contribution was to focus on issues relevant to the SFIC area of activities, in particular on the external dimension of the ERA and the EU and MS work carried out internationally with and *vis-à-vis* third countries. The opinion was adopted by SFIC via written procedure on 21 November 2011.

SFIC proposed a comprehensive and integrated package of common research and innovation policies for the implementation of the external dimension of the ERA Framework as a window of opportunities towards the challenges ahead. This included a strong support for the **design of a European strategy for international STI cooperation** with clear European added-value: the EDERA (External Dimension of the European Research Area) Strategy. Such a strategy holds an overarching role for the set of recommendations put forward by the Forum, which are summarised as follows:

² doc. ERAC-SFIC 1356/11

³ doc. 11032/11

- The **development of priorities and guidelines** for the strategic focus of SFIC's work through appropriate methodologies and a variety of tools to identify and select initiatives with and vis-à-vis third countries.
- The development of a **better policy coordination and policy mix** with enhanced coherence to reap the benefits of the external dimension of ERA allowing avoidance of duplication and rationalisation of efforts, aiming towards economic impact and efficiency gains.
- The **anchoring of collaboration** (and concentration of resources from some national schemes as well as from Horizon 2020) for basic and applied research and innovation into a limited set of consensually agreed grand/societal challenges.
- **The use of Horizon2020** in a more pro-active manner in promoting cooperation between EU and third countries, by giving incentives, added-value to European - third country cooperation in all levels of activities: researchers, institutions, research funding bodies, policy-makers, etc.
- The **prioritisation of long term sustainable cooperation models** including research projects focusing on specific societal/grand challenges, innovation activities (IP protection, standardisation, public procurement, etc) and incentives for international mobility and visa measures in the external dimension of ERA.
- The implementation of a **mapping exercise** focusing on existing instruments and areas for European added-value.
- The offering of **platforms for strengthening networking initiatives** by SFIC, building on the existing MS/ACs actions and using the well-tried and effective tools of ERA-Nets and INCO-Nets.
- The involvement of **SFIC in regular contacts with research and innovation stakeholders** as well as the creation of potential synergies with a broader range of stakeholders from other related areas (i.e. industry, services, education).
- The enhanced **visibility** of the role of SFIC and the showcase of ERA as an effective and **attractive** STI cooperation partner.

The strategy's goal is to achieve tangible impact at all levels (researchers, institutions and companies, policy-makers) as well as to form the basis for a "global research policy platform". When implementing the strategy, special attention should be put on avoiding duplication of different activities at EU and MS levels.

The SFIC opinion on the ERA Framework as well as the in-depth discussions taking place in a specific SFIC strategic workshop organised by the SFIC Chair on 10-11 May 2012 in Helsinki will strongly contribute to the development of the European strategy for international STI cooperation. This process is also meant to feed in and be in line with the Commission "Communication on enhancing and focusing international cooperation in Research and Innovation".

b. Common priorities and European added-value

An important part of SFIC's contribution to the European strategy for international STI cooperation will be common priority setting and the better coordination of existing measures. To this end, SFIC is regularly identifying areas in which coordinated or joint initiatives provide added value compared to bilateral activities. As stated in the SFIC opinion on the ERA Framework, SFIC is committed to the **development of priorities** for the strategic focus of its work through appropriate methodologies and a variety of tools to identify and select initiatives *vis-à-vis* third countries. This includes also an approach to identify **common guidelines for priority setting**, including clear criteria on how to identify target countries and themes as well as some modalities to implement the priorities.

In the aforesaid SFIC opinion, SFIC proposed a definition of European added-value as a way to identify **a common EAV approach on the external dimension of the European Research Area**, which should guide SFIC activities and be embedded in future SFIC work. European added-value in the external dimension of ERA is achieved when EU/MS-driven international STI activities are directly related to: scale and complexity issues; coordination of the EU and MS STI potential; enhanced European knowledge-base; economic impact, efficiency gains and financial benefits; societal/grand challenges; and European values.

c. Networking and cooperation

During 2011 and early 2012, SFIC has been looking to articulate synergies more clearly by encouraging coherence between SFIC activities and international aspects of the activities of **other ERA groups** such as GPC, SGHRM, KT and ESFRI.

International cooperation is a natural part of all ERA activities and SFIC's role is to support, ensure coherence, coordinate but also provide advice to other groups on how to integrate an international dimension in their respective activities.

Discussions on future cooperation with GPC have started at Task Force level and a concept paper for such cooperation is currently being elaborated. As most of the Joint Programming Initiatives were designed to tackle global challenges, an intensified exchange between GPC and SFIC is expected to generate synergies. The JPI "Water Challenges" is contributing actively to the India pilot. The JPIs "A healthy diet for a healthy life" and "More years, better lives - The potential and challenges of demographic change" have had an active part in the SFIC USA workshop in October 2011. The SGHRM has also been invited to some SFIC workshops on USA and China and a joint SFIC-SGHRM workshop on mobility is in the planning for 2012.

Moreover, strengthening the links with COST is under consideration. SFIC will endeavour to ensure a regular exchange and coherence of measures with these ERA-initiatives and COST and lend its support and expertise as regards the development of the international dimension of these initiatives. At the end of the reporting period (28 February 2012), a meeting between all ERA Group Chairs took place in the context of the future ERA Framework.

When developing its initiatives, SFIC has also build on **INCO projects**, e.g. the **ERA-NET NEW INDIGO** has participated actively in the India initiative. Representatives of the **BILAT** and **ACCESS** projects with the USA (BILAT USA and LINK2US) have been invited to Task Force meetings and project results have been considered during the development of the USA initiative.

Concerning the **involvement of stakeholders**, SFIC organised a seminar on 7 September 2011, at Finland's Permanent Representation to the European Union, at which a wide variety of stakeholders were present. The aim of the workshop was to gather the stakeholders' view as an input for the preparation of the SFIC opinion on the ERA Framework. Stakeholders were asked their view on the possible obstacles and challenges which may still exist for the EU and its Member States to develop a common EU-MS strategy and common EU-MS priorities for international STI cooperation, and which make it difficult for them to develop joint EU-MS actions that are in addition to, and go beyond, what the EU and its Member States are doing on their own. The successful meeting also served to discuss how the EU and its Member States could better bring their combined weight to bear to address global challenges which lie beyond the scope and resources of individual Member States or the EU as such. SFIC is planning to maintain regular contacts with stakeholders from the research-innovation-education domain as well as other parties linked to other areas.

