

Paper Proposal

Strategic Partnership? – EU-China Relations Under a New Leadership

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Young Dynamics of EU-China Relations

The strategic partnership between China and Europe is still under construction, while steadily taking form in concrete terms. Underlining the role of young people in this process, the EU-China Year of Youth was launched in 2011, followed by the EU-China Year of Intercultural Dialogue and the People-to-people Dialogue in 2012. Although great effort is being put into the development of different forms of cooperation and people-to-people exchanges, a lot of potential is not being addressed or used to its maximum. Moreover, concrete actions in the field of youth and youth exchanges between the EU and China remain rather limited and imbalanced to date, with for example only one European student going to China against every 7 Chinese coming to Europe. How can the gap between rhetoric and practice in the field of youth be explained and how can existing instruments in place in China and the EU be promoted and applied to improve exchange and cooperation in this field, or what kind of new instruments should be developed to improve this situation?

While Economic and political relations between China and the EU are strengthening and taking new forms, the potential this can create for young people is not significantly emphasised. Young people are the driving forces of society, the engines of innovation and development and nurture the leaders of tomorrow. With the huge challenges, such as Climate Change, ageing society, the widening gap between rich and poor, rural and urban development, etc., that both China and the EU are facing, young people should be empowered to take up an active role in society. Creating opportunities for young people in Europe and China to explore each other's culture, values and viewpoints will benefit common relations as well as cooperation and will enhance mutual understanding in future decades in view of global challenges.

With the new leadership in place in China, a gradual shift in policy in general is expected in the medium and long term. As this leadership change will most likely affect EU-China relations, a thorough assessment should be made of the role young people will play in Sino-European Relations in the future. How will EU-China youth exchange and cooperation take form under the new "Erasmus for All programme", and how can youth become an integrated part of the political, economic and cultural dimension of China-EU relations?