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**European
Business in China
Position Paper
2026/2027**

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**Alibaba Cloud expands European footprint
with two availability zones in France**

*A suite of agentic AI services are set to launch
for European customers later this year*

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**Brand-squatting
crackdown**

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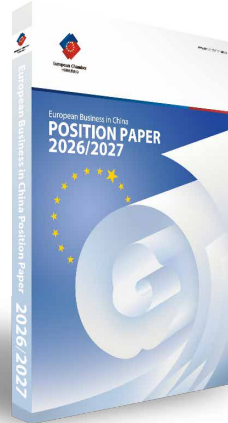


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European Business
in China

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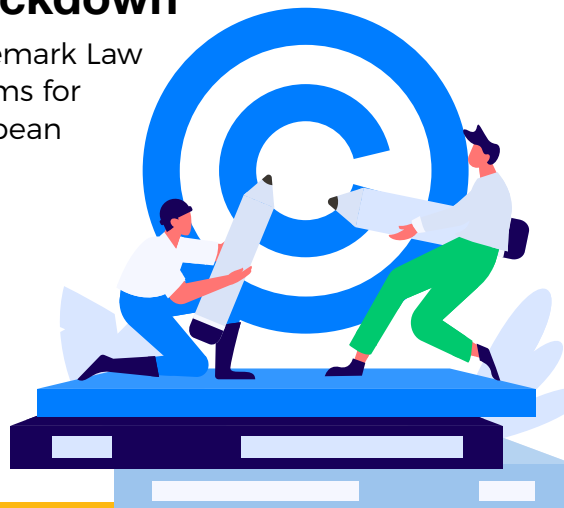
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European companies 'becoming more reliant on China, not less', EU chamber chief says

Jens Eskelund tells conference in Berlin that Beijing can raise costs of confrontation beyond what other side is willing to bear

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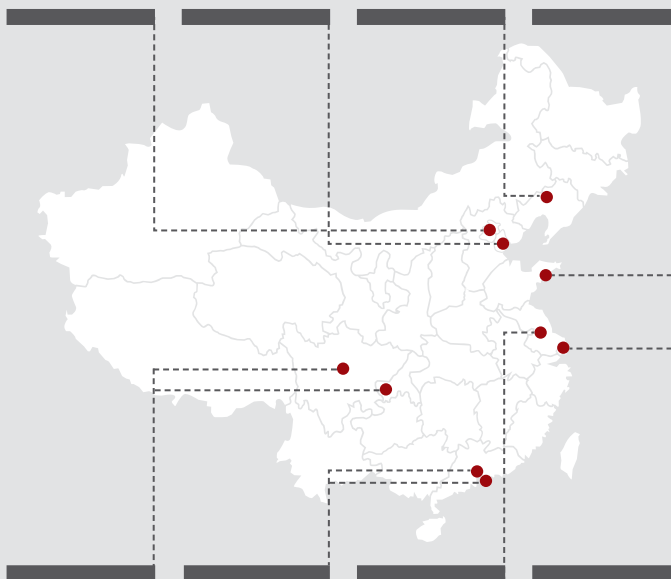
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President's Foreword

The EU and China: As things stand

As anyone who is lucky enough to have called Beijing home at some point in their life will tell you: autumn is the best season for visiting China's capital. The stifling heat of the summer eases and a cool breeze clears the air – the right conditions for a reset.

As such, Beijing in its autumn glory provided the perfect setting for the second round of talks between the European Union (EU) and China under their Trade and Investment Consultation Mechanism aimed precisely at bringing down the heat on mutual grievances.

Held on 8th and 9th October, the talks were eagerly awaited by the European business community in China. Discussions over the National Day holiday this year revolved around expectations and potential outcomes – a battle of hope and unpleasant *what ifs*.

There is one thing we could all agree on: China remains an extremely important market for European businesses. There are various perspectives on this. For many industries, it is the country's increasingly important role in global supply chains that makes it indispensable. For sectors relying heavily on scientific research, engineering and data analysis, China's fast-paced innovation ecosystem coupled with its abundance of data provides fertile ground for development. And still, despite subdued domestic demand growth in China and persistent involution pressures, some of our members have remained highly profitable here, with their China earnings often contributing directly towards sustaining jobs in Europe.

That being said, European businesses also recognise the need to rebalance the EU-China trade relationship. The growing trade imbalance along with increasing dependencies in critical industries raise legitimate economic security concerns. Many European companies, particularly those operating in strategic industries, have also long been disadvantaged because of persistent Chinese market access and regulatory barriers.

These issues are not confined within country borders, or in other words: what happens in China does not stay in China. Industrial policies and exchange rate factors tilting the playing field towards domestic companies, as well as pressure to export in the face of low domestic demand growth, have created both the conditions and need for Chinese companies to go global, often with products at prices that European suppliers competing on market terms cannot match. The result is ballooning trade imbalances and concerns amongst trade partners about economic security.

These are some of the key messages we impressed upon the EU's Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security Maroš Šefčovič ahead of his meetings with Chinese Minister of Commerce Wang Wentao and Vice Premier He Lifeng. We view these high-level exchanges along with a series of working-level engagements that have taken place in recent months positively.

We are encouraged that the two sides have set clear deadlines to track progress on their commitments. This indicates an understanding of the fact that words need to be urgently followed by tangible action, as, of course, the proof of the concept will be in the implementation.