The work of **science counsellors** is also a key element in developing 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, Beijing and Washington. As regards the strengthening of the networking of science counsellors, SFIC intensified the involvement of science counsellors in discussions about each particular initiative, distributed relevant SFIC documents to science counsellors as a matter of course, and invited science counsellors to SFIC-related events. A good example of this cooperation between SFIC and science counsellors is the US initiative. Science counsellors in the US participated in the SFIC workshop on EU/MS-US cooperation organised at Germany's Permanent Representation on 18-19 October 2011. Moreover, Member States/Associated Countries' science counsellors successfully co-organised a conference (*S&T Landscape in a Changing World – Enhancing US Collaboration with the EU and its Member States*) under the auspices of the Polish Presidency in Washington on 12 December 2011, in which SFIC took an active part. Back-to-back with this conference, on 13 December 2011, a meeting at the Delegation of the EU to Washington took place with impressive participation of

EU/MS/AC science counsellors, European Commission representatives and the SFIC Secretariat to reflect on the results of the conference and discuss potential ways forward on the SFIC US initiative.

SFIC has welcomed the important work that science counsellors already pursue in partner countries and has encouraged them to continue and intensify their activities. SFIC has pointed out that SFIC Members and Observers should take responsibility for conveying information on SFIC activities to their science counsellors (or equivalents) and encourage them to work with their peers overseas and other national representatives.

d. *Strengthening the role of STI in summits and bi-regional policy dialogues*

In its Work Programme 2011-2012, SFIC acknowledges that when STI issues are items of summits, bi-regional dialogues and international fora, SFIC will contribute to the identification of STI cooperation activities *vis-à-vis* and with third countries "*when appropriate*". The aim is to identify the potential to raise the STI profile in summits and bi-regional policy dialogues.

So far information about dialogues has been distributed orally during SFIC plenaries and Task Force meetings, mainly concerning the EU-Latin America and EU-Africa domains. The Commission services have compiled and updated a list of all EU-third country dialogues asking also MSs and ACs to fill in their respective information on ongoing dialogues and negotiations with third countries.

At the beginning of 2012, SFIC has started developing a joint set of concrete actions for enhancing the Forum's contribution to STI part of summits and bi-regional dialogues. Such actions:

- Encourage SFIC Members and Observers to debrief on bilateral/bi-regional dialogues between EU and India, China and the United States within agenda item points of subsequent SFIC plenaries;

- Set out the basis for SFIC to provide a 1-page report as input for the European Commission ahead of a summit or high-level meeting with a selected priority country. Such report may contain main messages on behalf of SFIC (or various SFIC Members) in the STI context that could contribute to strengthening the STI dialogue with the particular country in question.

e. Visibility

Visibility of SFIC and its work is essential for the success of the European Partnership on S&T cooperation. Thus, **SFIC has organised and/or contributed to different workshops and conferences** related to the pilot initiatives, for instance: two workshops under the China initiative in May and December 2011, the organisation of the first EU/MS awareness raising and information campaign in 27 key research and innovation hotspots across India from 13 to 24 June 2011, the SFIC US workshop in October 2011, the Polish Presidency event in Washington in December 2011, etc. Such events have contributed to enhance the profile of SFIC, to make some progress on policy coordination at horizontal level and have counted with the participation of major stakeholders. Results of the events are publicly available on the Internet, when appropriate and decided by the Forum.

Moreover, **SFIC has been systematically represented** at major events and conferences addressing issues that are in the remit of SFIC's activities. The SFIC Chair, jointly with the European Commission and the EU Presidency (when appropriate), have participated in high-level events such as the "Destination Europe Conference" in Boston and the "ERA Conference - Fostering Efficiency, Excellence and Growth" (both in January 2012) amongst others.

The SFIC Secretariat has also developed **a dedicated website** for better visibility and transparency of SFIC: under the *www.consilium.europa.eu* website, it gives access to all SFIC official documents, including agendas and summary conclusions of meetings, SFIC opinions, Activity Reports and Work Programmes, etc. The website is accessible to all.

Further information on the SFIC initiatives (India, China, USA) as well as SFIC's role in contributing to the external dimension of ERA can be found on the ERA web:
http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/areas/cooperation/international_cooperation_en.htm.

2) *Development of joint EU/MS (AC) - SFIC initiatives*

a. India

The India Initiative on water and bio-resources challenges was launched at the Delhi EU/MS-India Stakeholders conference in November 2010. As one of the components of the India pilot initiative, the Commission launched in July 2011 two water-related coordinated calls with India with a total budget of €32m funded equally by the two sides. As a result, some MS/AC intensified their cooperation activities with India in the field of water and bio-resources.

To bring the process to a higher, more comprehensive and strategic level, SFIC decided in 2011 to work on a strategic agenda outlining a broader range of common challenges, objectives, priority areas and instruments for EU/MS-India cooperation for the coming years. Thus, SFIC, in the context of the SFIC India Technical Group and in close consultation with the SFIC Task Force, prepared a working document on Europe's view for a **draft EU/MS-India Strategic Agenda for Research and Innovation (SA)**. The SA was presented to the SFIC plenary on 26 October 2011 and the Forum welcomed the work carried out so far and encouraged the Task Force and the India Group to pursue its work. At the moment, the document reflects only the European point of view. It should be used as an input towards a shared strategic agenda or common policy framework to be agreed with the Indian side. The draft SA covers the areas of water, bio-resources, energy, health and ICT and was transmitted to the India Department of Science and Technology in November 2011. In addition, innovation issues and framework conditionals contributing to the establishment of a level playing field necessary for a successful cooperation are also subject of on-going reflection.

This policy development process received a boost at the EU-India Summit on 10 February 2012, when, at the initiative of the Indian side, a **joint ministerial declaration on research and innovation** was agreed and signed by Commissioner Karel De Gucht (on behalf of the European Union) and by Mr. Ashwani Kumar

(Minister of State for Science & Technology for India). The Joint Declaration aims at enhancing the scale, scope and impact of cooperation and at building an "Indo-European research and innovation partnership", with a focus on common societal challenges and enhanced synergies between India and the EU. The joint declaration also calls for the setting up of regular Senior Official meetings involving India, the EU and Member States.

