



European
Commission

A EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK FOR SCIENCE DIPLOMACY

Recommendations of the
EU Science Diplomacy Working Groups

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A European Framework for Science Diplomacy

Executive summary

Science is a key shaper of the European and global economy through the development of discoveries, technologies and innovative solutions to a variety of challenges. It is also a key element in international relations, with emphasis on competition or cooperation or pursuing a combination of both. As clearly spelt out in the Draghi report¹, Europe is faced with three major challenges: closing the innovation gap with the US and China especially in advanced technologies, decarbonising the economy while boosting competitiveness, and increasing security and reducing dependencies.

Research and innovation are at the very core of these challenges – in fact, there is hardly any (geo-)political development not affected by the output of research and innovation.

As science and technology have increasingly become a geopolitical currency, science diplomacy is emerging as a key element in leveraging our power and partnerships for a global Europe.

The “Global Approach to Research and Innovation” – the EU’s strategy for international cooperation in research and innovation adopted in May 2021 – advocates that a stronger focus on science and technology in the EU’s foreign and security policies would help the EU to project soft power and pursue its economic interests and fundamental values more effectively.

In its Conclusions on the Global Approach in September 2021, the Council of the EU highlighted the importance of integrating the Global Approach into the EU’s external action and called on the Commission and the European External Action Service to develop a European Science Diplomacy Agenda.

The report “**A European Framework for Science Diplomacy**” delivers on this task and is the result of a European-wide co-creation process, which brought together 130 experts from the worlds of science and diplomacy under the guidance of a Steering Team.

1. https://commission.europa.eu/topics/strengthening-european-competitiveness/eu-competitiveness-looking-ahead_en#paragraph_47059

The report describes the emergence of science diplomacy as a concept and sketches the varieties of science diplomacy practices. Rather than advancing a new definition, the report views science diplomacy as a practice or craft. “Science” is understood here to include all fields of academic study, not only natural sciences, technology, engineering and medicine, but also social sciences and humanities. “Diplomacy” refers to the pursuit of state interest by diplomatic means, as well as the pursuit of global interests, e.g., by international organisations. Science diplomacy has been regarded in the past as a practice that covers three dimensions: science for diplomacy, science in diplomacy, and diplomacy for science. New challenges, such as a strong competition for technological supremacy and sovereignty amongst states as well as concerns revolving around research security have entered the field. In view of the rising geopolitical tensions and the risk of foreign interference, there is increasing awareness among science stakeholders that scientific developments and cooperation are being affected by global politics. Likewise, there is increasing awareness among diplomats that scientific and tech-

nological advances have a profound impact on international relations. As a result, a new dimension of science diplomacy so far not addressed becomes increasingly important: diplomacy in science, which refers to the use of diplomatic skills and tools in and by science.

As clearly stated in the political guidelines for the European Commission 2024-2029², in an age of geostrategic rivalries Europe needs to be more assertive in pursuing its strategic interests. Consequently, the reflection on what science diplomacy should or could offer to Europe, cannot be dissociated from the role research and innovation play in a changing world order. The underlying question is how Europe can turn its position as one of the global powerhouses in research and innovation into geopolitical clout.

As a guiding principle, European science diplomacy needs to be rooted in the principles and values that make Europe a trustworthy partner and provide both a foundation and signposts for navigating the complexities of a changing political world order.



2. https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/e6cd4328-673c-4e7a-8683-f63ffb2cf648_en?filename=Political%20Guidelines%202024-2029_EN.pdf

European science diplomacy should aim at preserving spaces for exchange and fostering a shared responsibility for addressing common challenges and protecting global public goods, thereby supporting effective multilateralism.

In addition, it should make sure that all relevant actors are heard and be accountable for pursuing scientific development and its deployment. Therefore, the science and diplomacy experts cocreating the input to the report advocate that a future European Framework for Science Diplomacy should contribute to:

- Strengthening Europe's competitive position as a global science and technology actor,
- Maximising the deployment of European research and innovation potential for the pursuit of peace and multilateralism, and
- Reinforcing Europe's commitment to managing global public goods and commons sustainably and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Consequently, the mission of a European science diplomacy must be to ensure that the Common Foreign and Security Policy and Common Security and Defence Policy leverage on scientific expertise and networks, and the European Research Area leverages on diplomatic efforts to preserve spaces for negotiation, cooperation and exchange, especially in conditions of tension and competition.

Joining forces at the EU and broader European level, taking on board all relevant state and non-state actors, is necessary to address issues that transcend national borders and disciplinary boundaries.

Europe is faced with increasingly assertive economic and scientific powers of a size and weight that can only be matched by a joint European effort. The true added value of a European Framework for Science Diplomacy is to provide a strategic umbrella under which the EU, its Member States and the various science and diplomacy stakeholders can maximise the impact of their efforts, while strengthening the geopolitical influence and the scientific and technological weight of the EU overall.

Amidst these challenges, identifying, engaging and systematically nurturing European science diplomacy actors is of the essence. These include most notably scientists and diplomats, but also civil society and business, as well as intermediary actors, such as those involved in capacity building, training or scientific advice.

