

# What is science diplomacy?

**Mitchell Young**

**Faculty of Social Sciences, Institute of International Studies**

**Charles University**

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Proposal for a

**COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION**

**on a European Union framework for science diplomacy**

**February 2026**

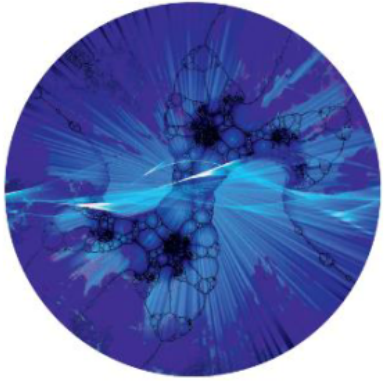
# **A definition and a grand objective**

Science diplomacy refers to the direct or indirect use of science, scientific evidence and scientific cooperation to support diplomatic objectives at different levels as well as the deployment of diplomacy to support scientific progress.

(27) Therefore, the Union should establish itself as the global leader in science diplomacy, both to defend its own interests and serve the global public good



# Who is a science diplomat?



## 7. SESAME – a synchrotron light source in the Middle East: an international research infrastructure in the making

### Author:

Charlotte Rungius

### Contributors:

Tim Flink, Sebastian Riedel



### Science Diplomacy in the Making: Case-based insights from the S4D4C project

Edited by Mitchell Young, Tim Flink and Elke Dall



The S4D4C project is coordinated by the Centre for Social Innovation (ZSI).  
This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020  
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*SD in the establishment and the administration*

# 2010 - Royal Society / AAAS typology of Science Diplomacy

## **science FOR diplomacy**

using science cooperation to improve relations between countries

## **diplomacy FOR science**

facilitating international science cooperation by diplomatic action

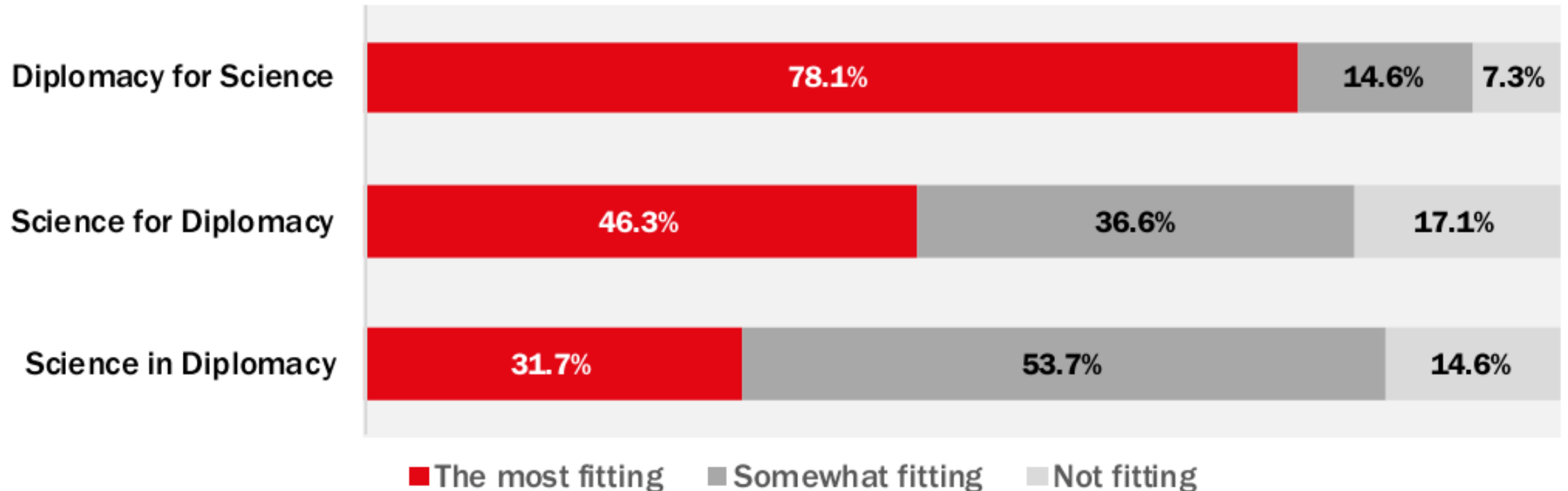
## **science IN diplomacy**

informing foreign and security policy objectives with scientific



# Asia-Europe Science & Technology Diplomacy Report – 2025

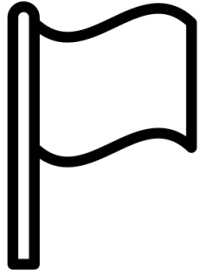
In your assessment, which one of the following descriptions fits the Science and Technology Diplomacy strategy and mechanisms of your country the most?