Amongst the most relevant events organised under the India pilot initiative it is worth mentioning the organisation of a **EU/MS awareness raising and information campaign** in 27 key research and innovation hotspots across India from 13 to 24 June 2011 by the EU/MS science counsellors in India, and the **EU-India S&T cooperation days** organised in Vienna on 1-2 December 2011, where a first technical discussion with the Indian counterparts took place.

Some MS continued to be engaged in the **ERA-NET NEW INDIGO** project which emerged as a successful example of multilateral partnership. The consortium implemented three multilateral calls for proposals with the Indian Department of Biotechnology and with the Indian Department of Science and Technology and it refocused its activities towards water related challenges in line with the SFIC India Initiative.

The next steps to bring forward the India Initiative are:

- Integrating input from the Indian counterparts in the draft SA and turn it into a shared document;
- Organising a EU/MS-India Stakeholders conference on 31 May-1 June in Brussels;
- Setting up a Senior Official meeting involving India, EU and Member States;
- Elaborating a long-term roadmap for actions for the various challenges identified in the SA.

b. China

In its meeting on 28 April 2010, SFIC endorsed the development of a broader base for a strategic approach towards cooperation with China and to work towards a more coherent EU/MS strategy *vis-à-vis* China. To build the China initiative, SFIC organised the **China I workshop** on *Approaching China* on 3-4 May 2011 at Finland's Permanent Representation which aimed at:

- Improving knowledge of the EU/Member States/Associated Countries on STI with China, based on an analysis of strengths and weaknesses, and exchange of information about policies, strategies and activities (including best practices and lessons learnt) of the EU and the Member States towards cooperation with China;
- Achieving a joint understanding and common knowledge base on how to approach cooperation in science and technology with China;
- Identifying policy priorities for cooperating jointly *vis-à-vis* China;
- Agreeing on the next steps to develop a coherent approach *vis-à-vis* China.

The participants of the workshop developed several recommendations which were the basis and foundations for the **SFIC China Roadmap** (presented to the SFIC plenary on 16 December as a "living document"), describing the steps towards an EU/MS-China Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda. The Roadmap develops a concept for EU-China STI cooperation and defines the different contributions needed to build a future strategic agenda. The Roadmap architecture includes a thematic scope (urbanisation -smart cities-, energy, food security, health & ageing, green technologies) and 5 specific axes with particular objectives and tools (What? Who? Why? When?): scale and instruments, mobility, framework conditions, intelligence and visibility.

SFIC also organised another very successful **China II workshop** on *Improving framework conditions for successful cooperation with China* on 15 December 2011 in Brussels. The workshop was a clear example of the usefulness of "going there together", mainly referring to companies/SMEs and countries in their relations with

China, exemplifying the great added-value of joint cooperation against companies/SMEs/countries acting on their own. The workshop reconfirmed that, when initiating cooperation with China, linking the research and innovation side to industry and trade objectives is essential. Other important remarks emerging from the workshop were (1) China is increasingly providing new regulatory framework conditions, however, these are not well-implemented (mainly in the areas of IP and procurement) and there is need for more education and knowledge on the Chinese side; and (2) China is still depending on foreign technology and innovation practices. SFIC is exploring the possibility of linking its work to that of the Knowledge Transfer group, particularly with regards to IPR issues.

The next steps to bring forward the China Initiative are:

- Organising a mobility workshop extended to other BRIC countries;
- Collecting information on ongoing activities in relevant scientific sectors;
- Drafting a proposal for a strategic EU/MS-China S&T agenda.

c. United States

Building on the work done in 2009 and 2010, when SFIC chose the US as a pilot to develop a strategic approach *vis-à-vis* industrialised countries and started some internal discussions and analysis, the US initiative has taken off and has received strong commitment by SFIC Members and Observers. One of the milestones of 2011 was the organisation of a **SFIC US workshop** at Germany's Permanent Representation on 18 and 19 October: *From common challenges to joint responses – adding a new dimension to EU/Member States cooperation with the USA in science, technology and innovation*. The overall objective of the workshop was to proceed towards a more coherent EU/MS approach to the USA in science, technology and innovation, focusing on: developing strategic intelligence, identifying key areas for cooperation, raising awareness of the attractiveness of Europe and sharing successful approaches.

Workshop participants, including a high number of SFIC Members and Observers:

- Underlined the need for developing a joint and coherent EU/ Member States strategic research and innovation agenda or roadmap, and for enhancing cooperation with the USA taking into account the rich experience of Member States, Associated Countries and the EU;
- Welcomed the diversity of funding initiatives within Europe and the potential for their further and, where relevant, coordinated development;
- Supported the choice of a thematic and pragmatic approach towards enhanced STI cooperation with the USA, considering the areas of health research, energy research and demographic change as appropriate and beneficial for both sides;
- Recommended that US research funding agencies should be approached for their views as part of the process of strategic discussion;
- Underlined that the visibility of European excellence in research could be improved by including more intensively the European/MS/AC science counsellor network in the USA and integrating more strongly national networks with the USA.

On 12 December 2011, the **EU Presidency Conference *Science and Technology Landscape in a Changing World – Enhancing US Collaboration with the EU and its Member States*** was held in Washington DC under the auspices of the Polish Presidency of the Council of the EU and organized with the EU Delegation, science counsellors from the Embassies of Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Spain and Sweden, and in cooperation with the AAAS (American Association for the Advancement of Science). The main objective of the conference was to facilitate discussions between the US, the EU and its Member States to highlight the need to strengthen collaboration.

The Conference involved high level representatives from the US government as well as the EU and its Member States. The event reconfirmed the already strong transatlantic relationship, stressing that the EU/MS-US cooperation builds on strong links, rich experiences and well established relations. EU and US enjoy a large number of common initiatives (e.g. TEC, Energy Council). However, even though there are

numerous platforms for collaboration, some challenges still remain to be tackled, mainly in the economic, environmental and social fields. As a result, a joint vision shared by EU/MS and the US emerged, calling for

- A global market of scientists, based on a pool of researchers with global experience;
- Global partnerships between EU/MS and the US to tackle societal challenges;
- Global S&T programmes with shared peer-reviewing systems and ethical principles; and
- A shared global responsibility of welcoming the emerging science nations to build a global science community.

Moreover, SFIC Members and Observers have also been active in events in the US, such as the **Destination Europe High-Level Conference** on 20 January 2012 in Boston, in which the SFIC Chair and other SFIC Members and Observers participated.

Building on these rich experiences, the Task Force is preparing a roadmap for actions with the US which will see the light during 2012.