In a concerted effort, which includes individuals and institutions from both the EU and Member State level, European science diplomacy should focus on achieving the following objectives:

- Using science diplomacy strategically to tackle geopolitical challenges in a fragmented, multipolar world;
- Making European diplomacy more strategic, effective and resilient through scientific evidence and foresight;
- Strengthening science diplomacy in delegations and embassies and fostering the EU's global science diplomacy outreach;
- Building capacity for European science diplomacy.

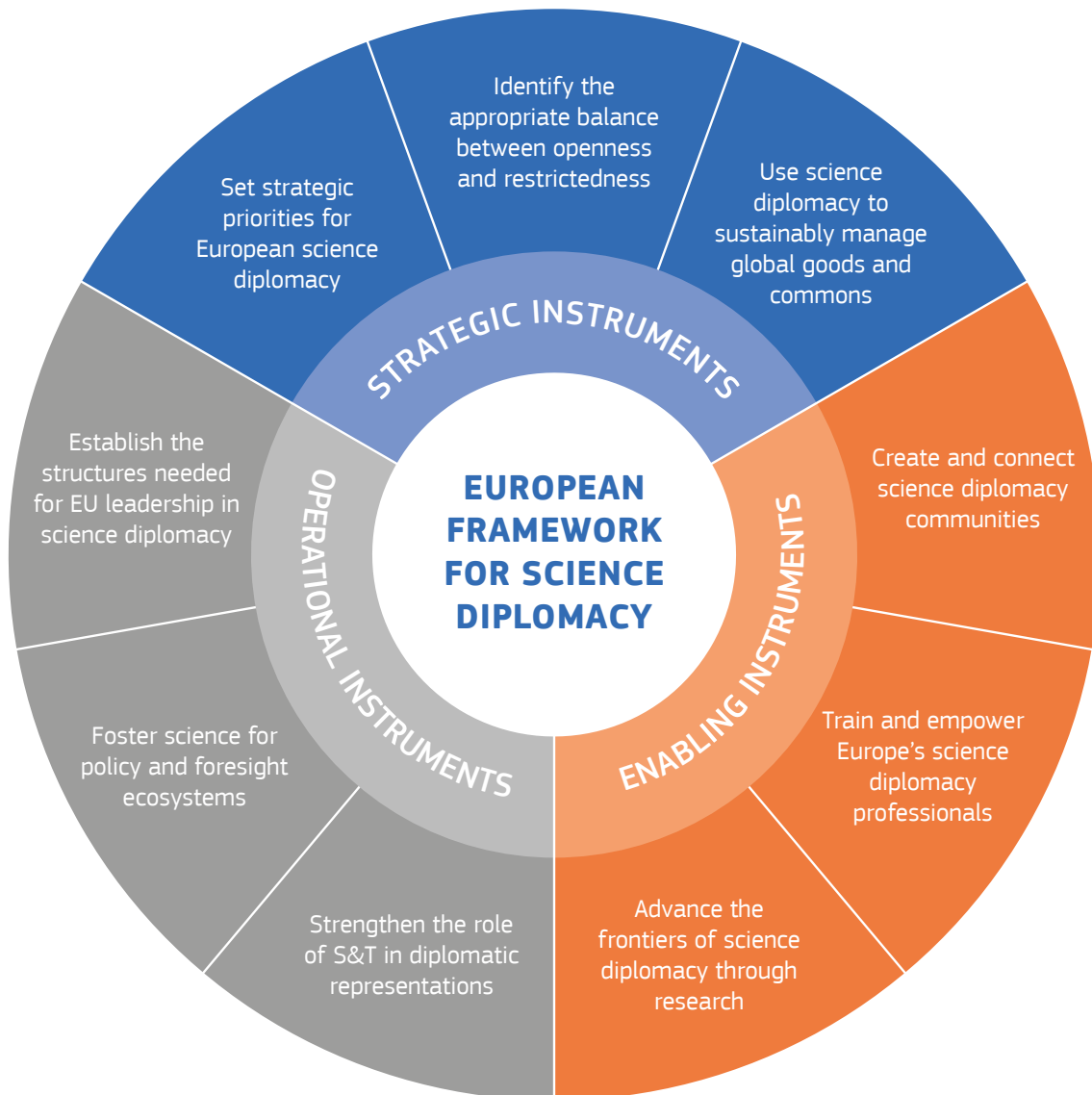
In order to implement these objectives, the report provides concrete recommendations and actions on how European leadership in science diplomacy can be achieved through strategic, operational and enabling instruments, assuming that the first step would be to define strategic priorities around which all relevant parties can be rallied.

To deliver on Europe's ambition, European science diplomacy must become more visible and be at the core rather than at the fringes of both, foreign and security policy as well as research and innovation policy.

A strategically planned and well-implemented European science diplomacy is needed to fulfil our political goals and secure a leading position for the EU in a multipolar world, based on our shared principles and values. Our vision for European science diplomacy is for it to become a key instrument in the EU's diplomatic toolbox, fostering peace, European competitiveness, and a safe, sustainable and prosperous future for all by harnessing the power of science and technology in a responsible way.



Overview of the recommendations by the EU Science Diplomacy Working Groups



The recommendations in the report *A European Framework for Science Diplomacy* reflect the collective view of the 130 experts that participated in the EU Science Diplomacy Working Groups. They do not necessarily reflect the position of, or commit, the European Commission, the European External Action Service, the governments of EU Member States, any mentioned stakeholders, or the employers of the working group members.

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