

EUROPEAN UNION

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

Secretariat

ERAC-SFIC 1359/14

NOTE

Subject: SFIC opinion on the Multi-Annual Roadmaps for international cooperation

Delegations will find attached a SFIC opinion on the Multi-Annual Roadmaps for international cooperation, as adopted via written procedure on 10 June 2014.

SFIC Opinion on the Multi-Annual Roadmaps for international cooperation

1. Background of SFIC's work

In its Conclusions of 30 May 2013¹, the Council: “Invites SFIC, in light of the new strategic approach proposed by the Commission, to contribute to the design and development of the multi-annual roadmaps in collaboration and open discussion with the relevant stakeholders, while developing joint research and innovation agendas between the Union, Member States and strategic partners in third countries”.

A first discussion was held in SFIC on 12 November 2013, concluding that the contribution to the roadmaps is an important task for SFIC and announcing the launch of a consultation with SFIC Members and Observers (with deadline on 15 December 2013) as an essential step to receive input from the Member States.

A questionnaire prepared by the Commission was sent out during the autumn and the process was further discussed at the SFIC plenary meeting on 5 February 2014. The Commission announced the organisation of a workshop on 26 March 2014 in order to discuss each of the ten roadmaps².

The workshop was attended by the SFIC Chair, the Vice-Chair and 23 participants representing SFIC Members and Observers. The countries represented were Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the United Kingdom. The SFIC Secretariat was also present.

The Commission provided a summary of the workshop.

¹ Doc. 10318/13

² Nine countries (Brazil, Canada, China, India, Japan, Korea, Russia, South Africa and USA) and one region (Southern Mediterranean) are covered by the roadmaps.

2. SFIC's recommendations to the Commission

SFIC welcomes the summary provided by the Commission and would in particular like to emphasize the following points to be taken into account in the short and the long term during the roadmaps design and development. Recommendations refer to the content and the process as:

Recommendations regarding the content (short term):

- The roadmaps should better emphasize the EU-added value and indicate the analytical basis for the selection of the priorities (including the analysis of the STI strategy of the partner country/region) also taking into account past and current SFIC work under SFIC country initiatives.
- A number of aspects in the roadmap for South Africa were highlighted as good practice and could be used as a ‘blue print’ or ‘template’.
- References to intergovernmental initiatives, e.g. Joint Programming Initiatives (JPI) and the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) should be included where relevant.
- The issues of reciprocity in opening national programmes, mutual interest and shared benefits, as well as obstacles and framework conditions for access to S&T systems within 3rd countries should be dealt with.
- Additional information regarding relevant policy reforms in key partner countries may be provided as appropriate, together with information regarding any commitments made by key partner countries to provide public funding to 3rd country participants who do not qualify for automatic funding under Horizon 2020.
- It is important to address the links between bilateral and bi-regional approaches to cooperation appropriately. The ongoing STI-dialogues between the EU and regions (e.g. CELAC, AU) could form a basis for establishing the roadmaps with the regions.
- The roadmaps should take into consideration the EU external and development policies and the EU Member States' policies. In particular, innovation should feature in the strategic

approach towards key partners/regions. The Commission could, if appropriate, also consider including the whole “knowledge triangle” in future roadmaps.

Recommendations regarding the process (long term):

- A structured consultation and implementation process for the roadmaps should be clearly defined and communicated. A realistic timeframe should be developed, from gathering input from other policy DGs in the Commission and Member States to the inter-service consultation procedure, to the publishing of the Multi-Annual roadmaps. In order to achieve desired synergies, the roadmaps should be coordinated in the same time frame as the preparation of the Horizon 2020 strategic programming cycle.
- The approach should be more challenge-based rather than thematic, when appropriate, and also plan for follow-up and monitoring. This would facilitate a more proactive approach, by allowing for new avenues of cooperation instead of confirming existing ones.
- At present there are ten roadmaps, for nine countries and one region. The Commission's strategy for international STI cooperation³ identifies three country groups and explicitly encourages bi-regional dialogues. SFIC is prepared to give input on the relevance of strategic countries/regions (including the balance between a country-focus and a regional-focus) to be covered in future multi-annual roadmaps.

3. SFIC's future contribution to the roadmaps process

SFIC intends to continue contributing to the multi-annual roadmaps process in the future, e.g., when the roadmaps will be presented by the Commission in the autumn of 2014 or during subsequent updates.

³ Commission Communication on "Enhancing and Focusing EU International Cooperation in Research and Innovation: A Strategic Approach" of 14/09/2012 (COM (2012) 497 final).

SFIC advises the Commission to continue the organization of workshops on the multiannual roadmaps as ongoing, annual discussion and orientation forums in line with the well-placed workshop organised in March 2014 in Brussels.

SFIC would welcome a consultation on the STI strategy as a whole, including the Commission's strategy in international fora and organizations (e.g. Belmont Forum).