# From Practices to Interests

Gluckman et al. (2017)

Science Diplomacy: A Pragmatic Perspective from the Inside



Actions designed to directly advance a **country's national needs**



Actions designed to address **cross-border interests**

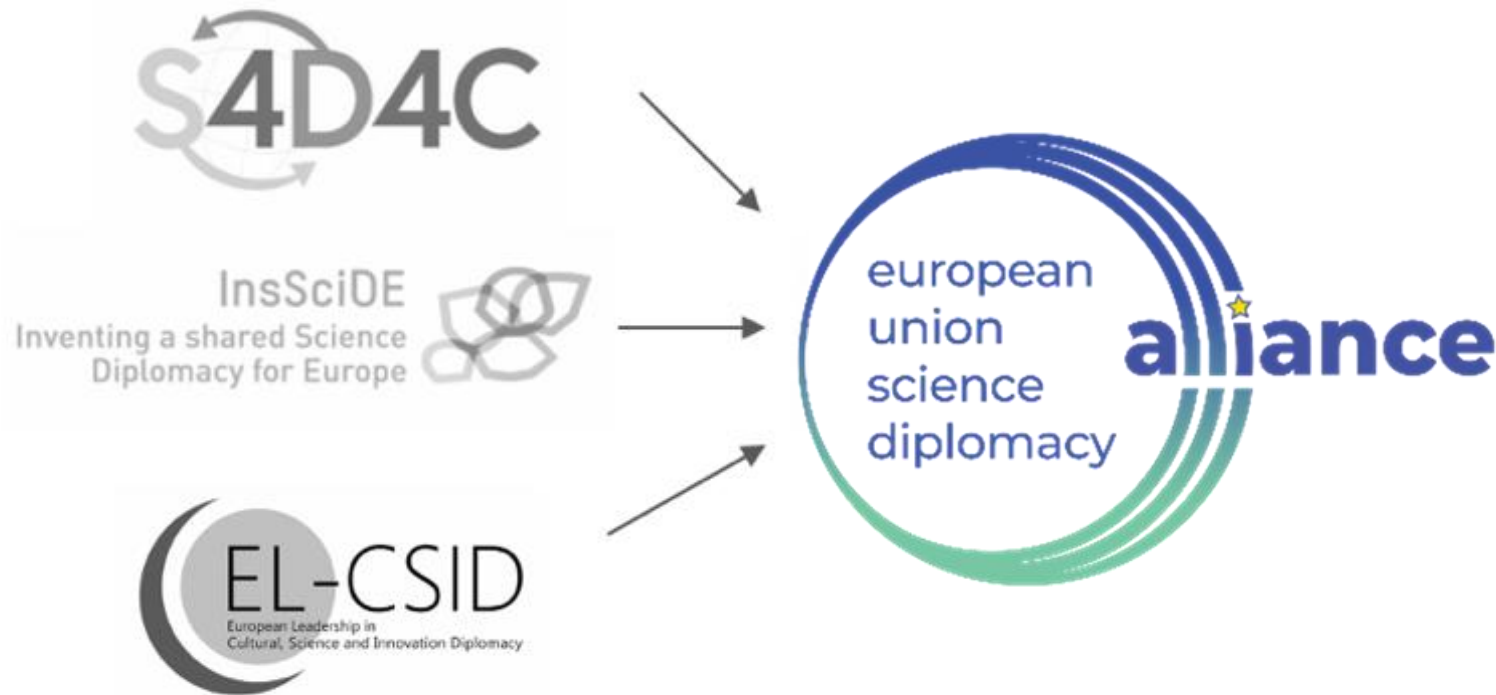


Actions primarily designed to meet **global needs and challenges**

# Research, support and promotion in the EU

2015/2017

2021



# European Union current developments

2021 - Global Approach to Research  
and Innovation

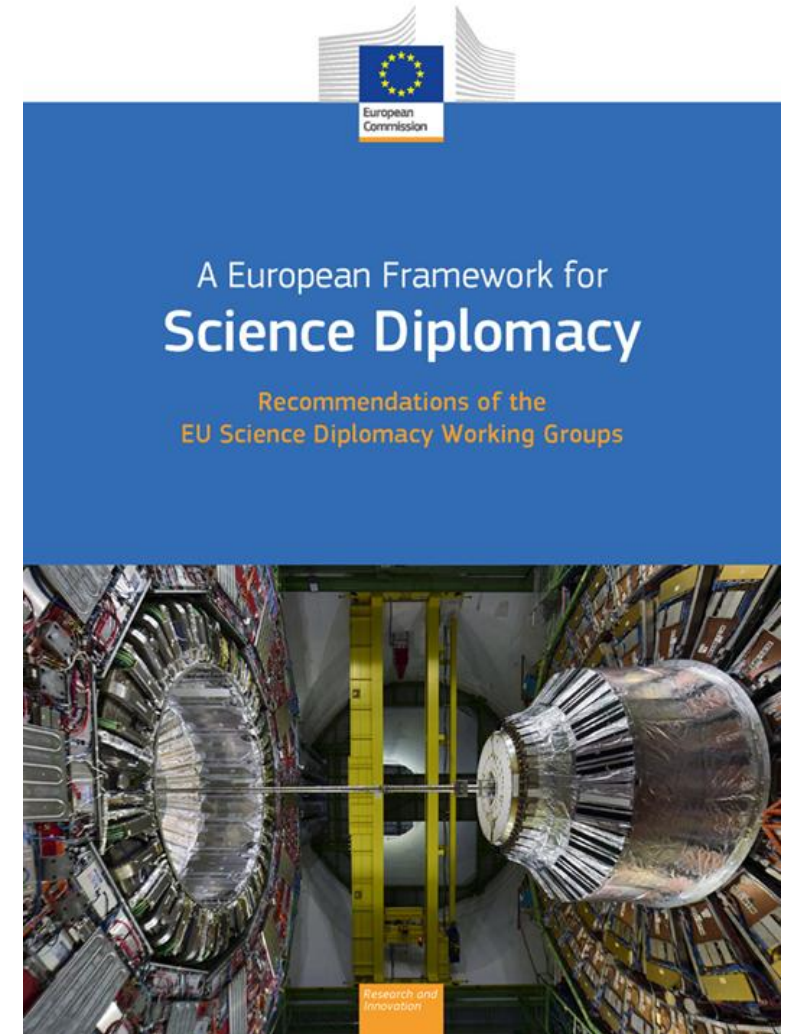
2023 - Competitiveness Council (Research)

