

## What role do political values play in Europe-China relations 70 years after the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?

New report published by the European Think-tank Network on China (ETNC)

The European Union (EU) has committed itself to promoting not only human rights but also democracy and the rule of law. On the eve of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at the Palais Chaillot in Paris, the European Think-tank Network on China (ETNC) has published a new report investigating the role of political values in Europe-China relations.

China experts from seventeen leading European research institutions from across the continent have compared the role political values play in the foreign policies of European states and the EU toward the most powerful autocracy in the world, the People's Republic of China. In essence, the results display four different patterns of behavior among European countries: vocal and active; active and discreet; passive; and passive and potentially counteractive.

Three factors are of particular importance in making sense of these differences:

First, while there has been a general downgrading of the importance of political values in the approaches to China by most European states, younger democracies have been more affected by this trend.

Second, states with a higher per capita gross domestic product tend to be more active in the field of political values in their relations with China. Close trade relations with China also correlate with a higher level of activity in this field. In general, the share of Chinese investment does not make a major difference. Instead, investment in strategic sectors of the economy or the hope of attracting Chinese money to fill investment gaps appear to be more decisive factors.

Third, Chinese pressure has led some European states to reconsider their level of activity in promoting democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Even so, they have not taken political values entirely off the agenda.

Despite China's increased efforts to promote its image abroad, in all the countries analyzed the general public and large sections of the political elite and media hold negative views of China's political system. Despite this generally negative image, China has occasionally gained influence over decision making in some sensitive fields and is increasingly seeking to align Europe with China's own interests and values. Those political elites with an affinity for or acceptance of China's political system are for the most part Eurosceptic. Nonetheless, not all Eurosceptics have a favourable view of China.

The full report will be released on **6 December 2018** and presented for the first time to the public the same day at 4PM at the Egmont Palace, Place du Petit Sablon 8bis, 1000 Brussels. Registration and more information about the launch event can be found [here](#).

About [ETNC](#): The European Think-tank Network on China (ETNC) is a gathering of China experts from a selection of European policy research institutes. It is devoted to the study of Chinese foreign policy and EU-China relations and facilitates regular exchanges among participating researchers.