For our part, we will remain committed to providing support for the sustainable development of the EU-China trade relationship by offering constructive recommendations to both sides based on the on-the-ground realities reported by our members. [EB](#)



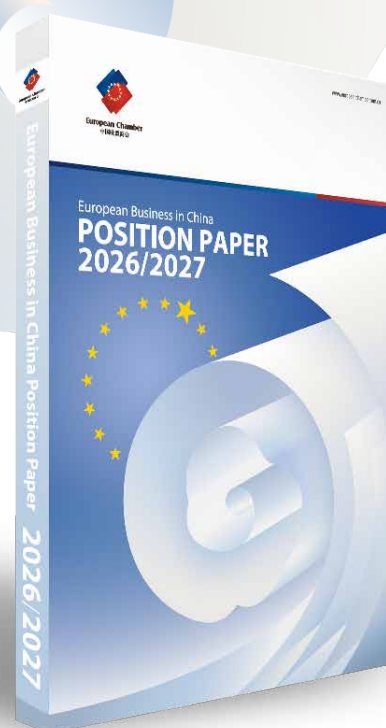
Jens Eskelund

President

European Union
Chamber of
Commerce in
China

European Business in China

POSITION PAPER 2026/2027



This year, the European Chamber's annual *Position Paper* focusses on the structural challenges in China's economy. The paper contains 33 individual industry and horizontal position papers, which have been compiled over a six-month period through the dedicated work of our members. It puts forward 1,096 detailed and constructive recommendations for China's policymakers with a view to finding solutions for the most pressing issues and improving China's business environment for all companies. The following is a summary of the *Executive Position Paper*, which provides a high-level overview of the key challenges faced by our members.

'Low-hanging fruit' can provide a foundation for rebuilding business confidence

The European Chamber's *Business Confidence Survey 2026* (BCS 2026) signalled that many of the negative trends of recent years may be bottoming out. The deterioration of confidence in China's business environment has eased for several key metrics, and some improvements were seen in terms of profitability outlook, market access and regulatory barriers.

These are data points from a single year, and as such do not constitute a trend. However, they suggest that there could be a meaningful uptick in business confidence over time if the right policies are implemented.

To create momentum for a recovery, there is low-hanging fruit that can be picked relatively easily – pro-business policies that can provide ‘quick wins’.

China’s 15th Five-year Plan (15FYP) contains several points that could also boost foreign-invested enterprises’ (FIEs’) business confidence. These include commitments to strengthen efforts to attract and utilise foreign investment; uphold national treatment; further open the service sector, specifically the telecommunications, internet, education, culture, and healthcare industries; shorten the negative list for inbound foreign direct investment; and review and rectify documents and regulations that do not comply with the Foreign Investment Law.

Importantly, the 15FYP also includes a recognition of structural challenges and a commitment to address them. Specifically: calls to boost domestic demand and for “comprehensive measures to address ‘involution-style’ competition” as well as a pledge to “promote balanced development of imports and exports”. If implemented, these could create the conditions for a sustained rebound of business confidence among all businesses operating in China, not just FIEs.

This is because Chinese and foreign companies operating in China are largely facing the same underlying issue: *involution on loop*, catalysed by the persistent imbalance between supply and demand.



Photo: European Chamber

A preference for ‘domestically manufactured’ products in public procurement is a long-standing market access barrier for foreign companies in China in industries in which the primary customers are typically state owned.

Several structural issues are impacting business at the micro level

There are other imbalances that have a negative impact on European companies’ China operations – to varying degrees.

A preference for ‘domestically manufactured’ products in public procurement is a long-standing market access barrier for foreign companies in China in industries in which the primary customers are typically state owned. China’s emphasis on self-reliance and developing indigenous technologies has seen the playing field sometimes strongly tilted in favour of domestic players. ‘Autonomous and controllable’ (A&C) technology guidelines encourage Chinese and foreign companies alike to avoid the use of foreign technologies that the Chinese Government fears could be cut off by other countries or may be connected or connectable to external systems, and to opt for ‘safe’ domestic alternatives. ‘Buy

China's policies lead to a positive bias towards domestic brands, with many Chamber members reporting that their products are frequently excluded from procurement despite being developed and manufactured in China.

Healthcare procurement is also impacted by an imbalance between the respective weights attached to quality and price. This is because China's volume-based procurement (VBP) mechanism tends to favour price over quality, putting bidders under pressure to supply large quantities of the relevant product at discounted rates. This is driving irrational competition, compelling manufacturers to adopt non-market-driven bidding strategies to secure contracts, with a race to the bottom on pricing. This approach not only erodes reasonable profit margins but also systematically undermines product quality assurance, supply chain stability and industry innovation, while putting patient outcomes at risk.

Meanwhile, disparities between China's written intellectual property rights (IPR) laws and on-the-ground enforcement are reflected in an increase of infringements over the past year, according to the BCS 2026. Members partly attribute this to the lack of capacity among relevant authorities: there are simply not enough officials that can adjudicate technologically complex cases. The proliferation of online sales platforms and different sales models has also provided more opportunities for infringing activities, which makes enforcement even more challenging. In addition, the burden of investigating infringers and collecting evidence falls largely on the right owner – this is costly, time consuming and often does not result in sufficient damages to cover legal expenses, while infringers can hide behind the liability of layers of suppliers, and also reoffend relatively easily, for example, by simply switching to another online sales platform.



70

per cent

of respondents to the BCS 2026 reported difficulties achieving their decarbonisation goals in China.



USD

625

billion

China's clean energy investment in 2024.



Over

60

per cent

China accounted for over 60 per cent of global renewable capacity expansion in 2025.

