

Strategy Advice to EXCO Scenario

A scenario exercise about achieving strategic objectives to strengthen science diplomacy for Europe

EXERCISE PROMPT

Prompt: Working together as a team, prepare a 10-minute presentation (using PPT or another visual support) responding to the following prompt. At the end of the day, the team will present this in plenary, and receive specialist feedback.

- “ Your assembled team of science diplomats, specialized in the area of your case study (Energy/Security – Space – Heritage – Health), has received an official request for strategic advice on progressing toward the selected objective(s) to strengthen science diplomacy for Europe.
- Relying on insights into your historical case – the understanding you have developed of actors, interests, interactions and outcomes – formulate advice for how the objective(s) could be achieved.
 - This advice could outline specific field actions to be taken, the basis on which they are recommended, and particular points of vigilance. You will have the opportunity to present (10 min) your draft strategic advice to a senior practitioner in your case area, who will give you feedback and discuss with you the feasibility and practicability of your proposals (20 min).
- ”

Fägersten's Six Strategic Objectives to Strengthen SD for Europe

1. **Strengthen a free and vibrant European scientific community** – the “home base” of science is a prerequisite for successful science diplomacy.
2. **Agree principles on scientific cooperation in an era of regime divergence and competition** – a path between unfettered cooperation and scientific decoupling can be established towards relations with non-democracies.
3. **Foster capabilities and a culture of scientific advice in foreign policymaking** – the EU foreign policy machinery can be adapted to make better use of science and scientific advice.
4. **Increase cohesion of EU level efforts** – European Commission, the External Action Service and other EU actors can coordinate better on common goals.
5. **Increase the cohesion of EU and member state efforts** – coordination can be facilitated on the diverse efforts by the EU and member states.
6. **Leverage potential science diplomacy stakeholders** – bridges to and joint platforms with the full ecosystem of science diplomacy actors can be established while still respecting their different roles.



DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Introduction

In this exercise students practice formulating advice for achieving specific strategic objectives related to science diplomacy and present it to a mock 'Executive Committee' (EXCO). It is ideally performed in a multidisciplinary and international environment in which individuals in each group contribute unique expertise and viewpoints.

The exercise is rooted in six strategic objectives outlined in InsSciDE's recommendation for European SD strategy (Fägersten) and includes the use of case studies.

Learning Objectives

- Deepen understanding of 1-2 strategic objectives for science diplomacy
- Be able to discuss how the strategic objectives apply to a case study on a related subject
- Expand thinking around the strategies and objectives at play behind SD practices
- Be able to support strategic thinking with ideas or context grasped from a historical case study (linking history to the present and future).

Materials

Materials

- Prompt and list of Fägersten's Six Strategic Objectives to Strengthen SD for Europe (hereby, 'Fägersten's Strategic Objectives') - see first page.
- [Science diplomacy case studies](#) - InsSciDE and S4D4C
 - [Recorded presentations](#) of select case studies available on InsSciDE's YouTube channel in the WSDS 21 playlist.

Optional materials

- Science diplomacy basics from the [European Science Diplomacy Online Course](#).
- [Full recommendation](#) on European SD strategy, containing Fägersten's Strategic Objectives: 'Leveraging Science Diplomacy in an Era of Geo-Economic Rivalry Towards a European strategy'
- Recorded lectures:
 - [Power](#), Actors and Interests of European Sci Dip - WSDS21 (Fägersten, 2021)
 - [Linking](#) Past, Present and Future inSci Dip Strategy - WSDS21 (Fägersten, 2021)
- External experts to engage with students' presentations

Details and Tips

In groups of 4-6, students study an assigned case study and discuss how it pertains to one or more of Fägersten's Strategic Objectives. Based on their discussions, students work to develop strategic advice for achieving those objectives, aimed at a real or fictional policy agency.

They should consider the interests, expectations and capacities of the policy-maker audience and exercise foresight in order to recommend the best course of action. The activity is designed to last over only a few hours and includes producing a presentation (e.g. PowerPoint), thereby entailing a time-constriction that necessitates quick and efficient coordination within the group.

Case studies

Case studies provide a foundation for the exercise. Students study the cases to foster understanding of the historical context and the landscape of actors and interests in which they are asked to craft strategic advice. The EU projects InsSciDE and S4D4C have conducted case studies on a wide range of science diplomacy topics that can be integrated into this exercise. (See link under *Materials*).

Formulating strategic advice

Formulating the advice entails considering a number of intersecting scientific, economic, political, security or other factors. Students should consolidate individual areas of expertise (genuine or attained by pre-exercise study) and harmonize across their cultural and disciplinary norms to agree on a set of clear recommendations for strengthening SD.

Example questions to consider:

- Which of Fägersten's Strategic Objectives pertain to your case study and why?*
- What are challenges to achieving these objectives considering the insight provided in the case study?*
- Who are the relevant actors that can support and coordinate the strategy?*
- What competing interests are at play?*
- What are the risks or restrictions?*
- What capacities or mechanisms need to be strengthened to achieve the objectives?*
- What evidence (scientific or historical) supports your advice?*

EXCO - Advice recipient

The advice is directed at an executive committee (EXCO) of a policy-making agency. Embellish the EXCO entity with details relevant to the context of the training. It could be a fictional entity or a specific real agency with known objectives and conventions, such as UNEP or a ministry of foreign affairs.

