

NOTE

Subject: Summary conclusions of the 33rd meeting of the Strategic Forum for
International S&T Cooperation, held in Brussels, 8 June 2017

The vice-chair (Tiina Vihma-Purovaara) hosted the meeting in the absence of the chair.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted without modification.

2. Working session on Working Groups

The first half of the meeting was dedicated to a working session on the future of SFIC working groups. The vice-chair introduced the working session by referring to the SFIC work programme and international mega trends that shape the challenges facing international collaboration. The vice-chair also mentioned the role of the working groups in the history of SFIC as core element and recalled shortly the history of working groups within SFIC. She identified them as a great forum for dialogue and sharing of information. She also highlighted that the growing importance of the regional dimension is more important than ever. Olivier Steffen (FR) presented the main outcomes of the SFIC strategic seminar with relevance for working groups.

Subsequently, delegations discussed in three small groups the question on

- the need for new geographical and thematic groups? (Science Diplomacy ; SDGs...);
- the structure : regional vs country approach; and
- interaction with the groups, including the link with SFIC plenary (and its horizontal work) ; mandate of the groups (SRIA...) ; commitment of the members.

The discussion led to a number of preliminary outcomes, including the recognition that working groups have been contributing to the central function of knowledge sharing, on the need to complement a geographical focus with a thematic focus, on the need to have clear goals and milestones and on the need to more closely reflect in the working groups the challenges faced by and interests of countries.

The vice-chair summarised the discussion highlighting that the usefulness of groups became clear, but that practical questions needed to be further discussed. On the innovation angle, the discussion also needed to be taken forward.

The chair and vice-chair will collate the information and will prepare a discussion paper based on the outcome of the working session for the next plenary session.

3. Tour de table of national activities

Based on presentations and ad hoc interventions, delegations informed about core developments in their countries. The Commission provided updates about past and planned meetings.

4. Administrative/Procedural issues

Two ERA advisory groups, the Helsinki group focussing on gender, and the Human Resources and Mobility group, will be moved from the Commission to the Council on 1 July 2017. They will be Standing Working Groups of ERAC and their secretariat will be provided by the Council Secretariat.

5. SFIC opinion(s)

Gender in international cooperation

AT presented the state of play of the work on gender in international cooperation (presentation) and reminded the groups that the deadline for responding to the survey has been extended until 18 June. The vice-chair recalled the importance of mirroring our work and of the work on gender. PT inquired about the alignment of the work of the group and the activities of the Commission.

6. Service facility

SFIC discussed with the Commission the draft requests to the INCO Service Facility as contained in WK 4711 2017. The Commission informed about the current services provided through the INCO service facility:

- *Communication activities (on demand: send trainers and presenters and/or communication materials)¹
- *NCP training to help in H2020 calls (on demand: mostly remote access to NCP training provided to European NCPs).
- *Support to CELAC to reach the sustainable dev goals
- *CELAC secretarial support
- Tunisia secretarial support: FR more info
- ASEAN JFS support
- EU Canada support: FR more info

DE proposed an new request on a policy dialogue in and for the Danube region. The Commission requested more time to assess the request. The proposal was supported by CZ, SK, AT, MD, RO and HU².

The Commission generally remarked that it needed clear guidance and more details on the requests and on expected result, as the INCO Service Facility would only execute the requests. The Commission also clarified that there is no specific deadline for requests, but that processing requests takes 70-100 days to complete. The Commission also asked to have a contact person in SFIC for each request. The Commission will share the overview of what is going on.

The vice-chair concluded by emphasising the collaborative nature of the process in SFIC and between Member States, associated countries and the Commission and invited all involved parties to clarify their requests.

¹ * indicates services already provided.

² HU indicated support in writing after the meeting.

7. State of play on working groups

China

The China WG last met on 28 April 2017 and discussed updates on ongoing projects and processes. The rapporteur recalled that the WG mandate runs out on 15 June and proposed to consider the future of the group in light of the discussions in the morning. The vice-chair also recalled the discussions from the strategic workshop when reflecting on the future of this WG. Brazil

As the Brazil WG is dormant at the moment, the vice-chair invited the Commission to present an update on INCOBRA (presentation) and CEBRABIC (presentation).

Toolbox

The rapporteur provided an update on the group's work. Specifically on the preparation of a planned workshop which will probably take place back to back with December SFIC plenary.

8. Feedback from ERAC workshop

The vice-chair transmitted the feedback from the ERA workshop in Malta by the SFIC representative.

9. AOB

The Commission updated on the meetings that took place last week in the context of the EU-China Innovation Cooperation Dialogue, chaired by Commissioner Moedas and the Chinese Minister of Science and Technology WAN Gang. They signed an administrative arrangement renewing the EU-China co-funding mechanism for research and innovation (CFM). They also endorsed flagship initiatives targeting the areas of Food, Agriculture and Biotechnologies, Environment and Sustainable Urbanisation, Surface Transport, Safer and Greener aviation, and Biotechnologies for Environment and Human Health. During the period 2018-2020 the two sides intend to mobilise about EUR 100 mil each for the flagship initiatives and cooperation in other areas. On the Chinese side funding will be provided by MOST through the CFM, as well as by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) on aviation, and by the Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC) on biotechnologies.

Konstantinos Glinos (Commission) informed SFIC that he will be on a fellowship to Singapore. He will be replaced during his absence by Philippe Vialatte.