In addition, an imbalance between China's decarbonisation potential and companies' ability to decarbonise poses a serious challenge to European companies with binding commitments. Decarbonisation is a key policy priority for the Chinese Government, with key targets set for peaking carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions before 2030, and achieving carbon neutrality by 2060. The country has already made rapid progress in the transition to green energy: in 2024, China's clean energy investment was more than United States dollar 625 billion, almost doubling since 2015 with the country accounting for over 60 per cent of global renewable capacity expansion in 2025. Furthermore, China is a global leader in green technologies, occupying a dominant position in the manufacturing and global supply of solar panels, wind turbines, electric vehicles (EVs) and batteries.

The European Chamber believes that decarbonisation is an area that would benefit greatly from deeper EU-China cooperation, as well as from increased contributions from European companies. However, decarbonising China operations remains an arduous task for many Chamber members, with 70 per cent of respondents to the BCS 2026 reporting difficulties achieving their decarbonisation goals in China. Key challenges include insufficient access to renewable energy; high costs associated with decarbonisation; lack of clear policy guidance; and unequal treatment between foreign and domestic Chinese companies when it comes to the enforcement of environmental/ decarbonisation-related regulations.



Structural issues at the macro level are more fundamental

Many of the concerns of foreign business are related to imbalances in China's economy – chief among these is the persistent imbalance between supply and demand.

Over the past two years, China has increased efforts to subsidise domestic demand. In 2024, a consumer goods trade-in programme was launched, which has been extended annually since. However, this was not enough to offset the disproportionate focus on providing supply-side support, which has resulted in slower consumption growth relative to the increase in production capacity. This is well illustrated by official data from May 2026, which showed growth in industrial production picking up pace while retail sales dropped for the first time in more than three years.

The supply/demand imbalance is at the core of the phenomenon known as '*neijuan*' or '*involution*': a cycle of ever-increasing investment with ever-diminishing returns, leading to unsustainable competition.

Involution has been observed in industries that China has identified as being of strategic importance to its future economic growth, which subsequently attract disproportionately large subsidies and other forms of policy support in an effort to develop domestic champions. This in turn often results in market overcrowding and unhealthy competition as companies continue to invest in production while aggressively cutting prices in a bid to maintain their market position, which ultimately leads to an erosion of profits, a waste of resources and overall industry destabilisation.

“

The supply/demand imbalance is at the core of the phenomenon known as '*neijuan*' or '*involution*': a cycle of ever-increasing investment with ever-diminishing returns, leading to unsustainable competition.

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This dynamic is exacerbated by the fact that local governments often continue to prop up domestic companies in their jurisdiction long after they have stopped being commercially viable. The number of loss-making companies has been on the rise as a result, with declining markup rates identified as a key factor behind falling profits.

Moreover, the average share of '*zombie firms*'—companies whose revenue cannot cover interest payments—has risen to more than double the global average of listed companies. While under normal market conditions such firms would be downsized, restructured or eliminated through insolvency mechanisms, in China, industrial policies geared towards promoting strategic sectors have often been instrumental in keeping them alive. In addition, as alluded to, local governments are incentivised to provide support for local champions in key sectors partly to secure employment in their jurisdiction and in the hope that these companies can become market leaders nationwide, or even globally.

This trend has contributed to overall low productivity in China's economy—despite some key strategic industries experiencing very high productivity growth—while exacerbating its debt burden, with local government debt expanding at a faster rate than both the average local fiscal revenue and the national economy in 2025.

From 'in China for China' to 'in China for the world'

At the same time, China's role is also changing for multinationals. A great part of China's allure has historically been its large and rapidly expanding market and the attractive returns companies were able to generate from it. In many instances this is still the case, but it is now increasingly the country's strong position in global value chains that makes it indispensable.

This evolution has taken place partly due to a combination of China's existing characteristics, including its innovation strength and the speed and reliability of its manufacturing base, and a host of other factors such as productivity gains, industrial policy support and exchange rate dynamics.

These circumstances—many of them the result of policy choices—in tandem with the issue of persistent involution,

force many companies to pivot to growth through exports, driving the shift from ‘in China for China’ to ‘in China for the world’.

The increasing need to export from China is feeding trade imbalances

While China’s growing exports have provided more cost-effective choices for overseas consumers, they are also sparking concerns among some of China’s trade partners about the potential consequences to their home markets. These include job losses, increasing dependencies and diminishing economic security.

Trade in goods between the EU and China continues to be the largest single contributor to bilateral tensions, with the imbalance having become even more pronounced in 2025, when China’s trade surplus with the EU reached euro (EUR) 359.8 billion, equivalent to approximately EUR 1 billion per day.

Notably, this is a sustained trend, with EU imports from China having increased 89 per cent since 2015, while its exports to China grew only 37 per cent over the same period.

Recognition of mutual economic security concerns is key to rebuilding the EU-China relationship

Historically, China has had more market restrictions in place for FIEs while the EU’s market has been more open to Chinese investment. This dynamic now appears to be gradually changing, with the EU looking to ‘close the gap’ with proposals for a more rigorous regulatory system for foreign investment, in tandem with its trade defence tools.

From Beijing’s perspective, these actions represent a retreat from free-market commitments and a shift towards protectionism. From Brussels’ point of view, these are necessary steps to ensure the bloc’s economic and national security.

Many of the dynamics contributing to the increasingly contentious EU-China relationship are rooted in shared concerns over economic security. In the context of the increasingly volatile global environment and all the resulting disruptions, a certain level of focus on risk management and diversification therefore appears increasingly justifiable.

The EU’s growing economic security concerns are not fundamentally different from China’s, with the policy framework it is currently developing aimed at safeguarding its strategic autonomy, and industrial resilience and competitiveness.

