

European Union and China relations

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Bastiaan BELDER (IND/DEM, NL) on EU-China relations. The report began by urging the Council and Commission to formulate "a consistent and coherent policy" towards China, the EU's second biggest trading partner. While looking forward to "closer cooperation", MEPs nevertheless took a critical line on the political and human rights situation in the country - on issues ranging from Tibet to Taiwan, and the death penalty to animal welfare.

The [report](#) acknowledged the increasing importance of the growing economic relationship between the EU and the People's Republic, but also aired several concerns. It condemned the loose enforcement of anti-dumping regulations, as well as the "artificially low value" at which the Chinese currency is pegged, and urged the Chinese government to "considerably improve the protection of Intellectual Property Rights."

On the political front, the committee wanted to see more pluralism, institutional modernisation, and a truly independent judiciary. It said that the "will and approval of the 23 million citizens of Taiwan must surely be respected and taken into account in negotiations with China on Taiwan's status." It also urged both Japan and China to "refrain from any action which might offend the historic memory or the sensibilities of the other." MEPs strongly recommended that "the EU arms embargo against China remain in place until greater progress is made on human rights issues."

The report urged China to abolish the death penalty and expressed concern about "recent reports of continuing serious human rights abuses in Tibetan areas of China." It called for a comprehensive Chinese law "guaranteeing genuine religious freedom," and expressly called on the government to cease its persecution and imprisonment of Christian groups as well as Falun Gong practitioners. The committee expressed concern that "the practice of torture remains widespread in China" and condemned the existence of the Laogai labour camps and police psychiatric and "re-education" methods used against detainees. MEPs also expressed "deep disquiet" at the numerous violations of women's and girls' rights resulting from forced compliance with the Chinese Government's family planning policy.

Lastly, other points raised in the report included criticism of the current clampdown in China on freedom of expression and free access to the Internet. In this connection MEPs expressed concern at the "irresponsible policies" of major internet firms Yahoo and Google, which had bowed directly and indirectly to Chinese government demands for censorship.