

## International Conference

# Trade, Investments, Technology, Climate Change, Human Rights: How should the EU deal with China?

27.10.2020, 9:00 - 12:10

Zoom

### Organised by

Austro-French Centre for Rapprochement in Europe (ÖFZ), Vienna  
Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation (KAS) Multilateral Dialogue, Vienna  
French Institute for International Relations (Ifri), Paris

### With the support of

The Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies (wiiw), Vienna

### Context and Objective

A little more than 40 years since China's opening and reform it has risen to a comprehensive global power which is a strategic partner, but also a competitor and even a strategic rival for the EU as stated in the *EU-China strategic outlook* (March 2019). While for many years after China joined WTO in 2001 its rapid growth was mostly seen as beneficial and an opportunity for European economic actors, in today's perception the balance of challenges and opportunities presented by China has shifted. The expectation that China's system of governance would gradually converge with a liberal, open, market-based international order has not been fulfilled. Lack of reciprocity in market access and distortions in competition have increasingly led to frustration in the European business community.

At the same time a globally more assertive China has emerged while the rule of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and its dominance over all aspects of the political, economic and social system has been strengthened. Its influence and reach now go well beyond East and South-East Asia. The Belt and Road Initiative epitomizes the ambition of a global China whose military power has grown in line with its economic rise. While China has consistently stated its support for European integration it still pursues a parallel approach through its privileged cooperation with Central and East European countries (the 17 + 1 since Greece has joined the group).

The Corona crisis has led to criticism about the lack of transparency after the outbreak of the pandemic in Wuhan and China's efforts to control the narrative of the crisis has further undermined trust in its leadership. The last EU - China Summit which took place as video conference underlined the divergences of views. The adoption of the security legislation for Hong Kong which threatens the level of autonomy and rule of law to which China had committed is now leading to a more comprehensive reassessment of EU - China relations, at a time when US - China relations have reached a new low point in what some observers call a new cold war.

The question how the EU should deal with China is therefore more urgent than ever. The summit envisaged between the 27 heads of state and government with President Xi Jinping in Leipzig during the German presidency has been replaced by a mini video summit with President Xi Jinping on 14 September. It showed even more clearly the need for the EU to apply a unified approach to its

relationship with China which not only remains a hugely important economic partner but whose cooperation will also be essential in the fight against climate change and the preservation of a rules based international order.

## Programme

### 9h00 Opening

**Dominique DAVID**, President, Austro-French Centre for Rapprochement in Europe/ Advisor to the President, Institut Français des Relations Internationales (IFRI), Paris

**Dietmar SCHWEISGUT**, Secretary General, Austro-French Centre for Rapprochement in Europe/ former Austrian and EU Ambassador to China

**Claudia CRAWFORD**, Director, Konrad Adenauer Foundation Multilateral Dialogue, Vienna

### 9h10 Panel 1: Global governance: Engaging with China while preserving Europe's values and interests in trade, investments and digital economy

**Helena KOENIG**, Deputy Director-General, DG Trade, European Commission

**Reinhard BUETIKOFER**, Member of the European Parliament/ Chair of the EP-Delegation for relations with the People's Republic of China

**Alice EKMAN**, Senior Analyst, European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), Paris

**Martin HALA**, Director, Sinopsis.cz, former Regional Manager for Asia Pacific, Open Society Foundation, Prague

*Moderation:* **Kristin SHI-KUPFER**, Professor, Institute of Sinology, University of Trier; Senior Associate Fellow, MERICS Lab, Berlin

10h25 Break

### 10h45 Panel 2: Eurasian connectivity: What Strategy, Whose Strategy?

**Janez PREMOZE**, former Slovenian Ambassador to China; Slovenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

**Romana VLAHUTIN**, Ambassador at large for connectivity, European External Action Service (EEAS)

**Peter HEFELE**, Head of Asia and Pacific Department, Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation, Berlin

**Mario HOLZNER**, Director, Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies (wiiw), Vienna

*Moderation:* **Regina FIGL**, Head of China Taskforce, Ministry for Europe and International Affairs, Vienna

### 12h00 Conclusion

**Dietmar SCHWEISGUT**, Secretary General, Austro-French Centre for Rapprochement in Europe; former Austrian and EU Ambassador to China

12h10 End of the event