The European Chamber therefore believes that key steps towards continuing and deepening EU-China cooperation should include: gaining consensus that they share mutual concerns; and agreeing on a framework that clearly defines both the areas that are essential to their respective economic security, and the areas where more openness, reliability and predictability can and should be provided for businesses. Establishing a healthy balance between security and development interests will be key to ensuring the sustainable development of both economies, laying the foundations for a strong, reliable trade and investment partnership that can endure for many years to come.

In this regard, the joint efforts being made under the Trade and Investment Consultation (TIC) mechanism are seen as positive signals by businesses. Since the *Position Paper 2026/2027* was published, the two sides have already

held the second round of talks under the mechanism, and issued a joint statement with a list of deliverables and understandings that could provide a blueprint for tangible progress towards addressing key concerns.

Prognosis

For a prognosis on what we can expect in the medium/long-term, the 15FYP gives some indications. As already mentioned, the 15FYP sets out aims to tackle some of the imbalances listed in this paper. At the same time, some of these imbalances could grow further due to China’s overarching policy focus: the 15FYP doubles down on calls for self-reliance, and reiterates a call to go even further and achieve ‘self-sufficiency’ in scientific and technological infrastructure. The 15FYP repeatedly references the term ‘new quality productive forces’ in the context of self-reliance, indicating a potential continuation of policies that support domestic Chinese companies similar to those provided under the Made in China 2025 initiative, albeit across a far broader range of sectors.

Meanwhile, businesses are eagerly awaiting the outcome of the third round of EU-China talks under the TIC mechanism, set for March 2027, as these could have significant ramifications for the environment that European Chamber members will have to navigate.

In the interests of furthering cooperation in ways that create mutual value for the EU and China, the Chamber offers its 1,000+ detailed and constructive recommendations for policymakers. 

To read the *Position Paper 2026/2027* in full, visit: <https://www.eurochamber.com.cn/en/publications-position-paper>

China ShortCuts

The European Chamber launched its new, short-format podcast series in October 2022.

China ShortCuts is a five-minute weekly catch-up about the Chinese business landscape.

Tune in to stay informed on the latest economic data, market trends, and policy and regulatory updates that could shape your industry.

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Alibaba Cloud expands European footprint with two availability zones in France

A suite of agentic AI services are set to launch for European customers later this year

On 17th June 2026, Alibaba Cloud, a leading global provider of artificial intelligence (AI) infrastructure and the intelligence backbone of Alibaba Group, announced the launch of its cloud region in France. Featuring two availability zones, the launch addresses accelerating demand from European customers across key sectors—including retail, software development, AI-powered creative platforms and sports tech—for advanced cloud and digital solutions located in Europe. The new facilities in Paris mark Alibaba Cloud's third European hub, complementing its existing infrastructure in Germany and the United Kingdom.

The France region delivers a comprehensive suite of enterprise-grade cloud computing services, spanning elastic computing, storage, containerisation, networking, security, databases and advanced developer tools. Built with strict data privacy and sovereignty in mind, the infrastructure adheres to rigorous European regulatory frameworks and standards, including data privacy, cybersecurity, resilience and sovereignty.

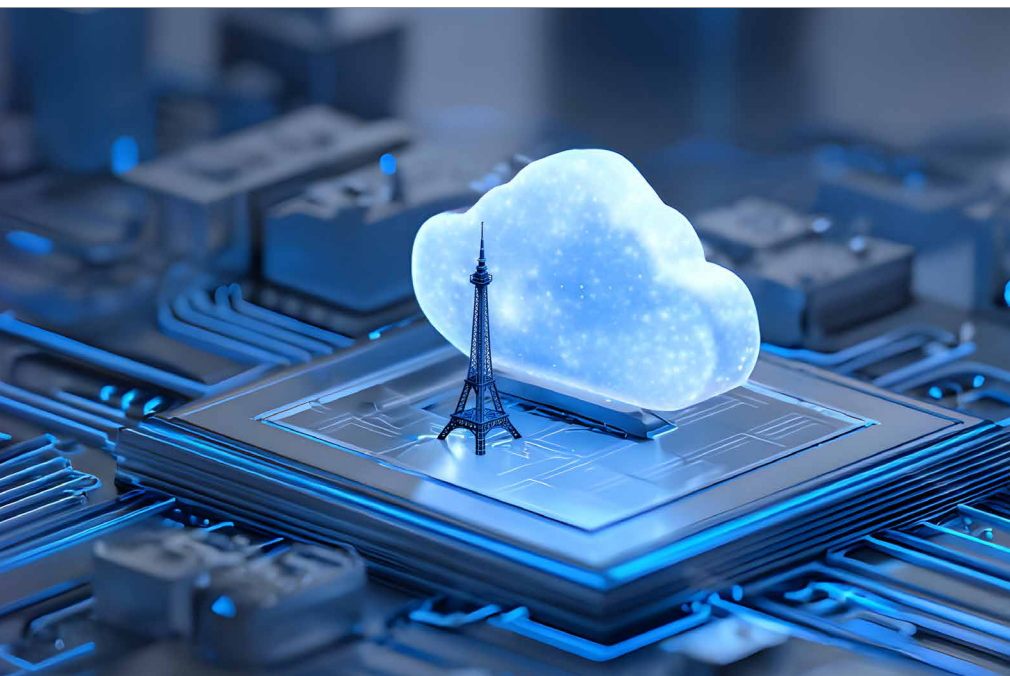


Dr Feifei Li, chief technology officer and president of International Business of Alibaba Cloud, unveiled the launch of Alibaba Cloud's France region

Now fully operational, the France region equips European businesses with high availability, operational resilience and robust disaster recovery capabilities. The launch has reinforced Alibaba Cloud's commitment to providing a secure, scalable and sustainable foundation for global digital innovation.