2024 - EU working groups

2025 - EU Framework report

2026 - Council Recommendation  
(February)

- Planned adoption, Competitiveness  
Council (29 May)



## SCIENCE IN DIPLOMACY



**Informing** foreign and security policy objectives with scientific advice

## DIPLOMACY FOR SCIENCE



**Facilitating** international science cooperation by diplomatic action

## SCIENCE DIPLOMACY



**Using diplomatic skills** and tools in and by science

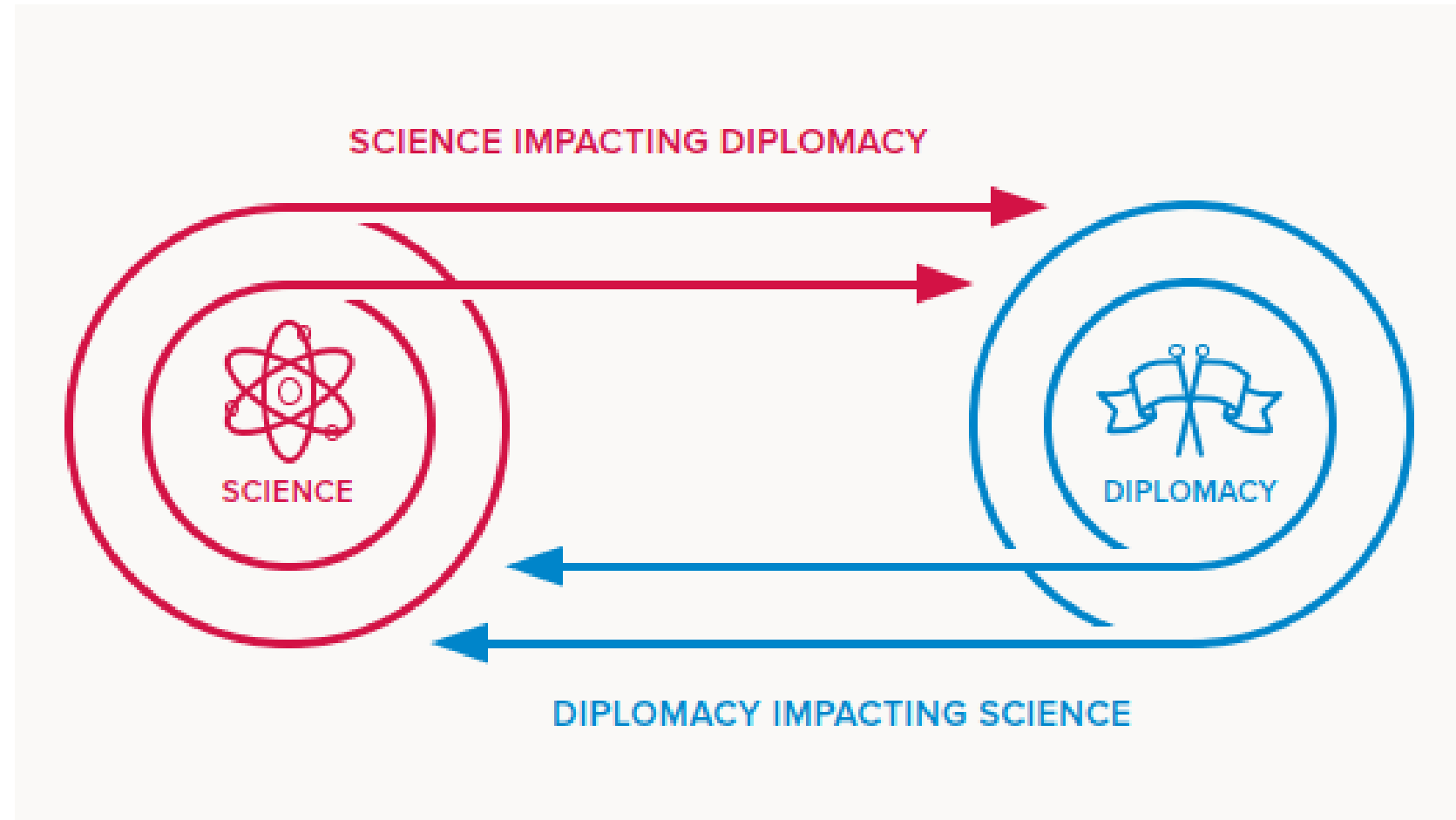
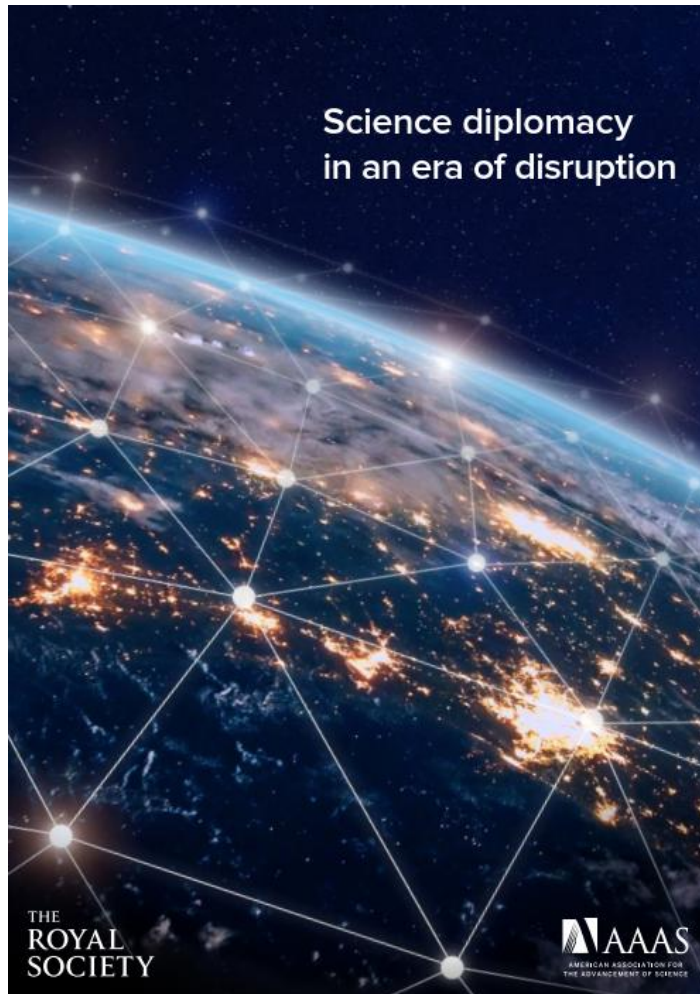