3) *Information sharing*

The SFIC plenary on 16 December 2011 mandated the Task Force to elaborate a 1-page paper as **Information Sharing Guidelines**. Taking into account the work done by Task Force I - Information sharing during 2009 and early 2010⁴, the Task Force prepared a set of information sharing actions to develop a strategic approach towards SFIC target countries, namely India, China and US. Such actions are within the domains of public information sharing and internal SFIC information sharing. Tasks are undertaken by SFIC Members and Observers and/or science counsellors. Information sharing has focused above all on China, India and the United States' relevant policies, strategies and EU/MS funding mechanisms in S&T cooperation with these countries.

Concerning internal SFIC information sharing, the **SharePoint system** is the main tool for SFIC Members and Observers. Germany, the SFIC Secretariat and the European Commission are currently streamlining the software to convert it into a more user-friendly tool. As a trial, Task Force members have been using the SharePoint system for sharing and accessing meeting documents. New software enhancing the current system is expected during 2012.

SFIC Members and Observers are also invited to share their experiences through **presentations** of S&T international (strategy, policy, activities) cooperation initiatives during plenary sessions. During the past year, UK presented the reorganisation of its science network worldwide and ES its policy to support internationalisation of SMEs.

Furthermore, SFIC has elaborated **workshop reports** (to be published) of its seminars and events, which will be accessible by the wider public when appropriate. It should also be emphasised that cooperation between SFIC Members and Observers and EU/MS/AC science counsellors in **collecting information** has proven effective and successful: Booklets on funding mechanisms are now available on the EURAXESS website and science counsellors have also contributed to mapping exercises of EU/MS/AC STI activities as a valuable input to SFIC's preparation of strategic agendas.

⁴ Final Report of Task Force I - Information sharing (presented at SFIC on 12 February 2010).

4) *Internal organisation*

On 20 June 2011, a **new SFIC Chair** was appointed: Ms Riitta MUSTONEN (FI) was unanimously elected as the SFIC Chair for a two-year term. In her welcoming speech, she announced that her mandate is to be based on:

- Getting all Member States involved and working together;
- Emphasizing the partnership between Member States and the Commission;
- Increasing the visibility of SFIC;
- Acting in line with the values of transparency and trust.

On 26 October 2011, following discussions on SFIC working methods and structures, the SFIC plenary agreed on the **update of the SFIC Rules of Procedure**. The decision was founded on the fact that, at that time, the Rules of Procedure were based on old CREST Rules of Procedure from 24 June 2009⁵; and on the ERAC advice on the review of ERA-related Groups⁶, in which the European Research Area Committee called for the Chairs of the respective groups to be supported by an elected Vice-Chair and the need to strengthen coordination between ERA Groups.

Moreover, the update reflected SFIC's willingness to be in line with the Rules of Procedure of other Groups (i.e. GPC). After agreeing on a base document at the SFIC plenary on 16 December 2011, the new SFIC Rules of Procedure have seen the establishment of the SFIC Vice-Chair and the institutionalisation of the SFIC Task Force as main working group of the Forum as well as establishing clear and communicative links with other Groups. The new SFIC Rules of Procedure were adopted by the SFIC plenary on 9 March 2012.

⁵ doc. CREST-SFIC 1354/09

⁶ doc. ERAC 1206/11

Annexes to the Third SFIC Annual Report

- Annex I: SFIC and its mandate
- Annex II: Calendar of SFIC events (1 March 2011 - 29 February 2012)
- Annex III: SFIC Work Programme 2011-2012 (doc. ERAC-SFIC 1354/11)
- Annex IV: SFIC opinion on the ERA Framework (doc. ERAC-SFIC 1356/11)
- Annex V: SFIC Rules of Procedure (doc. ERAC-SFIC 1352/12),
as adopted by the SFIC plenary on 9 March 2012

SFIC and its mandate

SFIC is a strategic forum and an advisory body to the Council and the Commission with a view to implementing a European Partnership in the field of international scientific and technological cooperation (S&T cooperation). Member States and the Commission are Members of the Forum while countries associated to the 7th Framework Programme have an observership status. SFIC's objective is to facilitate the further development, implementation and monitoring of the international dimension of ERA by the sharing of information and consultation between the partners with a view to identifying common priorities which could lead to coordinated or joint initiatives.

The rationale for such framework is provided by the Council conclusions of 2 December 2008⁷, in which 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 mandate annexed to the conclusions includes the main tasks of SFIC:

- 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.

⁷ Official Journal of the European Union, C 18, 24.1.2009, p. 11-13.

Calendar of SFIC events

(1 March 2011 - 29 February 2012)

- **3 March 2011:** India Group meeting
- **14 April 2011:** India Group meeting
- **3-4 May 2011:** China workshop on "Approaching China"
- **19 May 2011:** India Group meeting
- **20 June 2011:** SFIC plenary
- **6 July 2011:** India Group meeting
- **7 July 2011:** Task Force meeting
- **5 September 2011:** India Group meeting
- **6 September 2011:** Task Force meeting
- **7 September 2011:** SFIC workshop on ERA Framework with stakeholders
- **5 October 2011:** India Group meeting
- **7 October 2011:** Task Force meeting
- **18-19 October 2011:** SFIC US workshop "From common challenges to joint responses"
- **25 October:** India Group meeting
- **26 October 2011:** SFIC plenary:
- **23 November 2011:** Task Force meeting
- **30 November 2011:** India Group meeting
- **1-2 December 2011:** EU-India S&T cooperation days organised in Vienna.
- **12 December 2011:** PL Presidency Conference in Washington, US
- **15 December 2011:** China workshop on "Framework conditions"
- **16 December 2011:** SFIC plenary
- **20 January 2012:** Destination Europe High-Level Conference in Boston, US
- **9-10 February 2012:** Task Force meeting
- **15 February 2012:** India Group meeting (with stakeholders)
- **28 February 2012:** Meeting with ERA Group Chairs

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 strategy⁸, 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 Union⁹, 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."*¹⁰

⁸ COM (2010) 2020 final.

⁹ COM (2010) 546 final.

¹⁰ 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*¹¹

¹¹ 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 2009/10¹², 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 2010¹³ 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;

¹² Doc. 1356/09.

¹³ 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 initiative¹⁴, and provide input to the development of the ERA Framework¹⁵;
- 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 SFIC¹⁶ 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.