To meet the growing demand for enterprise agents, Alibaba Cloud plans to launch a suite of agentic AI services in European markets

in the second half of this year. The lineup includes AgentRun, a one-stop development platform for AI agents; STAROps, a comprehensive intelligent operations platform; ACS Agent Sandbox, which provides hardware-level security isolation while reducing operational costs of AI agents; Agent Security Center, which ensures agent build-time integrity and supply chain transparency; AI Security Guardrails 2.0, designed for safe model interactions, local compliance and



runtime risk interception; and Agentic SOC, a solution enabling automated threat response and closed-loop auditing. These products are designed to streamline the development and operation of enterprise-scale agents within a secure environment, offering full lifecycle management from development and debugging to deployment, real-world operations and end-to-end security protection.

"The expansion of our cloud infrastructure into France reinforces our ongoing commitment to empowering European businesses with sovereign, secure, and intelligent solutions," said Dr Feifei Li, chief technology officer and president of International Business of Alibaba Cloud. "This expansion, alongside the introduction of our agentic AI services to Europe, aligns with our broader strategy to bring our full-stack AI+Cloud ecosystem to global customers as we enter the agentic era."

Alibaba Cloud has served European markets since 2016, supporting prominent multinationals in expanding globally while helping local businesses stay competitive. For example, SAP

collaborates with Alibaba to jointly accelerate enterprise innovation and digital transformation, with an initial focus on the China market and a rollout planned for Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Africa. Additionally, Alibaba Cloud has been working with local technology partners to deliver tailored cloud and digital solutions across Europe.

During the 2024 Paris Olympics, Alibaba Cloud served as the Worldwide Olympic Partner and Official Cloud Service Provider, driving the digital transformation of the Games through its cloud and AI innovation. Notably, in partnership with Olympic Broadcasting Services (OBS), Alibaba Cloud launched OBS Cloud 3.0. The initiative made the work of OBS and media rights-holders easier and more efficient, and delivering live signals over OBS Live Cloud became the main method of remote distribution to broadcasters for the first time in the history of the Olympic Games.

In May 2026, Alibaba announced a multi-year partnership with the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) and UC3, the joint venture

between UEFA and European Football Clubs (EFC) that controls and manages the strategic marketing, sales, and delivery of commercial rights for UEFA club competitions. The partnership, starting immediately with UEFA and in 2027 with UC3, will see the deployment of Alibaba's advanced AI capabilities to support fan engagement and media and content management via its Qwen Large Language Model (LLM). Together with its cloud computing infrastructure and global e-commerce platform, Alibaba will power an immersive fan and content experience worldwide across UEFA's flagship men's competitions.

Alibaba Cloud's expanded presence in Europe underscores its unwavering commitment to driving digital innovation in the region. By providing local businesses with leading AI+Cloud solutions to efficiently build, deploy and manage AI agents, Alibaba Cloud aims to accelerate their transition from traditional automation to agent-led intelligent operations. At its recent international Qwen Conference, the company unveiled major updates across its foundation models, AI infrastructure, cloud-native tools and enterprise agent products, helping global enterprises rapidly deploy practical AI agents into day-to-day business environments.

ABOUT ALIBABA CLOUD

Alibaba Cloud (www.alibabacloud.com) is a global leader in full-stack AI+Cloud solutions. It offers a comprehensive suite of flexible, scalable and secure cloud services built on a three-tiered architecture of Infrastructure-as-a-Service (IaaS), Platform-as-a-Service (PaaS) and Model-as-a-Service (MaaS). Alibaba Cloud empowers enterprises worldwide with its full-stack AI capabilities, powered by Qwen (Chinese: Qianwen), a family of large language and multimodal AI models developed by Alibaba. Debuted in 2023, Qwen models are available to global developers via HuggingFace (open-weight) or through API on Model Studio, Alibaba's one-stop, enterprise-grade AI development platform offering access to the full suite of Qwen foundation models.

8TH-9TH JULY
NATIONAL

Chamber representatives
with a delegation from the
Netherlands
Photo: European Chamber

European Chamber meets with Dutch minister of foreign trade



On 8th July, Holly Lei, vice chair of the European Chamber's Shanghai Chapter, and Steven Basart, general manager of the chapter, met with a Dutch delegation led by Sjoerd Sjoerdsma, minister of foreign trade and development of cooperation, and

Coen van Oostrom, president of the Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers. The two sides exchanged views on the business environment for European companies operating in China.

On 7th July, European Chamber States' Representative Bruno Weill met with C-level executives from the delegation in Beijing. He provided an overview of the key economic headwinds facing European businesses operating in China. Following this, both sides discussed topics including how to address the European Union's growing imbalances with China, as well as escalating EU-China trade and investment tensions.

On 9th July, Steven Basart presented the main findings of the European Chamber's *Business Confidence Survey 2026* to the Dutch delegation.

9TH JULY
NATIONAL

Vice President Stefan
Bernhart speaking at
an event hosted by the
Beijing Municipal Bureau of
Commerce
Photo: European Chamber

Vice President Stefan Bernhart calls for further opening of the service sector



On 9th July, European Chamber Vice President Stefan Bernhart delivered a keynote address at an event hosted by the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Commerce. The event focussed on the opportunities available in Beijing's 'Two Zones'—the Integrated National Demonstration Zone for Opening Up the Services

Sector and the China (Beijing) Pilot Free Trade Zone—during the 15th Five-year Plan (15FYP) period.