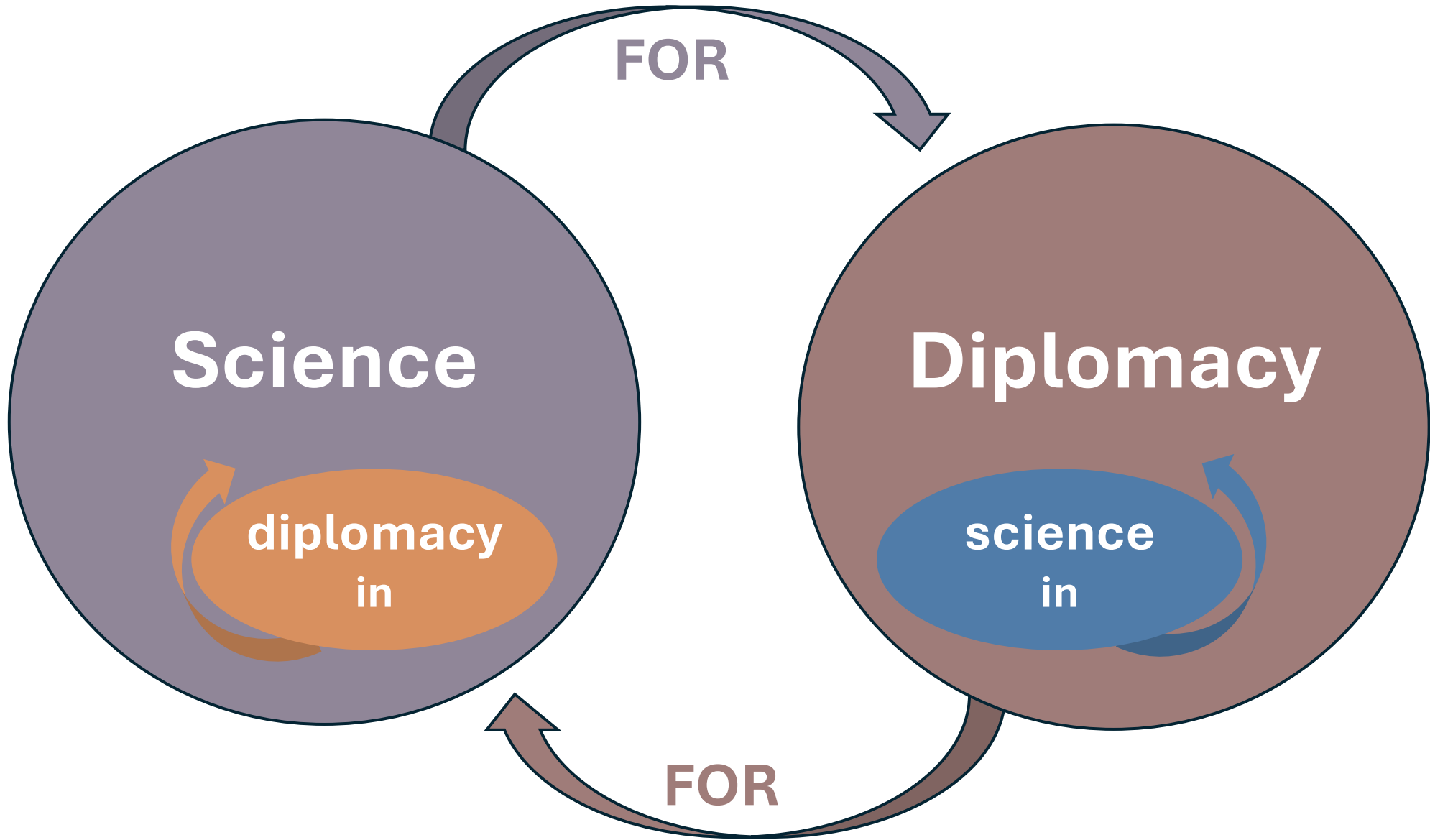
**Using science cooperation** to improve relations between countries