Plenary presentations

Invite one or more subject-matter experts to listen and provide constructive feedback to the students' presentations. Alternatively, moderate a discussion with all the students in the training. Students and experts may wish to comment on the clarity of any technical information

presented, the feasibility of the proposed strategy, or the effectiveness by the group to get its message across to a policy-maker audience.

PILOT EXPERIENCE

The description of this exercise *above* has been adapted from the experience described *below* to suit a wider audience. Understanding the conditions in which this training resource was tested can help modify it according to your needs.

The exercise was conducted virtually in WSDS 2021 with a total of 24 students divided into four teams of six. Team members were diverse in geography, profession, career level and age.

The four case studies used were:

(find these and other InsSciDE cases [here](#))

- *The role of data in global vaccination governance: a matter for health diplomacy - Anna Pichelstorfer (Team Vaccines)*
- *Constructing ITER: Reciprocity and compromise in fusion science diplomacy - Anna Åberg (Team ITER)*
- *Space diplomacy in the Cold War context: Cooperation vs. competition - Olga Dubrovina (Team Space)*
- *The workers' strike of 1963 at the German excavation of Tell Chuera - Tobias Helms (Team Heritage)*

Pilot Methodology

4 hours in total was spent on the exercise, plus prior general study.

- Pre-exercise Students ranked their interest in four InsSciDE case studies and were placed accordingly in a 'case study teams' prior to the program beginning. Each case study was pre-matched with two of Fägersten's Strategic Objectives.
- Pre-exercise Sessions preceding the exercise included:
(see *Materials* for the relevant links)
 - Science diplomacy basics from the European Science Diplomacy Online Course.
 - Study of their case study in their teams, grasping its sequence of events and identifying actors, interests and power dynamics at play.
 - Modules on the practice of science diplomacy, strategy making in international

relations, and the notion of linking history to present and future policy decisions.

1. Fägersten's Six Strategic Objectives were presented in plenary along with the prompt. (Find in *Materials*). Each case study was pre-matched with two of the Objectives.
2. 90 min Students were broken into two discussion groups – each group with two of the case study teams at a time – and were guided by instructors to:
 - Examine links between their case study and their strategic objectives
 - Identify the interests at play in the cases
 - Propose actors needed to implement the advice
3. 30 min Case study teams discussed their ideas and received advice from their respective case study authors.
4. 90 min Case study teams worked independently (without instructors) to develop their advice and create a 10 minute presentation.
5. 30 min/team A representative from each team delivered the presentation (10 min) before a jury of external experts who served as the mock Executive Committee and the rest of the students. The external experts provided feedback on the feasibility and originality of their recommendations and the other students also commented and asked questions.

Results

Below are four example presentations created by students of WSDS 2021 during this exercise. We discuss the presentations of Team Vaccines and Team ITER in greater detail to demonstrate how they correspond to the exercise.

- [Team Vaccines Presentation](#)
- [Team ITER Presentation](#)
- [Team Space Presentation](#)
- [Team Heritage Presentation](#)

Student outcome example A – Team Vaccines

The group called Team Vaccines studied the case 'The role of data in global vaccination governance: A case for health diplomacy' by Anna Pichelstorfer. The Strategic Objectives deemed most relevant to the case were:

Objective 1: Strengthen a free and vibrant European scientific community

Objective 5: Increase cohesion of EU and member state efforts

The case study discusses the challenge of collecting and interpreting vaccine data on a global scale due to countries' differing capacities and health systems, as well as demonstrates the political power implicated in the data and its related processes. In their presentation, the team outlined actions in the field of public health that would support the two Strategic Objectives, focusing on the role of data and science communication.



Meet our team

- Alliance of scientists
- *Main concern:* Making the EU more resilient towards future public health crises and a more important player in the field of public health
- *Audience:* European Commission

