



## EU Insight

### The importance of international cooperation in research and innovation – Conclusions of the Council of the European Union

On 29 and 30<sup>th</sup> of May, 2013, the European “[Competitiveness Council](#)” (covering the areas “Internal Market, Industry, Research and Space”) adopted a series of [conclusions](#) endorsing a new EU strategy for enhancing international cooperation in research and innovation which was laid down in the European Commission’s Communication “[Enhancing and Focusing EU International Cooperation in Research and Innovation: a Strategic Approach](#)”. This [EU International Strategy for Research and Innovation](#) was published on the 14th of September 2012, taking stock of the current state of the EU’s international cooperation in research and innovation and developing a new approach, particularly paying attention to the implementation of international cooperation within the next framework programme “[Horizon 2020](#)” (2014-2020).

#### The September 2012 Commission’s Communication

Addressing the [European Parliament](#), the [Council of the European Union](#), the [European Economic and Social Committee](#) and the [Committee of the Regions](#), the European Commission identified three key objectives of the broader policies of the EU which are supported by international cooperation in research and innovation:

- “Strengthening the Union’s excellence and attractiveness in research and innovation as well as its economic and industrial competitiveness
- Tackling global societal challenges
- Supporting the Union’s external policies”

The Commission aims at “maximising the impact of international research and innovation activities, while avoiding a costly fragmentation of efforts”, which “requires the Union to complement the openness of Horizon 2020 with targeted actions in order to ensure optimal scale and scope.” The strategic approach foresees as a first step the identification of areas for international cooperation along a set of criteria laid down in the document; based on these criteria the strategic approach will start out by “developing multi-annual roadmaps for cooperation with key partner countries and regions”. The following country groupings are included in the Horizon 2020 proposals:

- The EFTA countries, EU enlargement countries and countries covered by the European Neighbourhood policy
- Industrialised countries and emerging economies
- Developing countries.

#### Competitiveness Council

The creation of the Competitiveness Council in June 2002, through the merging of three previous configurations (Internal Market, Industry and Research) was a response to the perceived need for a more coherent and better coordinated handling of these matters related to the European Union’s competitiveness. Depending on the items on the agenda, this Council is composed of European Affairs Ministers, Industry Ministers, Research Ministers, etc. It meets about five or six times a year.



## The May 2013 European Council Conclusions

About half a year later, the Competitiveness Council adopted [Conclusions](#) endorsing this September 2012 communication and enhancing the importance of the international dimension of the [European Research Area \(ERA\)](#). The Council acknowledges “the important progress towards improved international cooperation made through FP7 projects, including through the INCO Programme, and also by opening participation to third countries and contributing to the development of international cooperation flagship projects“. The Council also “stresses the importance of ensuring that Horizon 2020 facilitates cooperation among researchers from across the globe on addressing shared challenges, while giving due attention to reciprocity and respect for intellectual property rights”.

### **Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC)**

SFIC is a strategic forum and an advisory body to the Council and the Commission with a view to implementing a European Partnership in the field of international scientific and technological cooperation (S&T cooperation). SFIC's objective is to facilitate the further development, implementation and monitoring of the international dimension of ERA by the sharing of information and consultation between the partners with a view to identifying common priorities which could lead to coordinated or joint initiatives, and coordinating activities and positions vis-à-vis third countries and within international fora.

Furthermore, the Conclusions particularly recognize and stress “the important advisory work of the [Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation \(SFIC\)](#), its contribution to mutual learning and its role in promoting coordination of international cooperation priorities of Member States, for instance, as regards the India initiative and the building up of the Indo-European Research and Innovation Partnership”. Therefore, the Council “encourages SFIC to continue its advisory work with its initiatives such as with India, China, the USA, Brazil and others”.

The conclusions acknowledge the importance of international cooperation and strongly support the new strategic approach advocated by the Commission.

### Sources and further information

- 1) [Council of the European Union](#)
- 2) [EU-Bureau of the German Federal Ministry of Research and Education](#) (in German)
- 3) “[Enhancing and Focusing EU International Cooperation in Research and Innovation: a Strategic Approach](#)”, European Commission's Communication, Brussels, 14 September 2012
- 4) [Council Conclusions on 'Enhancing and Focusing EU International Cooperation in Research and Innovation: a Strategic Approach'](#), Council of the European Union, 3242nd Competitiveness Council meeting, Brussels, 29 and 30 May 2013.