## DIPLOMACY IN SCIENCE

## SCIENCE FOR DIPLOMACY

# 2025 - AAAS / Royal Society





# Fractured Landscape



**Multi-Level**

**Multi-Actor**

**Multi-Tool**

**Multi-Power**

# **Key issues – arising from working groups**

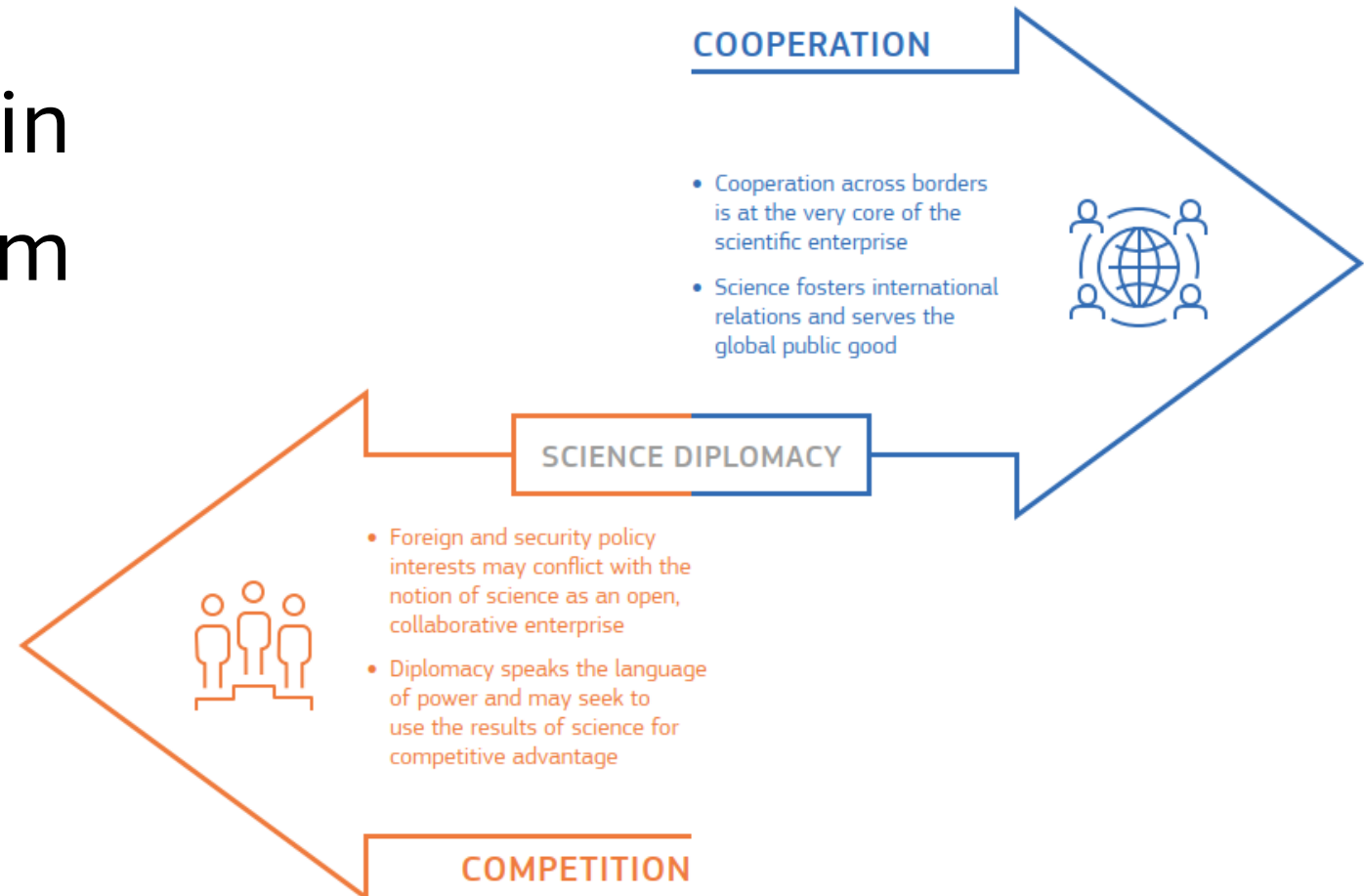
- Thematic emphases
- Positioning and Coordination
- Orientation and Core Objectives

