

Opinion Paper of the ERA Sub-Group on the Global Approach¹ to R&I towards a common European Framework for Science Diplomacy

The recently published expert report "[A European Framework for Science Diplomacy – Recommendations of the EU Science Diplomacy Working Groups](#)" represents a significant stride in the European Union's efforts to bridge the gap between scientific research and diplomatic initiatives. This comprehensive framework underscores the pivotal role that science diplomacy plays in an evolving geopolitical landscape in order to foster a shared responsibility for addressing global challenges, supporting effective multilateralism, promoting European values worldwide, and defending Europe's strategic interests. It is important to stress that international cooperation is fundamental for the advancement of excellent science.

Science diplomacy, as outlined in the report, is not merely an academic exercise but a strategic tool that can help the EU and its Member States to navigate complex geopolitical landscapes. It allows for the creation of synergies between the scientific and diplomatic spheres, promoting a cohesive approach to tackling global issues such as climate change, public health crises, and technological disparities.

To effectively operationalise the principles and objectives and implement the recommendations and actions outlined in the "European Framework for Science Diplomacy", we need concerted efforts at multiple levels of governance from the European Commission and the European External Action Service to the Member States' ministries in responsible for research & innovation and foreign affairs as well as higher education, research and innovation actors. The Global Approach Subgroup would like to highlight some of the vital points in this respect:

1. Strengthening strategic coordination and integration

The European Commission should spearhead efforts to integrate science diplomacy into the core of European policies and policy making, while Member States should work on national strategies and develop opportunities for collaboration. This involves:

- **European Science Diplomacy Strategy:** Based on the recommendations, develop a coherent set of priorities for Science Diplomacy. They should align with other existing/ planned EU initiatives, including the Competitiveness Compass, Clean Industrial Deal, and the Preparedness Union. Ensure that the strategy is focused and targeted but adaptable and responsive to global geopolitical as well as scientific and technological developments.
- **Science Diplomacy as an important component of European Common Foreign and Security Policy:** Acknowledge the relevance and potential of science and technology for the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (e.g., through including the topic in the European Commission Project Groups on External Action and work related to the Economic Security Strategy, appointing science diplomacy coordinators in EU diplomatic services, etc.).
- **Strategic Foresight and Monitoring:** Establish mechanisms for linking foresight activities and their results with foreign and security policy making to anticipate future international and regional challenges and opportunities.
- **Better connect scientific evidence and policymaking at the intersection of science policy and foreign policy:** Utilise this intelligence through adequate science advisory ecosystems (e.g., SAM, national science advisory structures) to inform EU and national policymaking and optimise international engagements, building on Europe's strengths in this area.

2. Enhancing international collaborations and partnerships

To bolster the EU's external scientific engagements:

- **Bilateral and Multilateral Agreements:** Foster EU level strategic partnerships through bilateral and multilateral agreements with key international players. Prioritise collaborations that address global

¹ Since its establishment in 2022, the ERA Forum Standing Subgroup on the Global Approach to R&I gives advice to the Commission services in designing, implementing and evaluating approaches and actions of international R&I cooperation, establishes coordination between the Commission, Member States, Horizon Europe Associated Countries and stakeholders and facilitates the exchange of experiences and best practices. It includes experts nominated by the Members States' authorities responsible for research and innovation.

challenges, such as climate change, global health, and sustainable development as well as the governance of global goods and commons, while at the same time delivering on the EU's strategic interests.

- **Capacity Building Initiatives:** Support at EU and MS level capacity-building programmes developed in partnership with countries facing constraints in scientific capacities. This can be achieved, e.g., through collaborative research projects, exchange programmes and training workshops and include instruments of the Neighbourhood and international partnership policies.
- **Promoting values and enhancing research security:** Open and safe research cooperation based on common principles and values should be the compass when engaging in international partnerships at EU and MS level. Potential protective measures should be assessed against their impacts from a science diplomacy as well as research security perspective with the aim of maximising opportunities while managing related risks.

3. Fostering Science Diplomacy communities, training and capacity building

Creating fora and trusted places for dialogue and exchange will increase efficiency and can nurture a new generation of science diplomats.

- **European Science Diplomacy Platform:** This virtual platform at EU level can act as a hub for continuous knowledge generation, community building and best practice sharing in and beyond the EU and also serve as a centre of gravity for various thematic and regional networks of experts.
- **Science Diplomacy Networks:** Build and support at EU and MS level networks of science diplomats within the EU and internationally and assist with supporting measures, e.g., a possible creation of European scientific diaspora associations abroad. These networks should facilitate knowledge exchange, collaboration, and the dissemination of best practices in science diplomacy.
- **Science Diplomacy Education:** Capitalise on the training offers available and integrate science diplomacy into educational curricula and professional development programmes at EU and MS level for researchers at all career stages and diplomats, including in Diplomatic Academies. This will create a knowledgeable workforce capable of navigating the complex interplay between science and international relations.

4. Stimulating Science Diplomacy research

For the EU to remain a hub for excellent science diplomacy research funding and collaboration as well as scientific publishing, opportunities need to be encouraged through EU and national resources and together with third countries or regions as relevant.

Conclusion

The expert report "A European Framework for Science Diplomacy" offers a visionary approach to enhancing the EU's role in global research and innovation. By taking strategic steps at the political level, the European Commission, EU Member States, and the European External Action Service can ensure that science diplomacy becomes an integral part of the EU's strategic international engagement. This will not only strengthen the EU's global standing but also contribute to addressing some of the most pressing challenges of our time through collaborative and ethical scientific endeavours.

For the EU to become more strategic in its international engagement, while addressing existing vulnerabilities, the Global Approach Subgroup

1) Supports the discussion of the expert report "A European Framework for Science Diplomacy" in the Council and formal political recognition of a European Framework for Science Diplomacy, ideally via a Council Recommendation on Science Diplomacy;

2) Requests the European Commission and Member States to continue funding science diplomacy activities, e.g. through Horizon Europe and its successor as well as national funding programmes;

3) Endorses that Science Diplomacy should remain a key topic in its work also for the next ERA Action Plan phase from 2025-2027.