¹⁴ In line with the Council Conclusions of 26 November 2010

¹⁵ Council Conclusions on the European Research Area (ERA) of 30-31 May 2011

¹⁶ 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 exercise¹⁷. 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 States¹⁸;
- The strategic priorities of SFIC should be in line with the global challenges identified in high level political processes (e.g. summits);

¹⁷ Including the work done through ERAWATCH.

¹⁸ 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) India¹⁹

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.

¹⁹ 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 evaluated²⁰.

²⁰ 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 opinion on the ERA Framework**1) BACKGROUND**

Following the Council Conclusions on the development of the European Research Area (ERA) through ERA-related Groups of 31 May 2011 (doc. 11032/11), the Strategic Forum for International Science and Technological Cooperation (SFIC)²¹ has undertaken the task of preparing a contribution to the ERAC opinion on the ERA Framework. The specific aim of this contribution is to focus on issues relevant to the SFIC area of activities, in particular on the external dimension of the European Research Area and the EU-MS work carried out internationally *vis à vis* third countries. As cooperation in science and research on a global scale is becoming increasingly important, European science, technology and innovation are shaped by different trends influencing both the present and future scenarios:

- The globalisation of science, technology and innovation activities, which calls for a global research policy platform;
- The changing level-playing field with the emergence of new STI superpowers (BRICS, Korea, Singapore, etc.) with whom Europe needs to cooperate but also compete with;
- The need to access knowledge from in and outside Europe and to remain competitive on a worldwide scale;
- The need for a global STI cooperation to address grand and societal challenges;
- The need for optimal foreign market access and related support.

²¹ Member States (MS) and the Commission are members of SFIC while Associated Countries (AC) have an observership status.

Until now SFIC has constantly addressed tasks defined in its mandate: sharing and pooling information and knowledge (a tool for common information sharing and management has been set up) and coordinating and proposing initiatives where appropriate: pilot initiatives have been launched with a regional focus on India, China and the USA, and one thematic initiative has focused on energy. Moreover, first steps towards a common European strategic approach in the international dimension of S&T have been taken according to the SFIC mandate.

Fulfilling its tasks, SFIC has identified some of the key obstacles/issues for the completion of the external dimension of ERA at different levels, taking into account the complex governance structures and the variety of actors involved in the STI internationalisation processes. At the same time, SFIC gives response to the identified obstacles and challenges with concrete solutions and finally proposes some recommendations for further action as a window of opportunities for SFIC.

The SFIC recommendations should be seen as a 'menu of possible international orientations' dealing with science, research and research-based innovation (STI) which could be taken on a voluntary basis by Member States / Associated Countries in partnership with the Commission. While all delegations have contributed to the approach in advance, the recommendations may not be in complete conformity with national positions being taken in the context of the ERA Framework.

2) SFIC'S APPROACH TO CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

a) *Policy and Governance*

Although a number of MS cooperation initiatives with variable geometry have been successfully implemented towards a common European strategic approach, the main drawback for the completion of the external dimension of ERA is the lack of a shared European Strategy for international STI cooperation in order to complete the external dimension of ERA. National officials, ultimately answerable to ministers elected by national electorates, tend to think nationally when dealing with research issues and it is worth noting that many countries do not have a comprehensive national strategy for international cooperation. However, they may consider cooperation with third countries within the European framework as long as there is a clear European added-value.

European Added-Value (EAV)

SFIC proposes a definition of European Added-Value as a way to identify **a common EAV approach on the external dimension of the European Research Area**, which should guide SFIC activities and be embedded in future SFIC work. European Added-Value in the external dimension of ERA is achieved when EU/MS-driven international STI activities fulfil some of the following conditions²²:

- *Scale and complexity*: International STI activities of such scale and complexity that no single Member States can provide the necessary financial or human resources, and hence need to be carried out at European level in order to achieve the critical mass;
- *Coordination of the EU and MS STI potential*: International STI actions that contribute to the development of the external dimension of the European Research Area (ERA) by promoting EU and Member States STI potential emerging from European science and technology policies and programmes in a global context and work in international fora as well as research that may lead (when necessary) to the establishment of uniform international rules or standards;
- *Enhanced European knowledge-base*: International cooperation that contributes to increase excellence and attractiveness of European research and innovation;
- *Economic impact, efficiency gains and financial benefits*: International action at European level *vis à vis* third countries that has an economic impact, either in the form of efficiency gains (e.g. simplification and streamlining, pooling and more efficient use of scarce public resources, etc. allowing avoidance of duplication and rationalisation of efforts) or financial benefits (even after considering all costs and risks inherent in international cooperation);
- *Societal/grand challenges*: International STI activities that focus on specific societal/grand challenges that are shared across Europe and with third countries;
- *European values*: International cooperation at EU-level that can enhance European values in cooperation with third countries (i.e. mutual interest, respect, reciprocity).

In summary, the EAV in the external dimension of ERA should be seen as a necessity to cooperate in situations where joint action by MS/ACs together at European level is more beneficial and has more gains and benefits than acting on an individual basis. EAV is not a synonym of abandoning MS/ACs' own international cooperation activities; on the contrary, the European Added-Value of international cooperation is the possibility of choosing the level of cooperation from the perspective of the mutual interest of the partner country and the MS/AC/European actor. It should also be noted that the EAV can vary from country to country depending on its research base – thus the need for the concept of variable geometry.

²² European Added-Value is a moving target. Therefore, it is possible for these conditions to be fulfilled without the European dimension through cooperation and collaboration of a group of Member States (i.e. Nordic countries).

Moreover, a better interface may be called for between ERA, EU's international STI cooperation activities and the European External Action Service (EEAS) as current coordination is limited if not inexistent. Besides, research is too often seen as a stand-alone field. Linkages and connections with other areas, actors and policy-makers from other domains such as innovation, education, industry, health, economic development, trade, etc. have to be intensified in the context of the Knowledge Triangle.

b) *Actors*

Due to the various multi-governance levels and the wide variety of stakeholders involved in international STI cooperation, there is a multiplicity of actors and participants in the external dimension of ERA (researchers, universities, research performing organisations, funding agencies, national ministries, private sector, etc). However, coordination between all actors involved is still limited. There is need for defined responsibilities and mission of each existing body and entity that works in science and innovation issues.

