

ERAC-SFIC 1357/15

NOTE

Subject: SFIC opinion on Common principles for the conduct of international R&I cooperation

Delegations will find in annex an opinion by the Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC) on common principles for the conduct of international R&I cooperation, as adopted by the SFIC plenary on 9 June 2015.

**Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC) opinion on
Common principles for the conduct of international R&I cooperation**

1. BACKGROUND FOR SFIC'S WORK

In its Conclusions of 30 May 2013¹, the Council recognised the importance of developing common principles in the field of international R&I cooperation and invited "the Commission, in close cooperation with the Member States and partner countries [...] to develop such common principles on issues such as responsible research and innovation, research integrity; peer review; promotion of gender equality and the gender dimension in research and innovation; researcher careers; fair and equitable treatment of IP; and open access to publicly funded research publications and to research infrastructures".

More importantly for SFIC's work, the Council explicitly invited SFIC "to contribute to the development of the common principles for the conduct of international cooperation in research and innovation, notably through the provision of relevant advice and the sharing of information on international cooperation policies and activities and best practice developed at national level".

The SFIC plenary on 4 March 2015 decided to prepare a SFIC opinion on common principles for the conduct of international R&I cooperation compiling all work done by SFIC as a response to Council's request.

¹ Doc. 10318/13.

2. SFIC'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMON PRINCIPLES FOR THE CONDUCT OF INTERNATIONAL R&I COOPERATION

SFIC's work on common principles has been based on work carried out in variable geometry. A group of Member States and Associated Countries as well as the Commission gathered around a core group on common principles and, later on, a SFIC Working Group on common principles based on a specific mandate given by the SFIC plenary². Several SFIC Members and Observers, working with the Commission, have contributed to the various stages of the process.

2.1 Scoping paper on Global Research Standards

Following from the SFIC Task Force meeting of 17th September 2013, the UK, SE and DE developed a scoping paper on common principles to bring together information about organisations who are working at a global level on research standards and best practice. The scope was a non-exhaustive list and a first step in SFIC's contribution to its work on common principles with the purpose of providing the basis for further discussion at future SFIC plenary meetings. SFIC Members and Observers were therefore the main recipients. It is worth noting that the Commission was already and it is still involved in a number of these global initiatives identified in the paper. The scoping paper was presented and discussed at the SFIC plenary on 12 November 2013. One of the main outcomes of the discussion was that given the range of guidelines and standards already existing on common principles, SFIC should further explore what was already available and only consider developing new ones where none already existed.

² Doc. ERAC-SFIC 1358/14.

2.2 Presentation by Science Europe on common principles

SFIC invited Science Europe to present its work on common principles to the SFIC plenary on 5 February 2014. As stated in the summary conclusions of that meeting³, the President of Science Europe, Sir Paul Boyle, touched upon the role of Science Europe as a member of the Global Research Council, focusing on open access and funding opportunities for the future. He also emphasized the importance of linking common principles to both the development of the European Research Area (ERA) as well as to the work of the Global Research Council.

2.3 Questionnaire on common principles and related input from SFIC delegations

In April 2014, the SFIC Working Group sent a questionnaire on common principles for international R&I cooperation to all SFIC Members and Observers. The objective of the questionnaire was to better understand what different Member States and Associated Countries were doing in the field of common principles and which ones were the greatest priority in their international research and innovation cooperation. The results of the questionnaire were presented at the SFIC plenary on 19 May 2014⁴ by the rapporteur for the SFIC Working Group on common principles (Mrs. Julia Lewis, UK). Responses to the questionnaire were received from Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, UK and Norway. Member States identified a number of common principles of high importance, but Open Access, Research Infrastructures and Research Integrity were considered the highest priorities. The questionnaire also identified a number of key international fora where common principles are already being developed and promoted. These were in addition to the ones already identified in the scoping paper. The need for a better coordination and promotion of existing common principles was therefore highlighted as a main recommendation. [see Annex to Annex]

³ Doc. ERAC-SFIC 1352/14.

