

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

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**Secretariat**

**ERAC-SFIC 1352/12**

**NOTE**

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Subject: Rules of Procedure of the Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation  
(SFIC)

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Delegations will find in the annex Rules of Procedure of the Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC), as adopted by SFIC at its meeting on 9 March 2012.

**STRATEGIC FORUM FOR INTERNATIONAL S&T COOPERATION (SFIC)  
RULES OF PROCEDURE**

**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 meeting 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 requested<sup>1</sup>. 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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'<sup>1</sup>. 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.
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