c) *Processes*

Several different approaches towards third countries exist in Europe, with different processes in the research and innovation domain. Europe needs a common knowledge-base in international STI cooperation as well as joint foresight activities with third countries to address joint challenges. There is also a need to better understand how priorities are set in third countries. Obstacles may exist at the priority setting phase, with lack of resources to establish or reinforce partnerships with third countries; at a later stage other challenges may emerge, such as the coexistence of different evaluation mechanisms, with lack of a joint European model for evaluation and assessment. Additionally, Commission DGs, national ministries and responsible entities for international STI cooperation have not yet realised the potential of information sharing. On another note, it is worth noting that one of the pillars of international STI collaboration is mobility of researchers. There are currently limited mobility and research career initiatives between the EU/Member States and third countries. In this respect, stronger cooperation should be envisaged between SFIC and the SGHRM.

d) *Resources & Infrastructures*

Due to the current crisis climate, resource constraints at national level, in particular human resources in national ministries and agencies, are an inescapable worrying feature of the current international STI activities environment. Moreover, the contextual situation does not lead to a clear path on current and future investment in research and innovation environments and their related infrastructure and human resources. However, economic crisis and cuts on public spending can also be seen as a true opportunity for European cooperation in STI, mainly through: the complementarity of EU and national resources, the role of the EU as a facilitator in MS-third countries relations and the use of EU funding instruments, in particular the Framework Programme 7 and the future Horizon2020.

e) *Societal challenges*

In tackling grand and societal challenges, some of them already defined in the GPC/JPI framework, Europe and its Member States need to cooperate with countries outside Europe. In order to do so, there is the urgent need to discuss common priorities as uncoordinated activities and isolated bilateral agreements could lead to duplication of efforts and fragmentation. Global challenges call for global solutions and research does not recognise geographical boundaries, as work is already carried out in global research networks. Global solutions could be efficiently developed between SFIC and other international actors to form the basis for a "global research policy platform". In this respect, there are possibilities to turn particular challenges into cooperation opportunities in the external dimension of ERA in selected areas where a joint effort is needed to effectively tackle particular challenges in consistency with a common methodology and the identification of "what and with whom?". An existing barrier is, for instance, how to connect the process of the annual work programmes (at national and EU level) with corresponding processes in target countries. This is a consequence of the fact that the priority setting processes in EU and third countries may be very different.

3) RECOMMENDATIONS

SFIC proposes a comprehensive and integrated package of common research and innovation policies for the implementation of the external dimension of the ERA Framework as a window of opportunities towards the challenges ahead. On the basis of the work already carried out by the Forum, SFIC strongly recommends the **design of a European strategy for international STI cooperation with clear European Added-Value: the EDERA (External Dimension of the European Research Area) Strategy, which could serve as a set of common principles and guidelines for Member States in their international STI cooperation activities** that could, where appropriate, be used as inspiration by all MS/ACs and EU in their respective bilateral dialogues with third countries.

EDERA should include an honest analysis of ongoing activities (mapping exercise) as well as targets, opportunities and risks, and involve a EU/MS commitment to its implementation and to monitoring its impact. This strategy should be accompanied by a common methodology for priority setting, common standards of ethics in research and a clear definition of European Added-Value (EAV) identifying what the benefits of EU/MS international cooperation at European level and the complementarities between EU and MS level are in the Knowledge Triangle scenario. The strategy's goal is to achieve tangible impact at all levels (researchers, institutions and companies, policy-makers) as well as to form the basis for a "global research policy platform". When implementing the strategy, special attention should be put on avoiding overlap between different activities at EU level on the one hand and between EU activities and MS activities on the other. In the latter case it should also take proper account of MS competences. The strategy as such should be based on and bring forward the following sub-sets of recommendations:

1. Strategic recommendations

- a) The **development of priorities** for the strategic focus of SFIC's work through appropriate methodologies and a variety of tools to identify and select initiatives *vis à vis* third countries. This includes also an approach to identify common guidelines for priority setting, including a clear criteria on how to identify target countries and themes as well as some modalities to implement the priorities;

- b) The development of a **better policy coordination and policy mix** with enhanced coherence to reap the benefits of the external dimension of ERA allowing avoidance of duplication and rationalisation of efforts, aiming towards *economic impact and efficiency gains*. This could be achieved with a better vertical and horizontal policy coordination at national level (more efficient use of information and know-how), between different Commission DGs and by mainstreaming the external dimension of ERA across Horizon2020 and all policy dialogues while, at the same time, strengthening linkages between international activities in Horizon2020 and ERA initiatives. A clear commitment for the sharing of information among European counterparts on national strategies for international cooperation, bilateral meetings, MoUs, etc. with third countries is also needed to accomplish enhanced coordination. Moreover, linkages between SFIC and other ERA Groups, particularly GPC and the SGHRM, should be encouraged. The interlinkages with the European External Action Service (EEAS) should be strengthened. New mechanisms to coordinate Member States activities towards third countries should be explored;

- c) The **anchoring of collaboration** (and concentration of resources from some national schemes as well as from Horizon2020) for basic and applied research and innovation into a limited set of consensually agreed grand/societal challenges particular to some partners incorporating all stakeholders from the research and innovation ecosystem. This scientific exchange and collaboration would be based on a dialogue and trust with non-European countries, with the *European STI potential* reflecting towards *grand/societal challenges* while, at the same time, offering obvious *financial and economic benefits*. This approach should also take account of multilateral cooperation

and the reality that activities close to R&I market areas will often involve a competition-cooperation framework amongst Member States and/or potential partners.

- d) **Horizon2020** should be used in a more pro-active manner in promoting cooperation between EU and third countries, by giving incentives, added-value to European - third country cooperation in all levels of activities: researchers, institutions, research funding bodies, policy-makers, etc. Moreover, EU funding could also play an instrumental role in facilitating cooperation of European researchers with third countries in joint programmes addressing global challenges, for example, in relation to JPIs and other policies and instruments as well as in capacity building initiatives in key countries and regions in order to jointly address global challenges;
- e) The **prioritisation of long term sustainable cooperation models** including research projects focusing on specific *societal/grand challenges*, innovation activities (IP protection, standardisation, public procurement, ethics, etc) and incentives for international mobility and visa measures in the external dimension of ERA. Such issues could be dealt in the context of Horizon2020 or bilateral/multilateral agreements, EU co-funding of national mobility schemes and the opening-up of EU and national research programmes to non-European scientists both in a reciprocal manner and for capacity-building purposes. Where relevant, support to the SGHRM and national authorities for a better use of the existing Scientific Visa Package should be targeted;

