



IRISH INSTITUTE OF  
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# The European Union's policy on China: goals, contradictions and challenges

**Workshop:**  
**The European Union's Policy on China and the role of Civil Society**

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- I. Relations between the People's Republic of China and the European Union have been a great success: from humble beginnings to an 'all-out strategic partnership'.
- II. A cynical view, however, would call EU-China relations trade promotion plus something else.
- III. Both areas experience an increase in interaction – and an increase in conflicts: trade, investment, Tibet, global governance, human rights; rule of law.



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- IV. Conflicting interests are only part of the explanation (and are handled comparatively well within the established framework).
- V. More fundamental and much more difficult to resolve are differences in norms, values and mutual expectations: the EU calls for democratization, rule of law and responsible global governance; China works on the multi-polarization of global politics, i.e. an EU as a counterweight to the US.
- VI. So who's changing whom? And who's calling the PRC a soft power?



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- VII. Therefore, the recent stalemate in negotiating a new Partnership and Co-operation Agreement indicates the growing need to address these fundamental issues in a much clearer way particularly at a time, when the strategic nature of the relationship is put to test in the current efforts to define 'Capitalism 2.0'.
- VIII. Unfortunately, this requires a coherent EU policy: better coordination, well-defined – and more honest - objectives and an EU identity.



## Member States China Policies<sup>[1]</sup> – An Overview (draft)

Member States [ <i>Approach in a nutshell</i> ]	Official term	Main Objectives	Targeted policy areas	Human Rights policy	Role of the EU
<b>France</b> [ <i>Partnership of nuclear states, UNSC members sharing similar views</i> ]	'Strategic global partnership' (1997/2004) Comprehensive Strategic Partnership	1. promoting China's integration into global economy 2. improving coordination of global policies	1. political dialogue 2.economic exchange 3.cultural, scientific and technical cooperation	1. promote human rights within the specific context of each state 2. Support EU-China dialogue	1. 'Franco-Chinese relationship at the heart of the EU-China relationship' 2.Core of ASEM
<b>Germany</b> [ <i>Cooperation for mutual benefit</i> ]	1. (East-) Asia as a challenge for EU, G 8 2. Global partnership for responsibility ( <i>globale Verantwortungsgemeinschaft</i> )	1. promotion of democracy, rule of law and human rights 2. peace and stability 3. building networks for economic success	1. civil society  2. environmental technologies	1. Central objective 2. Various projects in bilateral coop on rule of law 3. Call on companies to play a role	Joint effort with EU and other partners
<b>Ireland</b> [ <i>'Cash in on Asia'</i> ]	'Excellent relations' China a 'priority country' in Asia	1. develop trade 2. Intensify the levels of political, business and other forms of interaction	Trade in <i>targeted services sectors</i> ( I & T, eLearning, education, construction, consultancy, aviation, other) <i>and goods exports</i> (healthcare devices, electronics, food)	No link between Ireland's Asia Strategy and human rights' issues Human rights policies behind closed doors General support for EU	Limited links with/ integration into EU China policies
<b>Netherlands</b> <sup>[1]</sup> [ <i>'Build trust and focus on target areas'</i> ]	'trustworthy partners' <sup>[2]</sup>	1.to adopt Netherlands policies to growing significance of China  2. make best use of Dutch strengths	1. water management 2. environmental technology 3. medical technology 4. food and agricultural technology 5. logistics and transports	1. Contribution to strengthen the Chinese rule of law 2. NL-Chinese HR dialogue	Supplementary approach with EU
<b>United Kingdom</b> <sup>[3]</sup> [ <i>'Get the best from China's rise'</i> ]	Comprehensive Strategic Partnership	1.achieve the best from China's rise 2.cooperate with China as leading members of the international community 3.help China to deliver economic reform and eradicate poverty	1. science and technology 2. culture 3. environment 4. trade 5. education 6. health 7. development	1. HR a priority of UK foreign policies UK-China HR dialogue including civil society representatives 2.Discussions behind closed doors	1.Coop in HR dialogue 2. Coop in immediate action

[1] Sources: Ministerie des Affaires Etrangères et Européennes (2008); *Panorama des relations bilatérales; Sino-French Joint Declaration 2004*; République française (2006); Auswaertiges Amt (2003), *Aufgaben der deutschen Aussenpolitik. Ostasien am Beginn des 21.Jahrhunderts*; CDU/CSU-Fraktion in deutschen Bundestag (2007); Sven Hansen (2007); Frank-Walter Steinmeier (2008); von Guttenberg (2008); Bertie Ahern (2004; 2007), Government of the Republic of Ireland (2006), *A Decade of the Asia Strategy 1999-2009*; Bernard Bot (2006); Balkenende (2007); Ministerie van Buitenlands Zaken (2006), *Beleidsnotitie China*; Foreign Office (2008), Political Relations with China; Foreign Office (2007), *Human Rights Report 2007*

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- IX. Civil society / NGOs must play a prominent role as crucial issues such as sustainability, energy, global and sectoral governance **all** require substantial policy innovation. Where are the European political parties? Where is the public debate?
- X. This should lead to a stronger engagement with 'NGOs' and reform-oriented groups in China's authoritarian polity – and more consistency, less u-turns, less rhetoric, more substance.



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- Thank you very much!
- For comments, recommendations and especially counter-arguments, please get in touch:  
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