# Orientation: Cooperation and/or Competition

Pierre Ruffini

- Collaborative: Win-win
- Competitive: Zero sum

“Post-naïve”

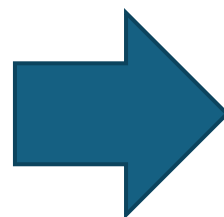


# Cooperative Logics of the pre-2020s

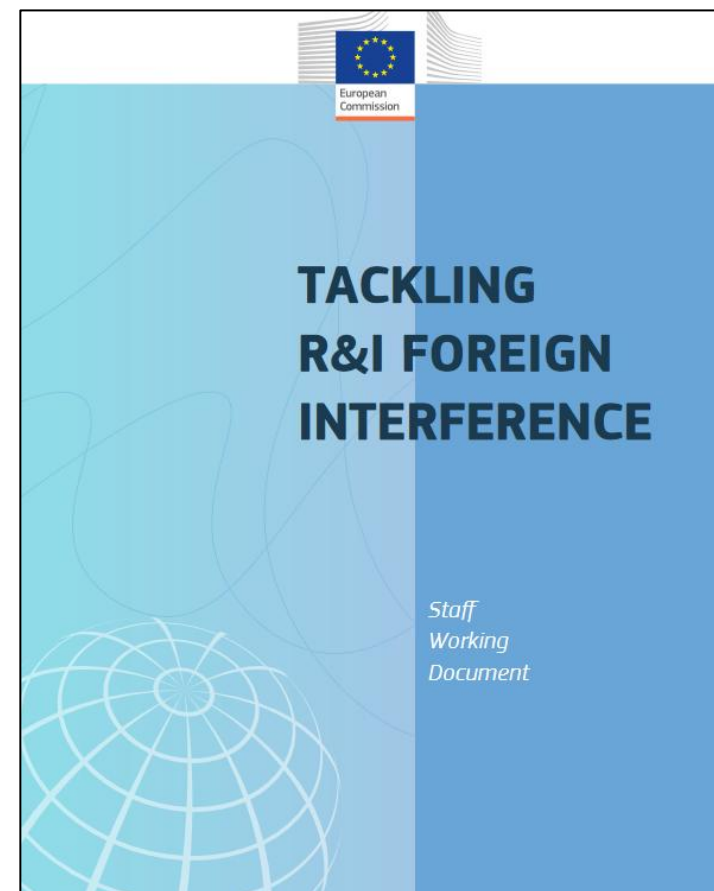
	Allies	Rivals
Global problems (involving science)	Cooperation assists or is needed to solve these problems	Cooperation should transcend the rivalry. Science is a neutral ground for cooperation (Antarctic)
Scientific problems	Cooperation builds relations and advances science	Cooperation builds relations and creates channels outside of political conflict (US-Soviet relations)



2016



2021



2022

# Shift in the EU discourse

- Politics matter: “**take into account the EU external relations priorities**” (2020 New ERA)
- Tempering of key concepts (‘Global Approach 2021 )
  - Openness becomes ‘**reciprocal openness**’
  - Cooperation becomes ‘**modulating**’ cooperation
- Tone and context of introduction to global approach and biennial follow up
  - 2021 - **well-being, cooperation, resilience, and prosperity**
  - 2023 - **heightened geopolitical tensions, fragmentation, technological sovereignty and strategic autonomy**

# Competitiveness and Power

- EU calls itself a “research and innovation powerhouse”
- A knowledge-based society and economy (Lisbon strategy)
- A global knowledge leader (publications, patents, universities)