2. Proposed instruments

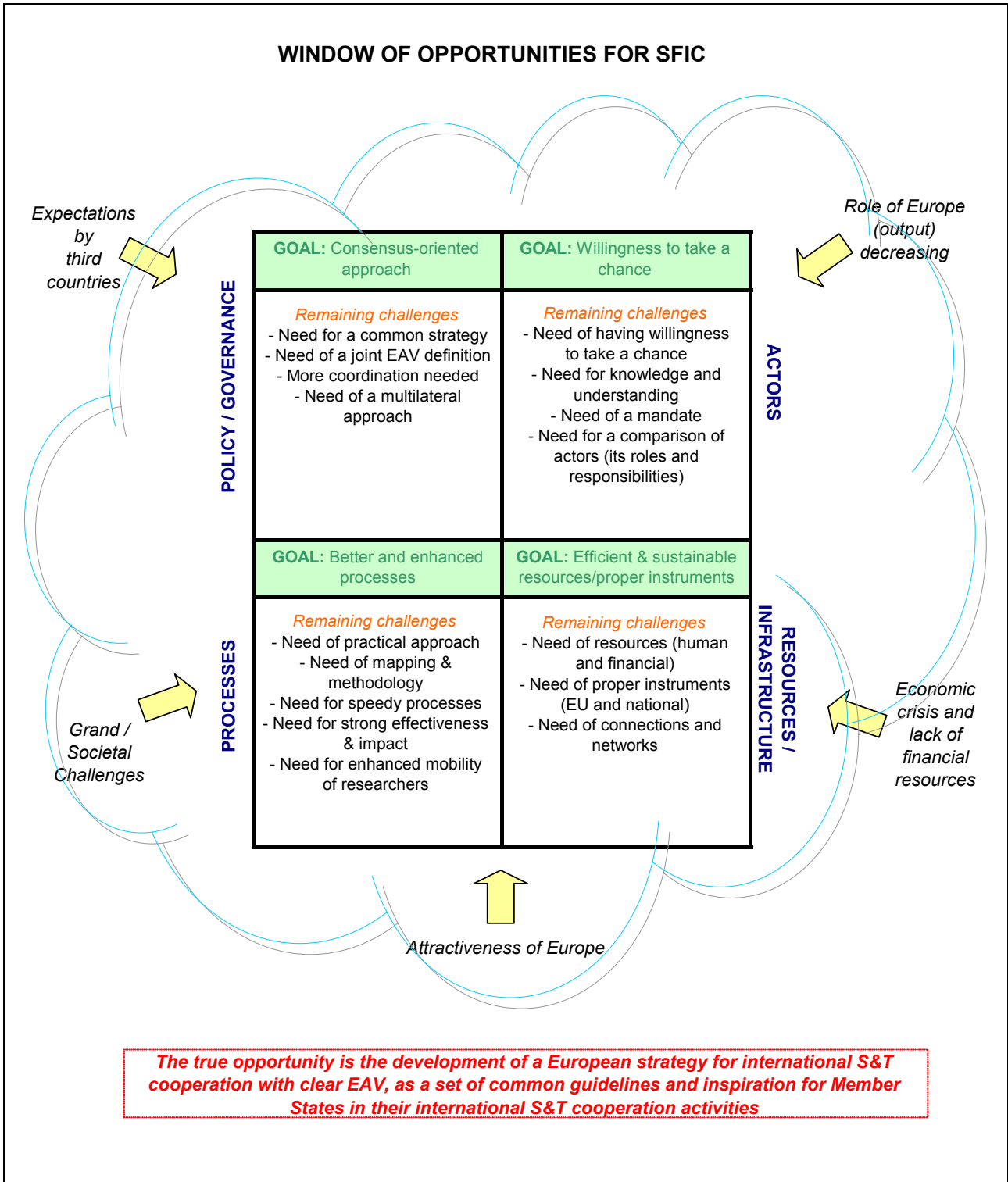
- f) The implementation of a **mapping exercise** focusing on existing instruments and areas for European Added-Value. The mapping should focus on the current cooperation sectors and those current mechanisms and tools at EU, MS and AC government level for international STI cooperation at a global level, with a view to searching synergies between EU/MS instruments, fine-tuning them and defining a complementarity approach to address unmet needs. The mapping can also be based on a joint foresight exercise, including a better understanding on how priorities are set in selected third countries, for the identification of European Added-Value areas and potential opportunities reflecting towards *scale and complexity*;

- g) SFIC should offer **platforms for strengthening networking initiatives**, building on the existing MS/ACs actions and using the well-tried and effective tools of ERA-Nets and INCO-Nets. Therefore, EU-funded networks could complement Member States' existing networks or could help the setting up of new EU/MS-third countries R&I alliances, building up on the virtual 'European Science House' scheme already proposed by SFIC under the China initiative.

- h) The **involvement of SFIC in regular contacts with research and innovation stakeholders** as well as the creation of potential synergies with a broader range of stakeholders from other related areas (i.e. industry, services, education). This could entail a stronger relation between the worlds of science and business in order to bring ideas into the market and foster the competitiveness of European companies;

- i) The enhanced **visibility** of the role of SFIC and the showcase of ERA as an effective and **attractive** STI cooperation partner, with a strong forward-looking coherent profile.

Diagram: Window of opportunities for SFIC



SFIC Rules of Procedure

(as adopted by SFIC plenary on 9 March 2012)

Article 1

COMPOSITION

1. The Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC) (hereinafter referred to as "the Forum") shall consist of the Member States and the Commission (hereinafter referred to as "Members"), and Associated Countries as Observers in line with their respective association agreements as appropriate (hereinafter referred to as "Observers").
2. Each Member and Observer shall nominate up to two representatives responsible for research and innovation policies. In addition, each Member and Observer may nominate up to two alternates, to replace the representatives when appropriate.
3. Notice of nominations or the replacements of representatives/alternates of Members and Observers shall be sent to the SFIC Secretariat.

Article 2

CHAIR

1. The Forum shall be chaired by one of its Members representing a Member State for a period of two years.
2. The Chair shall be elected in accordance with the procedure defined in Article 8.
3. In the framework of the orientations defined by the Forum, the Chair shall be responsible for chairing the Forum and for the overall guidance of its work.

4. The Member State from which a representative has been elected as the Chair shall nominate another representative in his/her place for the period of the Chair's term.
5. The Chair shall have no voting rights, except in situations where there is no for/against majority, in which cases his/her opinion in the discussed matter shall prevail.

