A new EU-China strategy

2021/2037(INI) - 16/09/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 570 votes to 61, with 40 abstentions, a resolution on a new EU-China strategy.

Parliament recommended developing a stronger, **comprehensive and coherent EU-China strategy** that shapes relations with China in the interests of the Union as a whole, placing the defence of EU values at the heart of this strategy and promoting a rules-based multilateral order. It stressed the multifaceted nature of the EU's relationship with China, which is a cooperation and negotiation partner for the EU, but also an economic competitor and systemic rival in a growing number of areas.

Members proposed that this strategy should be based on six pillars:

(1) Open dialogue and cooperation on global challenges

Parliament called for the new strategy to involve China in a dialogue on global challenges based on the EU's fundamental principles and interests, such as human rights, the environment and climate change, nuclear disarmament, promoting economic recovery after COVID-19, tackling global health crises and reforming certain multilateral organisations.

The **human rights dialogues** should include media freedom and freedom of the press, minority rights, including in Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia and Tibet, the situation in Hong Kong, freedom of expression, labour rights, the right of assembly, freedom of religion or belief, and the rule of law in China in general.

Members called on the EU to engage in a dialogue with China on ways to strengthen, in a transparent manner, initial response capacities to infectious diseases that have the potential of becoming epidemics or pandemics. They also called on China to allow an **independent and transparent investigation** into the origins and spread of SARS-CoV-2.

(2) Enhanced engagement on universal values, international norms and human rights

Recalling its resolution of 20 May 2021 on Chinese countersanctions, Parliament called on the Commission to use all the tools at its disposal and the debate on the **EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI)** as a lever to improve human rights protection and support for civil society in China. It stated that the process of ratifying the CAI could not start until China lifts its sanctions against Members and EU institutions.

Members urged China to take concrete steps to end human rights abuses in the country, such as forced labour and the systematic persecution of Uighurs and other Turkic Muslim minorities, Tibetans, as well as Christians and other religious communities, and to respect its international commitments on Hong Kong by suspending planned reforms of the city's electoral system and releasing pro-democracy legislators and activists.

China is urged to comply with international standards, particularly regarding its impact on climate, environment, biodiversity, poverty, health, labour and human rights.

(3) Analysis and identification of risks, vulnerabilities and challenges

The EU's future strategy towards China should provide the tools and data needed to address the political, economic, social and technological threats from China, including its military modernisation and capacity build-up, and their implications for the EU's open strategic autonomy. The Commission is invited to commission an audit on the EU's dependence on China in certain strategic and key sectors, such as pharmaceuticals.

The implementation of the EU-China Strategy and national strategies and policies towards China should be regularly coordinated between the EU institutions and Member States to ensure a comprehensive and coherent policy.

(4) Building partnerships with like-minded actors

Parliament called on the VP/HR to coordinate the EU's actions with partners who share its values regarding the protection of human rights, support for the people of China, Hong Kong and Macao, and the defence of liberal democracy, especially in Hong Kong and Taiwan, and to encourage China to respect international law.

Expressing concern about China's expansionist policies in the South and East China Seas and the Taiwan Strait, Members called on the EU to address these issues in the new EU-China strategy and in the EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region.

Recalling the importance of economic and trade relations between the EU and Taiwan, Parliament stressed the need to make progress towards a **bilateral investment agreement with Taiwan**.

(5) Promoting open strategic autonomy, including in trade and investment relations

Parliament considered it necessary to invest in innovation and research and to develop a **sovereign and competitive industrial strategy** in areas including microchips and semiconductor production, rare earth mining, cloud computing and telecoms technologies in order to reduce the EU's dependence on China.

Members called on the Commission to analyse the EU's economic dependencies in strategic sectors, such as critical raw materials, and called for initiatives to diversify and consolidate the EU's access to key strategic resources.

The resolution called for **increased funding for 5G deployment projects and research into 6G**, artificial intelligence and megadata technology, in order to ensure future network security and enhanced digital sovereignty.

(6) Defence and promotion of core European values and interests by making the EU a more effective geopolitical actor

Members consider that the EU should continue its efforts to become a genuine geopolitical actor by promoting its autonomy and strategic capacity and by cooperating with the US and other like-minded partners. They called for strengthening the EU's defence tools, increasing its capacity to protect its interests abroad, playing a more proactive, coherent and strategic role in its direct neighbourhood.

Lastly, Parliament stressed the importance of giving the European External Action Service the mandate and resources to **monitor and address Chinese disinformation operations**, including the creation of a dedicated Far-East Stratcom Task Force focused on disinformation from China.