⁴ Doc. ERAC-SFIC 1360/14.

3. SFIC'S RECOMMENDATIONS ON COMMON PRINCIPLES

Based on the activities outlined above, and considering the input of the SFIC Working Group on common principles, SFIC recommends to the Council and to the Commission:

- To acknowledge the work already done on common principles by actors both in Europe and world-wide;
- To contribute to the dialogue and information sharing on common principles where appropriate (e.g. JSTCC meetings and policy dialogues, as well as in international multilateral fora such as the Global Research Council);
- To include common principles on R&I in international science and technology (S&T) agreements both at EU and Member State/Associated Country level;
- To use international collaboration in Horizon 2020 and associated agreements (e.g. Joint Programming Initiatives) to promote common principles in R&I;
- To use the Service Facility in support of the strategic development of international cooperation in research and innovation to support Members States and Associated Countries in promoting common principles in R&I;
- To promote information exchange on common principles in all ERA-related groups;
- To develop future contributions by SFIC on an ad-hoc basis. This might include, for instance, presentations from expert speakers or workshops on topics of particular interest.

4. SFIC'S FUTURE CONTRIBUTION

SFIC considers the request to contribute to the development of common principles for the conduct of international R&I cooperation, as mandated by the Council, to have been fulfilled. However, SFIC intends to continue contributing to the common principles debate in the future, on an ad-hoc basis and when requested by Council and/or Commission or when SFIC Members and Observers consider it appropriate.

SFIC Working Group on common principles
Summary of results of questionnaire on common principles and priorities

A short questionnaire on common principles for international cooperation in research and innovation was sent from the SFIC Working Group on common principles via the SFIC Secretariat on 11th April with closing date on 28th April. These responses were analysed and presented at the SFIC plenary on 19th May 2014. Responses were received from AT, BE, CZ, DE, FR, PL, PT, SE, UK and NO.

Q1.1 International fora, organisations or topics missing [from original scoping paper]

The following organisations were identified:

- OECD (groups such as the OECD working party on Innovation and Technology policy);
- UN (WHO -World Health Organisation- and ILO -International Labour Organisation-);
- TAFTIE (European network of innovation agencies);
- Inter Academy Panel (Global network of science academies);
- WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organisation).

Some topics were flagged up as "missing" but having considered these, it was decided that they were really “framework conditions” such as access to finance rather than “common principles” such as research integrity. These topics are also important but outside the scope of the advice that SFIC has been asked to provide.

Q1.2 Priorities

Respondents made the distinction between the fact that all of these principles were a “high” priority but that they ranked them on the basis of those that would make the biggest difference to the quality of international cooperation. Using a score of High=3 Medium=2 and Low=1, respondents scored the priorities to identify the top 3 priorities.

These top 3 priorities are:

- Open Access;
- Research infrastructures;
- Research integrity.

Q.2.1 Active promotion at national level

All respondents actively promoted common principles in their international collaborations although the methods varied from country to country:

- Use of formal bilateral research and innovation agreements;
- Standard templates and documents;
- Sharing best practice.

Q.2.1 Best practice examples

A number of best practice examples were received of which these provide a sample:

- AT: Use of bilateral agreements to promote gender equality and intellectual property rights;
- FR: Use of evaluation templates, written in English, by the National Natural Sciences Foundation of China which were compatible with those of the ANR;
- UK: The UK-Brazil Innovation Dialogue, as a bilateral forum for cooperation inaugurated to bring together delegates from both countries. It is led by the Brazilian Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS).

Q.3 Is better co-ordination needed either at MS or EU level?

The general response was “yes” but with the caveat that we should be promoting existing common principles rather than “re-inventing the wheel”, for example using existing funding instruments such as Horizon 2020 or collaborative initiatives such as joint programming where third countries are participating to promote “common principles”.