Article 3

VICE-CHAIR

1. The Forum shall have a Vice-Chair elected from among Member State representatives for a period of two years. The Vice-Chair shall not have the same Member State of origin as the Chair and his/her term will be displaced by 6 months from that of the Chair to allow a smooth transition between Chairs and to support the incoming Chair on his/her work.
2. The Vice-Chair shall be elected in accordance with the procedure defined in Article 8.
3. The Vice-Chair shall replace the Chair in his/her functions on mutually agreed occasions or in justified absences of the Chair.
4. The Vice-Chair shall be the chair of the Task Force.
5. The Vice-Chair shall have no voting rights, except in situations where he/she is the only delegate or representative of his/her own country, in which case he/she will have the right of vote as any other national SFIC Member.

Article 4

PLENARY

1. The SFIC Plenary is the decision-making body of the Forum.

2. The Forum shall meet up to four times per year (preferably three or four times every year). The Plenary is convened by the SFIC Secretariat on the initiative either of the Chair or of at least five Members.
3. The Chair, in collaboration with the SFIC Secretariat, shall draw up the provisional annotated agenda of each plenary meeting, which shall be submitted to the Members and Observers of the Forum at least 10 working days before the beginning of each meeting, whereas documents related to items of the agenda shall be submitted at least 5 working days (preferably 10 working days) before the beginning of each meeting.
4. The agenda items and their content shall be suggested 20 working days in advance by the Task Force and shall be approved by the SFIC Chair. Preparation of the SFIC Plenary agenda items is undertaken by the Task Force, with the help of its subgroups and in close collaboration with the SFIC Chair and the SFIC Secretariat.
5. The agenda will be adopted by the SFIC Plenary at the beginning of each meeting.

Article 5
TASK FORCE

1. The Task Force's role is to assist the SFIC Chair in the preparation of meetings and discussions at plenary level.
2. Task Force meetings shall take place when necessary, keeping in mind the needs of the Forum. Task Force meetings are convened by the Task Force Secretariat on the initiative of the Task Force Chair.
3. SFIC Members and Observers are invited to participate in the activities of the Task Force on a voluntary basis.

4. The Task Force meeting agenda shall be jointly formulated by the Task Force Chair and the Task Force Secretariat, in close coordination with the SFIC Chair.
5. Invitations and agendas of Task Force meetings as well as their minutes shall be distributed to all SFIC Members and Observers by the SFIC Secretariat.
6. The Task Force Secretariat is provided by the Commission. The Task Force Secretariat is responsible for drafting the minutes of the Task Force meetings, which are approved by the Task Force Chair before circulation.

Article 6
SECRETARIAT

1. The Secretariat of the Forum shall be provided by the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU.
2. The Secretariat shall ensure proper running of the Forum's plenary meetings. It shall prepare the summary of conclusions of each meeting of the Forum and, in agreement with the Chair, submit it to the Forum for approval either at the following meeting or via written procedure.
3. All correspondence for the Forum shall be addressed to the Secretariat, using the following electronic address [erac.sfic@consilium.europa.eu].
4. All correspondence from the Forum to the Members and Observers shall be addressed from the Secretariat to the electronic addresses of the Members' and Observers' representatives (including the alternates). All representatives (including the alternates) must provide their electronic addresses to the Secretariat.

Article 7

WORK PROGRAMME AND REPORTING ACTIVITIES

1. The Forum shall have a 24-month rolling Work Programme.
2. The Work Programme shall describe activities of the Forum which are in line with its mandate and shall be adopted by the Forum.
3. The Work Programme shall include the organisation of at least one informal strategic seminar, to be organised every two years under the guidance of the SFIC Chair.
4. SFIC shall produce an Annual Report of activities, to be submitted to the Council and to the Commission during the Spring season of the following year the report refers to. Such report will take stock of the state-of-implementation of the Work Programme and the progress made in the given year.

Article 8

VOTING ARRANGEMENTS AND QUORUM

1. Each Member shall have one vote.
2. Decisions of the Forum, including opinions and reports, shall be adopted by a simple majority of its Members if a vote is requested²³. Members who are unable to participate in a meeting of the Forum may delegate their vote to another SFIC Member. Where a vote is taken, any SFIC Member may also act on behalf of not more than one other Member. Any minority views of the Members shall be recorded.
3. The presence of representatives of a simple majority of the SFIC Members is required to enable the SFIC Plenary to adopt a formal opinion on items and to decide on the proposals of the Task Force.

²³ This provision emphasises that the main aim is to take decisions by consensus. Only when a vote will be requested, the majority rule will apply.

4. Decisions agreed by the Forum shall be implemented by Members and/or the Task Force upon approval by the SFIC Plenary, following the principle of variable geometry.
5. In urgent cases, opinions of the Forum may be adopted by means of a written procedure, by a simple majority of its Members. On the initiative of the Chair, the Forum may act by means of a simplified written procedure called 'silence procedure'²⁴. Such written procedures shall be set in motion by the Secretariat. The time limit of written procedures shall be set out by the Chair according to the urgency of each case. The Secretariat shall establish that the written procedures have been completed.

Article 9

AD-HOC WORKING GROUPS

1. Ad-hoc working groups might be created following a direct request from the SFIC plenary or a proposal by the Task Force (with the subsequent approval by the SFIC plenary).
2. Ad-hoc working groups are responsible for the implementation of particular tasks or SFIC Work Programme items for a fixed time-period and following a clear mandate by the SFIC Plenary.
3. Ad-hoc working groups shall be led by a SFIC Member, who will ensure the management of the group and will duly report both to the Task Force and the Plenary.

Article 10

PUBLIC ACCESS TO DOCUMENTS AND INFORMATION SHARING

1. The proceedings of SFIC shall be confidential.

²⁴ In that case, the decision shall be deemed to be adopted at the end of the period laid down by the Chair depending on the urgency of the matter, except where a simple majority of the SFIC Members objects.

2. Only documents with ERAC-SFIC number shall be published unless otherwise approved by the SFIC Plenary.
3. An IT SharePoint System or equivalent may be efficiently used to ensure the information flow between all SFIC Members and Observers and Task Force participants (including ad-hoc working groups) and to foster the involvement of all SFIC Members and Observers on any ongoing process.

Article 11

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION

1. To increase the impact of its activities, SFIC may develop, accordingly with its Work Programme, an effective communication and promotion plan linked to its ongoing and planned activities.