Introductory page of WSDS Team Vaccines' presentation to EXCO

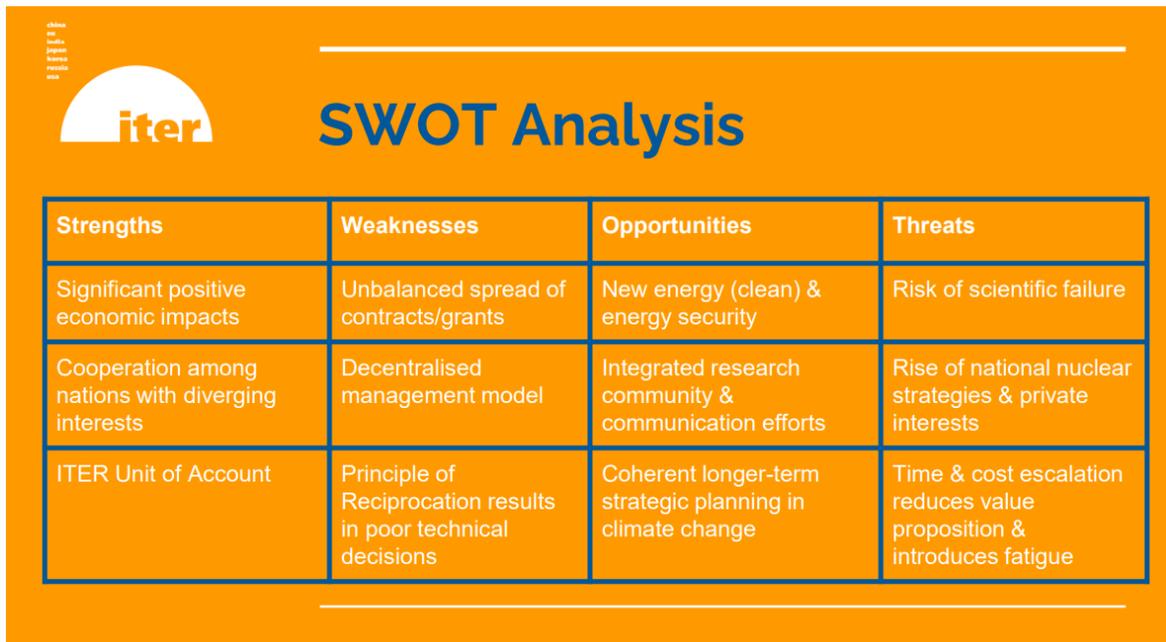
Student outcome example B – Team ITER

The group called Team ITER studied the case 'Constructing ITER: Reciprocity and compromise in fusion science diplomacy' by Anna Åberg. The objectives from Fägersten's Six Strategic Objectives deemed most relevant to the case were:

Objective 2: Agree principles on scientific cooperation in an era of regime divergence and competition

Objective 5: Increase cohesion of EU and member state efforts

The case study outlines the complex negotiations that birthed the international megaproject ITER and which remain the foundation of decision making and scientific procedures between its thirty-five collaborating nations. In their advice, the team presented a SWOT analysis of ITER and its structure, on which it based recommendations for better organizing future international scientific projects.



The slide features the ITER logo in the top left corner and the title "SWOT Analysis" in large blue font. Below the title is a table with four columns: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. The table contains three rows of text.

| Strengths | Weaknesses | Opportunities | Threats |
|--|--|---|---|
| Significant positive economic impacts | Unbalanced spread of contracts/grants | New energy (clean) & energy security | Risk of scientific failure |
| Cooperation among nations with diverging interests | Decentralised management model | Integrated research community & communication efforts | Rise of national nuclear strategies & private interests |
| ITER Unit of Account | Principle of Reciprocation results in poor technical decisions | Coherent longer-term strategic planning in climate change | Time & cost escalation reduces value proposition & introduces fatigue |

SWOT analysis of ITER performed by WSDS Team ITER

Feedback

The participants’ evaluation report from WSDS 2021 revealed that the exercise overall was well received, although there was some uncertainty among students on “the strength of links between knowledge of history and developing forward-looking strategy” (Hardy, Mays et al., 2021). A few quotes from student evaluations depict how the EXCO Strategy Advice Exercise was received:

- “We believe that combining history with strategy will help to understand the past and to better identify the current issues and set strategy goals that will lead us to find common language and cooperate for common interests. Considering history while framing the strategy is important and can enable us to better analyze the stakeholders, to create effective partnerships, and to find the right balance between competition and cooperation. Using history to understand anthropological realities and devised strategies can also help us to foster cross-cultural practical science diplomacy partnerships.”
- “Seeing the four [case study teams’] very different attempts at delivering policy objectives and trying to work out where those ideas and experiences had come from was really revealing!”
- “I think the best part of today was getting to receive feedback from experts [in the EXCO Strategic Advice Exercise] and to simulate a scenario where we had to act under pressure and with little time and not so much information as we would have liked.”

Challenges and possible modifications

Based on the reception of the exercise in InsSciDE's pilot program, we suggest considering the following challenges and potential tools in replicating the exercise:

- Students need to establish a firm understanding of the case studies being used.
 - Assign the case study as pre-exercise study material and ensure sufficient time for discussing the case in groups.
- Students should have some familiarity with the contemporary SD ecosystem related to their case study, including relevant actors and any major legislation.
 - Discuss the institutions and legislations mentioned in the case studies to ensure students have a general understanding of their functions.
 - Consider assigning pre-study modules from the S4D4C MOOC on European Science Diplomacy.
- *To suit more homogenous or non-expert student groups*
 - provide different background reading to each member of a group, in this way simulating the interdisciplinary and/or international aspect of the exercise.
- *To forego subject matter experts as advice recipients:*
 - students deliver their strategic advice in plenary and the floor is opened to discussion after each group's presentations.
- *To create a more specific context:*
 - Create stricter confines in which the strategic advice should apply. For instance,
 - Replace the function of the case study with presentations by experts on a specific subject matter. For instance, students learn from a lecturer about science diplomacy in the Arctic and then specific international challenge in which science, diplomacy and other sectors might intersect, such as sustainable fishing in international waters or cross-border disease outbreak control.