Bernhart welcomed the release of the 15FYP and noted that several recommendations put forward by the European Chamber were reflected in the policy document. He highlighted the role that China's services sector has to play when it comes to achieving more balanced and sustainable economic growth in the China market, as well as how European companies could contribute their expertise to this end. At the same time, he stressed that further market opening in the sector, as well as the realisation of a level playing field between foreign and domestic service providers remain necessary. Beijing Vice Mayor Tang Wenhong and Deputy Director General Tang Song from the Investment Promotion Agency of the Ministry of Commerce also spoke at the event.

21ST JULY
NATIONAL

Vice President Gianni Di Giovanni presents the Chamber's *Business Confidence Survey 2026* to the commissioner
Photo: European Chamber

Chamber representatives meet European commissioner for energy and housing



On 21st July, European Chamber Vice President Gianni Di Giovanni and Secretary General Adam Dunnett met with European Commissioner for Energy and Housing Dan Jørgensen at a dinner hosted by Danish Ambassador Michael Starbæk Christensen.

Di Giovanni presented the main findings of the Chamber's *Business Confidence Survey 2026*. He also highlighted the importance of strengthening Europe's competitiveness while advancing energy security, industrial resilience and the green transition. He also noted that China could achieve net zero faster by streamlining cross-provincial green power purchase agreements, enhancing green electricity certification systems, setting sustainable fuel blending targets, aligning green methanol with international maritime standards and expanding pilot programmes open to European technologies.

21ST JULY
NATIONAL

Vice President Stefan Bernhart meets with a visiting delegation from the European Parliament's Committee for Foreign Affairs
Photo: European Chamber

European Chamber Vice President Stefan Bernhart meets delegation of MEPs



On 21st July, European Chamber Vice President Stefan Bernhart met with a visiting delegation of members of the European Parliament (MEPs) from the Parliament's Committee for Foreign Affairs (AFET) led by MEP David McAllister.

Bernhart provided an overview of the key economic trends impacting the operations of European companies in China, and how they have contributed to business sentiment among European companies falling to or around record-low levels in recent years. He added that despite increased difficulties doing business, China remains a key market for European companies' operations, in no small part due to its vibrant innovation ecosystem, world-leading industrial clusters and highly efficient and cost-effective supply chains. He then put forward a series of recommendations to EU policymakers on how the EU could better preserve key strategic industries and boost its industrial competitiveness, while continuing to engage with China.

11TH AUGUST
NATIONAL

A Chamber delegation led by President Jens Eskelund met with Vice Minister Ma Hui of the IDCPC.
Photo: IDCPC

Chamber delegation meets vice minister of IDCPC



On 11th August, European Chamber President Jens Eskelund led a delegation of representatives from the Chamber's Executive Committee in a closed-door meeting with Vice Minister Ma Hui of the International Department of the CPC Central Committee (IDCPC). Both sides exchanged views on the state of EU-China relations, as well as on the challenges faced by European businesses operating in China. Specific topics discussed included economic security, involution, localisation, low-carbon development and the standards of domestically produced products. Ma acknowledged the value of holding exchanges with the European Chamber, as well as in striking a careful balance between China's efforts to advance national security and development.

20TH AUGUST
NANJING

Vice President Carlo D'Andrea speaking at the Conference.
Photo: European Chamber

Jiangsu-Germany Economic and Trade Cooperation Conference



On 20th August, the Jiangsu-Germany Economic and Trade Cooperation Conference was held with the support of the European Chamber's Nanjing Chapter. Ling Ji, vice minister of commerce and deputy China international trade representative, spoke at the event, as did Jiangsu Vice Governor Zhao Yan and CPC Suzhou Municipal Committee Secretary Fan Bo.

European Chamber Vice President and Shanghai Chapter Chair Carlo D'Andrea gave a keynote address on behalf of the Chamber, during which he acknowledged Jiangsu's efforts to open up its economy to foreign investment, as well as the fact that European businesses remain committed to working with officials to help improve the business environment.

BRAND-SQUATTING CRACKDOWN

Trademark Law reforms for European firms

European small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and multinational groups operating across mainland China have long faced structural vulnerabilities linked to systematic trademark squatting, widespread counterfeiting and fragmented administrative enforcement frameworks. In this article, **Francesco Marano** and **Claudio Di Marino** explain how this persistent commercial challenge will undergo radical transformation starting 1st January 2027, following the definitive approval of the revised Trademark Law by the Standing Committee of the 14th National People's Congress on 26th June 2026.¹



The landmark reform to the Trademark Law restructures the core pillars of national trademark regulation, introducing far heavier administrative fines for bad-faith filing practices, extended cross-class anti-dilution protection for internationally renowned brands, and revised procedural deadlines for oppositions and revocation procedures, alongside formal statutory recognition of motion marks as registrable intellectual property assets. While both the European Union (EU) Trademark Regulation and the updated Chinese trademark regime share the fundamental purpose of safeguarding brand identity and eliminating consumer confusion, their governance architectures, state oversight powers and enforcement workflows operate under entirely separate paradigms that every European business leader active in China must integrate into long-term intellectual property planning before the new legislation takes effect.

At a foundational level, European and Chinese trademark laws pursue identical core priorities: granting exclusive proprietary rights over distinctive commercial signs and deterring unfair third-party appropriation of established brands. The key dividing line lies in the balance between corporate self-management and proactive state regulatory intervention. The EU trademark system delivers harmonised unitary cross-border protection backed by independent boards and courts, which deliver balanced civil, administrative and criminal remedies, granting brand owners full procedural autonomy to file opposition or invalidity claims against conflicting registrations. Conversely, the Chinese framework, administered by the China National Intellectual Property Administration (CNIPA), endows national intellectual property (IP) authorities with broad direct powers to dismantle mass



IP consultancies and legal practitioners who knowingly assist squatting actors can incur penalties of up to CNY 200,000

squatting operations that have targeted thousands of European companies over the past decade. It is critical to highlight that no automatic mutual recognition exists between the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) and the CNIPA registrations: any European brand selling goods or providing services within Chinese territory must complete a dedicated local filing process to obtain enforceable domestic IP rights.

