

ERAC-SFIC 1351/19

NOTE

Subject: SFIC opinion on international cooperation in “Horizon Europe”

Delegations will find attached SFIC opinion on international cooperation in “Horizon Europe”, as adopted via the written procedure.

SFIC opinion on international cooperation in “Horizon Europe”

International cooperation in research and innovation (R&I) should remain a key priority for future European policies. In the spirit of Sustainable Development Goals, collaboration with scientific teams and access to research infrastructures worldwide is crucial to tackle global challenges as well as to strengthen the competitiveness of the European research and innovation landscape and the attractiveness of the European Union as a major R&I player.

In its opinion on the mid-term review of Horizon 2020¹, SFIC expressed its concerns regarding the drop in participation of third countries in Horizon 2020 (2.4% of participation vs 4.9% during FP7) and suggested measures to leverage the international cooperation within the framework programme.

In the context of the European Commission’s proposals for the next Framework Programme for Research and Innovation “Horizon Europe”, SFIC wishes to address the following crucial aspects of international cooperation within the Framework Programme:

- **Strengthening the strategic approach to international cooperation in “Horizon Europe” and the link with SFIC**

In matters related to international cooperation in research and innovation, the Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC) should be able to contribute to the strategic planning through providing its expert advice. SFIC’s contribution should in particular contribute to specify the Programme’s operational objective ‘strengthen international cooperation’².

The international cooperation strategy for “Horizon Europe” should be spelled out more clearly, potentially as a dedicated part of the strategic planning process for “Horizon Europe”. SFIC is ready to bring in its specific expertise and food for thoughts in this regard with a view to updating the Commission communication of 14 September 2012³, notably by taking into account the specific situation that arises due to European and international developments since 2012.

- **Improving the coordination between Member States/Associated Countries and European Commission**

A closer coordination of the Commission and Member States/Associated Countries on international R&I policies would strengthen Europe’s role in the global research landscape. SFIC should therefore intensify its role as a platform to enhance MS/AC-Commission coordination for bilateral and bi-regional dialogue meetings. The delegates should be informed on the developments of international cooperation via a close dialogue with the European Commission. This could include the consultation in the preparation of S&T cooperation agreements, joint calls and other initiatives.

¹ SFIC opinion on international cooperation in the context of the mid-term review of Horizon 2020 and the preparation of the 9th EU Framework programme (ERAC-SFIC 1352/17) February 2017

² As defined by article [2 § 2(...)].

³ ‘Enhancing and Focusing EU International Cooperation in Research and Innovation: A Strategic Approach’

SFIC should also be involved as comprehensively as possible in discussions on international cooperation (link with strategic process) as well as in consolidation of the Commission's Multi-Annual Roadmaps for international cooperation, through the DG RTD Informal Workshops on "EU and National Strategies for international cooperation in R&I".

- **Streamlining international components in the "Horizon Europe" programme**

Because of the concerns expressed by SFIC regarding the drop in participation of third countries in Horizon 2020, SFIC suggests that the different international elements of "Horizon Europe" (e.g. in Pillar II) should be integrated into a coherent strategic and operational approach. Clear coordination of the international component of "Horizon Europe" should be ensured within the Commission Services to leverage the full potential for international cooperation in "Horizon Europe", to avoid a similar drop of non-European participation as in the previous Framework Programmes. Since there are no dedicated structures in the comitology for the implementation of international cooperation activities foreseen in "Horizon Europe", the Commission Services should, for example, make international cooperation a standing agenda item of the different configurations of the programme committee during the implementation phase of "Horizon Europe", to ensure the visibility and importance of global cooperation.

The evaluation procedures in "Horizon Europe" should also be adjusted to fully capture the importance of international cooperation as a cross cutting issue.
