

ERAC-SFIC 1355/15

NOTE

Subject: SFIC opinion on the ERA Governance: Review of the status, the mandate and the reporting lines of SFIC

Delegations will find in annex an opinion by the Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC) on the ERA Governance: Review of the status, the mandate and the reporting lines of SFIC, as adopted by the SFIC plenary on 4 March 2015.

**Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC) opinion on
the ERA Governance: Review of the status, the mandate and the reporting lines of SFIC**

1. BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

The Strategic Forum for international S&T cooperation (SFIC) was established in 2008 as a dedicated configuration of CREST (which since then became ERAC) in order to further develop, implement and monitor the international dimension of ERA.

Since then, and as identified in the SFIC self-assessment exercise in the context of the review of the ERA-related groups¹, SFIC has to a larger extent fulfilled its mandate through its work on developing the international dimension of ERA. Moreover, new developments in the R&I domain (e.g. the Commission's international R&I strategy, the implementation of Horizon 2020) as well as the future ERA Roadmap (with the corresponding SFIC opinion on the issue²) shape the context in which SFIC operates.

In view of the current and future discussions on the ERA governance, and taking into account SFIC's past and recent work as well as a potential revision of the SFIC mandate, SFIC would like to provide input to the Council in a timely manner.

**2. INPUT TO COUNCIL ON THE POTENTIAL REVIEW OF THE STATUS, THE
MANDATE AND THE REPORTING LINES OF SFIC**

SFIC recommends to the Council the following main elements to be taken into account by the appropriate Council instances when deciding on a new ERA governance structure:

¹ Doc. ERAC-SFIC 1361/14

² Doc. ERAC-SFIC 1364/14

- **What should SFIC's objective be?**

To facilitate the further development, implementation and monitoring of the international dimension of ERA, with focus on the external dimension of the European Union and Member States' research and innovation activities, by the sharing of information and consultation between its members (Member States and the Commission) with a view to identifying common priorities which could lead to coordinated or joint initiatives, and coordinating activities and positions vis-à-vis third countries and within international fora.

- **How should SFIC work?**

Without prejudice to the decisions taken by the Council preparatory bodies on the ERA governance working methods, SFIC recommends the following:

- SFIC should be attended, where appropriate, by high level representatives of Member States and the Commission;
- SFIC should be chaired by one of its members representing a Member State designated for a period of 2 years. The SFIC Chair should be supported by a Vice-Chair;
- SFIC may be supported by appropriate working groups if deemed necessary. The working groups should be created for a limited period of time and should have specific mandates to deal with questions relevant to SFIC's mandate;
- SFIC should be open, as appropriate, to the countries associated to the EU's Framework Programme.

- **What are the main activities SFIC should focus on?**

SFIC, as ERA-related group currently responsible for international S&T cooperation as well as potentially responsible for a possible ERA Roadmap Top Priority 6 on international cooperation, should focus its activities on:

- Developing and implementing appropriate joint strategic approaches and actions for international R&I cooperation on the basis of national priorities (in line with ERA Roadmap - Top Priority 6);
- Providing input for the implementation and further development of the ERA Roadmap;

- Cooperating with and, when relevant, reporting to ERAC and other ERA-related groups by contributing to the mainstreaming of the international dimension in the other ERA priorities;
- Systematically sharing and structuring information and good practice on international R&I cooperation activities and objectives, including those derived from bilateral S&T agreements with third countries by Member States, Associated Countries and the Union;
- Pooling and sharing relevant knowledge concerning third countries as well as ensuring regular consultation between the members in order to identify their respective objectives and common priorities in terms of R&I cooperation with third countries, also in line with the Multi-Annual Roadmaps process;
- Information exchange and networking with scientific advisors in key third countries.

- **How should SFIC report to Council and Commission?**

Via a report of activities to the Council and to the Commission every two years on progress and impact.
