

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

Secretariat

Brussels, 21 November 2014
(OR. en)

ERAC-SFIC 1364/14

NOTE

Subject: SFIC opinion on the ERA Roadmap

Delegations will find in annex the Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC) opinion on the ERA Roadmap, as adopted by SFIC on 20 November 2014.

**Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC) opinion
on the ERA Roadmap**

1) BACKGROUND

The Council Conclusions on progress in the European Research Area¹ (ERA) invited *"Member States in close cooperation with the Commission, considering the ERAC opinion and working through ERAC, to develop by mid-2015 an ERA roadmap at European level, which should serve the purpose of facilitating and reinforcing the efforts undertaken by the Member States"*. Furthermore, the Conclusions stated that *"the external dimension is an integral part of the ERA"*.

Following the invitation from the Council, the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC) is currently working on the development of the ERA Roadmap. The Strategic Forum for International Science and Technological Cooperation (SFIC) would therefore like to contribute to ERAC's work on the ERA Roadmap focusing on issues relevant to the SFIC area of activities, in particular on the external dimension of the European Research Area.

2) PROCESS

ERAC is keen to have the involvement of the ERA-related groups in the process of developing the ERA Roadmap and ERAC delegates have provided inputs on the six ERA Priorities - including international cooperation as the 6th ERA Priority - and consulted within their administrations and with stakeholders at national level in view of a discussion at the ERAC plenary meeting on 3 October 2014.

The Chair and Vice-Chair of SFIC were invited together with the Chairs of the other ERA-related groups to the Plenary meeting of ERAC in October 2014 to provide input for a list of key actions linked to the six priorities with a view to develop the ERA Roadmap. SFIC had a first discussion at its Plenary in September 2014.

¹ Doc. 6353/14

3) RECOMMENDATIONS

1. SFIC welcomes and supports ERAC's structure for the ERA Roadmap with **international cooperation as a clear and differentiated 6th priority**, underlining the importance of international cooperation as an essential part of ERA. Substantial progress is required in the way international cooperation is reflected in policy measures at all levels, including EU, national and stakeholder levels. It is important to have a stand-alone priority focusing on the external dimension of ERA as well as **international cooperation considered as cross-cutting priority across all the other ERA priorities and actions**.
2. The EU, Member States and Associated Countries should take advantage of the best research and innovation worldwide. In this context, SFIC stresses the importance of having a **Top Action Priority** in the ERA Roadmap based on:

Develop and implement joint strategic approaches and actions for international S&T cooperation on the basis of national priorities, as appropriate.

This will include enhancing **multilateral S&T cooperation approaches** (e.g. towards tackling grand societal challenges).

3. A more coherent view of Europe as a partner should be promoted, where possible. This will be achieved by ensuring a **better coordination of national and EU policies and actions** on international S&T regarding third countries and international fora, with the possibility of using SFIC as a platform.
4. The **mainstreaming of the international dimension within Horizon 2020 initiatives and actions** should be a priority. Furthermore, SFIC invites the European Commission to consult Member States through SFIC when developing the **Multi-Annual Roadmaps** for cooperation with third countries on S&T as well as in the context of the **EU's joint committee meetings and policy dialogues** with third countries, where the participation of SFIC representatives should be encouraged.

It is worth noting that the above-mentioned issues stem from discussions within SFIC, including the messages provided by delegates in the recent self-assessment exercise, issues discussed at the SFIC Strategic Seminar on 12-13 June 2014 in Stockholm as well as the preliminary discussions on the SFIC Work Programme 2015-16.

4) SFIC'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ERA ROADMAP

SFIC is the appropriate platform to facilitate the further development, implementation and monitoring of the international dimension of ERA by coordinating the cooperation between Member States and the EU towards international partner countries. SFIC is ready to have an essential role in the further development and implementation of the ERA Roadmap:

- a) By providing input during the development process of the ERA Roadmap, that is up until its foreseen adoption in May 2015. SFIC has planned two plenary meetings on 8 December 2014 and 4 March 2015, where the Roadmap will be on the agenda;
- b) By contributing to the mainstreaming of the international dimension in the other five ERA priorities to ensure consistency;
- c) By providing early support to the European Commission regarding the further development of the Multi-Annual Roadmaps for international R&I cooperation with third countries;
- d) By encouraging the discussion and exchange of good practices regarding S&T agreements at both EU and Member State level, and developing recommendations for better coordination in this regard;
- e) By supporting the further work on indicators for international cooperation in the context of the ERA Monitoring Mechanism and the R&I Observatory.

Activities and actions dealing with the above-mentioned points will be considered in the forthcoming SFIC Work Programme 2015-2016.

SFIC has an essential role to play in the future implementation of the ERA Roadmap as the ERA group responsible for international cooperation.