Article

## Knowledge power Europe

Mitchell Young   & Pauline Ravinet 



Figure 1

### World article share and FWCI<sup>4</sup>, selected regions (2019-2024)

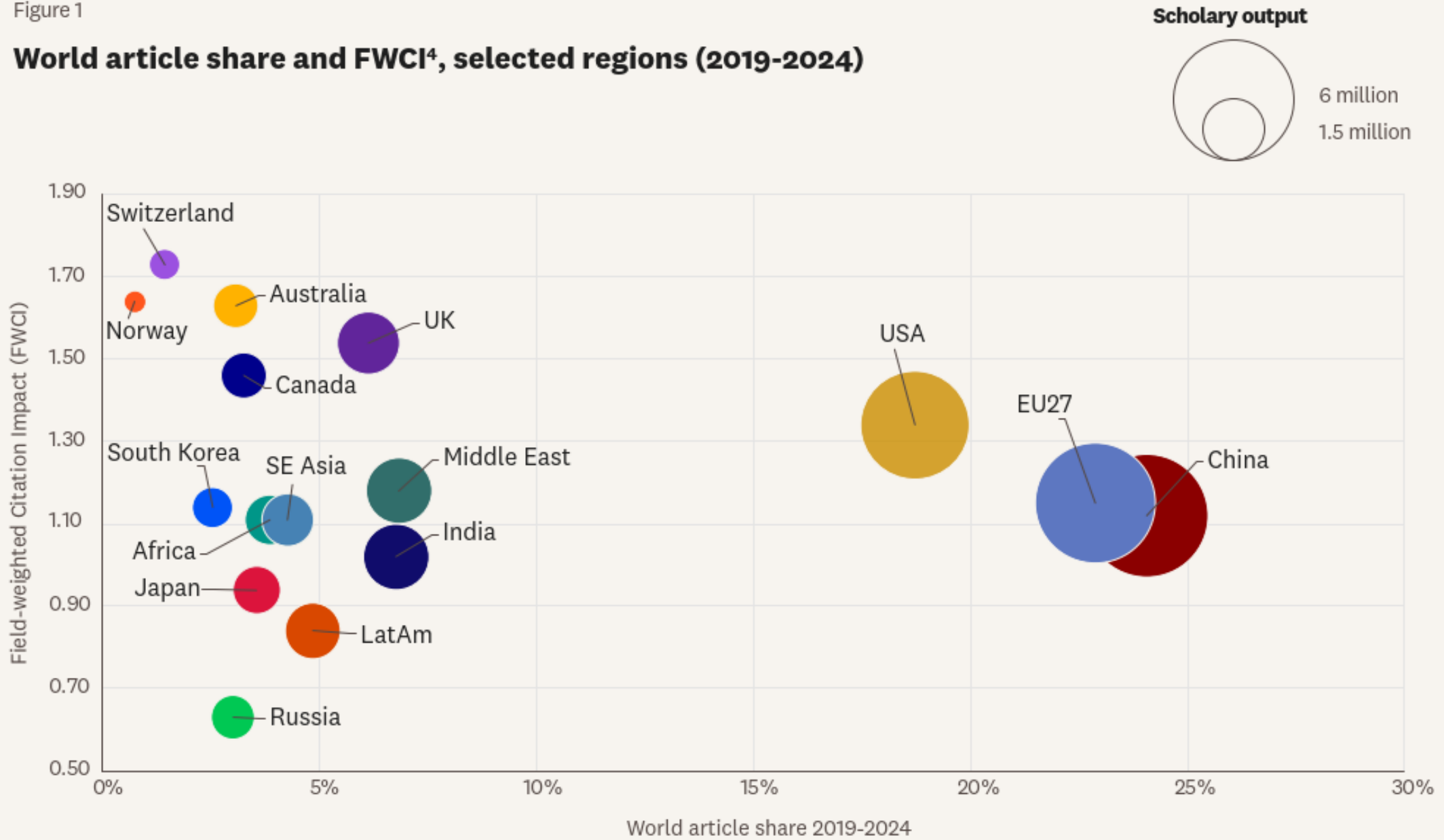
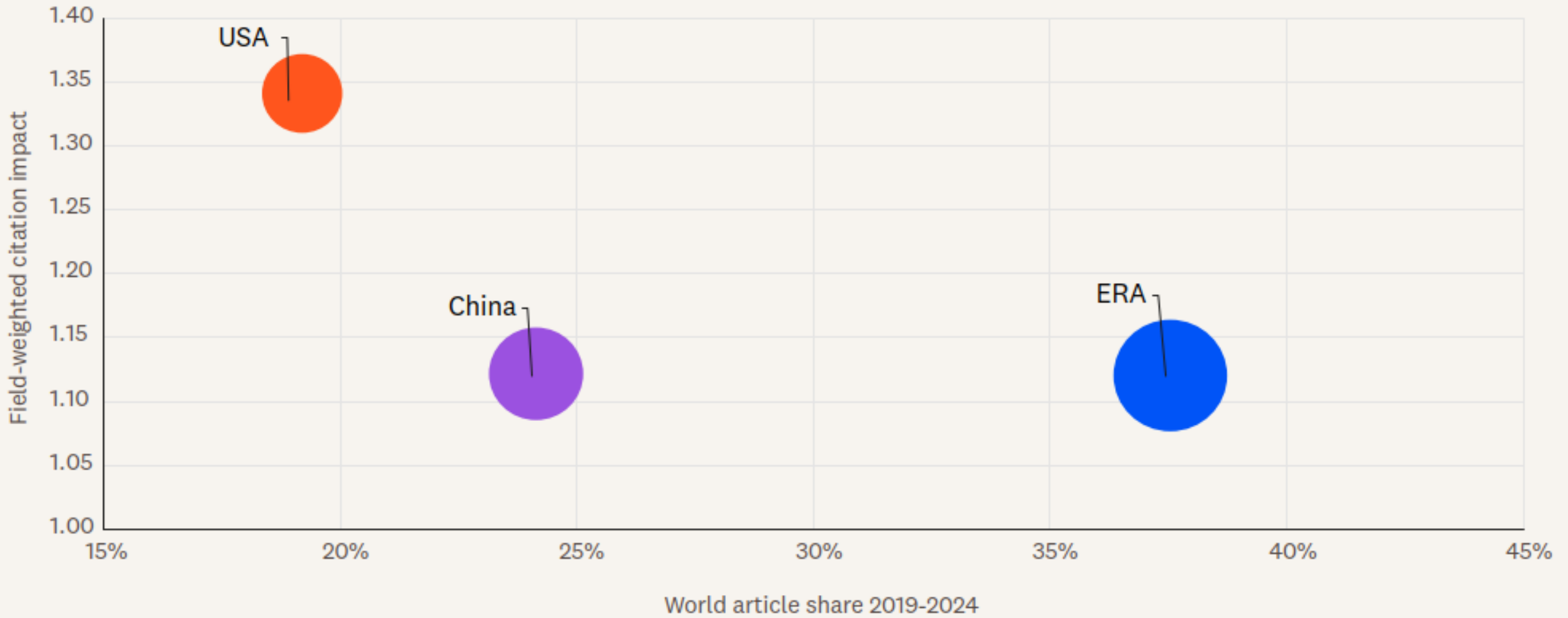
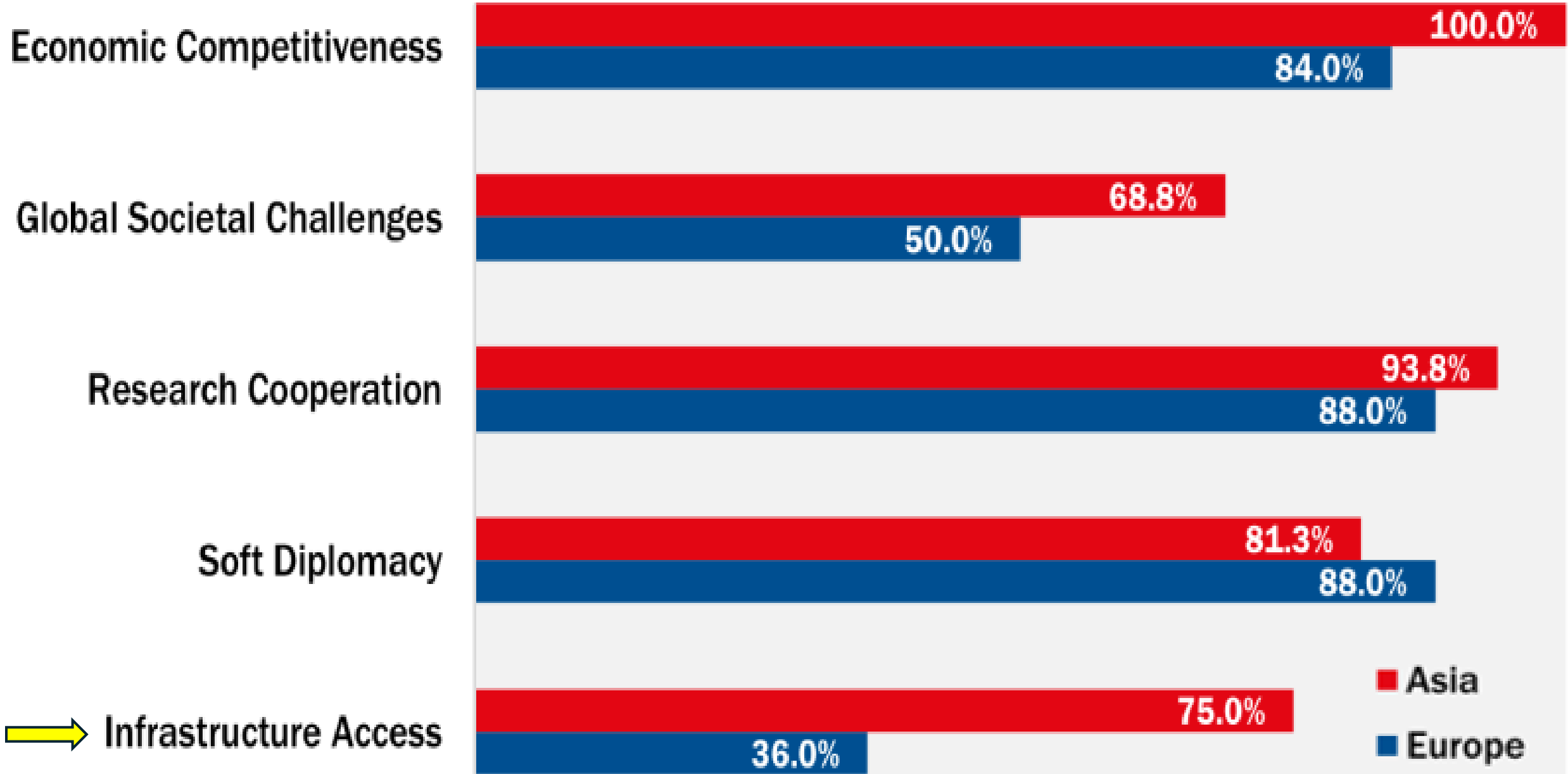


Figure 4

### World article share and FWCI: European Research Area, USA and China (2019-2024)



# Core Objectives



# **From the 2026 Proposal for a Council Recommendation**

***11. position European research and technology infrastructures as strategic assets of the Union's soft power in science diplomacy and key drivers of the Union's competitiveness and technological sovereignty, capitalising on their ability to promote the Union's ambition and convening power, their potential to attract the best talent, their contribution to innovation, standard-setting and the sharing of data, and their role in advancing bilateral and multilateral relations;***

# **From the 2025 Communication on a European Strategy on Infrastructures**

***20. Strengthen the international dimension of pan-European research infrastructures and their role for science diplomacy notably through enlarging geographical coverage in high-priority scientific fields, promoting European standards and approaches to access, data management and open science globally, promoting reciprocal access for EU researchers, facilitating exchange of best practices, while ensuring the appropriate levels of security/confidentiality.***

**Thanks for your attention!**

