

State of EU-China relations

2017/2274(INI) - 12/09/2018 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 530 votes to 53 with 55 abstentions, a resolution on the state of EU-China relations.

Members asserted that the EU-China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership is one of the most important for the EU, and is founded on a shared commitment to openness and working together as part of a rules-based international system. However, they were concerned that the increase in China's global economic and political weight over the past decade has put these shared commitments to the test. Members referred to Europe's much greater collective bargaining power with China, and urged that Europe defend its democracies so as to better face up to China's systematic efforts to influence its politicians and civil society.

Chinese investments: Parliament noted China's interest in strategic infrastructure investment in Europe through the "Belt and Road" initiative. Such investments are part of an overall strategy to have Chinese state-controlled or state-funded companies take control of banking and the energy sector, as well as other supply chains. The findings of recent investigations show that since 2008, China has acquired assets in Europe worth USD 318 billion.

Parliament called on those Member States participating in the 16+1 format (between China on one hand, and 11 Central and Eastern European Countries (CEEs) and five Balkan countries on the other) to ensure that their participation in this format enables the EU to have one voice in its relationship with China. It asked these Member States to carry out sound analysis of suggested infrastructure projects to ensure no compromising of national and European interests for financial support and long-term commitments to Chinese involvement in strategic infrastructure projects and potentially greater political influence, which would undermine the EU's common positions on China.

Members supported the call on China to adhere to the principles of transparency in public procurement as well as environmental and social standards. They suggested that data on all Chinese infrastructure investments in EU Member States and countries in process of EU accession negotiations be shared with the EU institutions and other Member States. They also emphasised that the Belt and Road Initiative should be accompanied by human rights guarantees.

Human rights: the promotion of human rights and the rule of law must be at the core of the EU's engagement with China. Parliament firmly condemned the ongoing harassment, arbitrary arrest and prosecution of human rights defenders, lawyers, journalists, bloggers, academics and labour rights defender. It expressed concern at China's massive cyberspace surveillance systems and condemned the ongoing crackdown on internet freedom by the Chinese authorities, in particular the freedom to access foreign websites.

Parliament called on the EU and its Member States to pursue a more ambitious, united and transparent policy with regard to human rights in China. It called on the Council, the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Commission to ensure that EU-China cooperation is grounded in the rule of law.

Chinese students: Members drew attention to the need for greater support to students and scholars from China who are in Europe, so that they are less vulnerable to being pressured by Chinese authorities to surveil one another and to become tools of the Chinese state, as well as the importance of looking very carefully at substantial mainland funding to academic institutions across Europe.

Lastly, Parliament called on the Commission to actively monitor the Chinese trade distortion measures, which are affecting EU companies positions in global markets, and to take appropriate action in the WTO and other fora, including through dispute settlement.