The 2026 revised statute outlines three distinct categories of conduct liable to administrative penalties: the accumulation of large portfolios of unused trademarks with no legitimate operational purpose, the pre-emptive registration of globally famous brand identities,² and the submission of identical or confusingly similar signs designed to mislead local consumers. Private individuals acting in bad faith face fines of up to Chinese yuan (CNY) 100,000, while IP consultancies and legal practitioners who knowingly assist squatting actors incur penalties of up to CNY 200,000, with separate fines of CNY 100,000 applicable to their senior management teams.

This adjustment resolves a historic disadvantage for European businesses: under the previous regulatory framework, financial disincentives for trademark hijackers were minimal, forcing brand holders into lengthy, costly invalidation proceedings with limited avenues to recover damages. One interpretative grey area remains regarding the official definition of 'adverse market impact', the threshold triggering financial sanctions; supplementary CNIPA implementing rules will be published before the end of 2026 to set uniform assessment criteria for regulators and market operators alike.

One of the reform's most impactful innovations for European multinationals is the extension of cross-class anti-dilution safeguards to well-known foreign trademarks without full CNIPA registration, a decisive shift from prior rules

¹ Trademark Law of the People's Republic of China, China National Intellectual Property Association, 26th June 2026, viewed 19th October 2026, <https://www.cnipa.gov.cn/art/2026/6/26/art_95_206942.html>

² The expression 'globally famous brand' in this article corresponds to the statutory concept of a well known trademark (驰名商标) under the revised 2026 Trademark Law. Under Article 21, well known marks enjoy cross class anti-dilution protection regardless of whether they are registered in mainland China. Criteria to assess well known status are laid down in Article 63, while Article 69 establishes the pathway for CNIPA confirmation of well known status to be used in cross border trademark disputes.

that restricted this far-reaching protection solely to marks formally filed in China. This realignment brings domestic Chinese standards in line with major multilateral trade agreements such as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), while establishing an official CNIPA certification pathway: brand owners may secure formal well-known trademark rulings, which serve as binding evidence for cross-border trademark disputes and streamline global enforcement strategies for European groups active across multiple international markets. A controversial clause mandating compulsory five-year usage declarations, featured in the law's early drafts, has been fully removed following extensive cross-industry stakeholder feedback. It has been replaced with autonomous authority for the CNIPA to launch ex officio revocation procedures for any registered mark left unused for three consecutive years without valid commercial justification. This mechanism drastically cuts administrative overhead for European firms, which previously had to submit individual cancellation petitions for

every dormant blocking mark held by squatters. All European entities operating in China must maintain ordered, complete archives of sales documentation, marketing materials and distribution records to prove continuous trademark use and avoid involuntary official cancellation of their own registered assets.

“

This mechanism drastically cuts administrative overhead for European firms, which previously had to submit individual cancellation petitions for every dormant blocking mark held by squatters.

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The updated legal text formally includes motion marks within the catalogue of registrable IP assets: animated logos widely adopted by European digital, fashion and technology brands. The law draws a clear legal divide between purely distinctive animated graphics eligible for trademark protection and functional moving visuals excluded from registration, aligning Chinese trademark jurisprudence with EU standards governing multimedia trademarks. Two procedural revisions re-organise daily workflows for European legal departments: the statutory window to file oppositions against newly published applications is reduced from three to two months, requiring systematic weekly monitoring of CNIPA public databases to avoid missed deadlines against abusive or confusing registrations. Additionally, civil infringement litigation rules have been amended: if a defendant raises a non-use defence, the brand owner must supply proof of trademark deployment within the three years immediately preceding the alleged violation, closing a longstanding loophole that allowed companies to use their brand only symbolically after discovering counterfeiting solely to claim financial compensation.

Administrative oversight of misleading trademarks has been significantly tightened under Article 56 of the revised law, empowering regulators to order mandatory corrective measures paired with fines equivalent to five times illegal turnover; where revenue figures cannot be quantified, the maximum sanction is set at CNY 250,000. A decisive change compared to preliminary draft wording removes the 'serious circumstances' prerequisite for full trademark cancellation: any misleading commercial exploitation of a registered mark may result in permanent erasure from the official



CNIPA registry. European brand holders must conduct regular audits of all product packaging, e-commerce visuals and offline retail materials to remove wording or imagery capable of misleading consumers regarding product origin, manufacturing processes or quality characteristics.

An illustrative scenario based on recurring 2025 CNIPA trademark opposition trends within the luxury sector highlights the operational burdens the new reform aims to eliminate. Say a European luxury fashion brand discovers a local operator holding identical word and figurative trademark registrations across apparel, beauty and hospitality classes, with zero documented legitimate commercial activity over a three-year period. Under the old regulatory framework, the European brand would have spent 14 months and substantial legal expenditure to secure full invalidation, with no financial penalties imposed on the squatter. Within the 2026 revised regulatory landscape, the identical situation should be resolved far more efficiently: CNIPA examiners may autonomously flag large portfolios of unused trademarks during initial application screening; the brand retains only a two-month window to submit opposition filings; successful opposition outcomes trigger administrative fines against bad-faith applicants; and after three full years of documented inactivity the conflicting mark can be cancelled by regulators without separate corporate petitions – shifting part of the enforcement workload to state authorities and delivering tangible operational advantages for smaller European SMEs with limited in-house IP teams.

To fully align internal corporate processes ahead of the 1st January 2027 implementation date, European businesses can follow a structured



"Pending the release of full supplementary CNIPA implementing regulations scheduled for late 2026, all European firms are advised to complete a full review of their trademark portfolios..."

six-stage compliance roadmap: conduct an end-to-end audit of all active CNIPA registrations and compile exhaustive proof of continuous brand usage to prevent ex officio revocation; update internal monitoring protocols to implement weekly reviews of newly published applications to meet the shortened opposition deadline; assess eligibility for CNIPA well-known trademark certification to strengthen evidentiary standing in cross-border litigation; complete a global marketing asset audit to eliminate all consumer-misleading elements; revise all local IP agency contracts to insert liability clauses mirroring the new administrative penalties for collaborating with bad-faith trademark filers; and formalise internal brand compliance protocols outlining clear workflows to track trademark deployment across e-commerce platforms, manufacturing sites and physical retail locations nationwide.

Taken as a holistic regulatory package, the June 2026 revision of China's Trademark Law delivers concrete, actionable protective tools addressing longstanding trademark squatting risks, alongside expanded cross-class safeguards for internationally

renowned unregistered marks and streamlined official cancellation procedures for dormant blocking registrations. At the same time, compressed procedural timelines and extended CNIPA revocation powers demand comprehensive upgrades to internal intellectual property governance frameworks for all European Chamber member companies operating within China's consumer and industrial sectors. Pending the release of full supplementary CNIPA implementing regulations scheduled for late 2026, all European firms are advised to complete a full review of their trademark portfolios and refresh internal compliance policies to minimise exposure to administrative fines and costly commercial litigation risks once the new legal regime enters into force. Consistent regular monitoring of trademark databases and systematic archiving of brand usage documentation remain the most resilient long-term strategy to preserve European brand equity across the Chinese market ecosystem. **EB**

Francesco Marano is Partner and General Manager at CPO & Partners (Shanghai). Drawing on deep expertise in Sino-EU corporate law, cross-border investment planning, IP strategy and commercial arbitration, he advises European SMEs and Italian corporate groups on market entry strategy and ongoing regulatory compliance across mainland China.

Claudio Di Marino is Legal Consultant at CPO & Partners (Shanghai). Based in Shanghai, he delivers tailored advisory support to European and Italian enterprises navigating China's evolving trademark and commercial regulatory landscape, with consolidated hands-on experience in cross-border IP compliance for foreign investors.

CPO & Partners (Shanghai) is an Italian-founded international tax and legal consultancy active in China since 2007. Its multilingual team of Chinese and Italian chartered accountants and legal practitioners delivers integrated advisory covering corporate incorporation, tax regulatory compliance, IP asset protection, cross-border investment structuring and bilateral Italy-China business support, serving both European SMEs and multinationals entering China, alongside Chinese enterprises pursuing overseas expansion projects.

Media Watch

Chamber's views on Europe's efforts to reduce dependence on China sought by media

In July, international media coverage highlighted the European Union's (EU's) increasing dependence on China, which has resulted in a growing trade imbalance. In late July, when the record heatwave in Europe resulted in a spike in purchases of Chinese portable air conditioning and cooling units, the topic was even more widely discussed. Chamber President Jens Eskelund was interviewed by the *SCMP*, during which he pointed out that Europe is becoming more dependent on China.

Domestic media seek Chamber's views on the attractiveness of the China market

Domestic media coverage of EU-China business relations in July and August 2026 largely focussed on highlighting the attractiveness of China's market for European firms. In a live interview with *CCTV*, European Chamber Secretary General Adam Dunnett highlighted how China's world-leading industrial clusters have motivated many European companies to set up manufacturing and sourcing operations in the country. A second long-form article by the *People's Daily* quoted Chamber President Jens Eskelund, who noted that aside from being important for company revenues, China is also now a key cog in many European companies' global supply chains.

China-EU relations Economy / China Economy

European companies 'becoming more reliant on China, not less', EU chamber chief says

Jens Eskelund tells conference in Berlin that Beijing can raise costs of confrontation beyond what other side is willing to bear

2-MIN READ      Listen  Make SCMP preferred on Google 

SCMP article on how many European companies are reliant on China as a sourcing and production destination

Media: *SCMP*

Date: 2nd July 2026



Secretary General Adam Dunnett speaking live with *CCTV* on China's industrial clusters

Media: *CCTV*

Date: 15th July 2026

China, EU can foster a dynamic trade balance through sustained development

By Zhong Sheng (*People's Daily*) 11:05, July 16, 2026

Article by the *People's Daily* on the attractiveness of the China market for European businesses

Media: *People's Daily*

Date: 16th July 2026

In record heat, a warming world has come to rely on China to stay cool

AK, 30, 2026
By Stephanie Yang



CNN article on how heatwaves in Europe have contributed to surging demand for Chinese air conditioning units

Media: CNN

Date: 30th July 2026

China Wields Its Rare-Earths Leverage Over Europe With Export Controls

Beijing banned shipments of important supplies to 14 companies on the cutting edge of chemicals processing, electric motors and defense.

NYT article on the Ministry of Commerce's recent announcement adding 14 European entities to the country's export control list

Media: The NYT

Date: 24th July 2026

Export controls report garners media coverage

On 24th July, the Chinese Ministry of Commerce added 14 European entities to the country's export control list. According to a ministry spokesperson, the measure was taken in response to the EU's decision to include 14 mainland Chinese and Hong Kong enterprises in its 21st package of sanctions issued against entities accused of aiding Russia's war effort, which was announced a day earlier on 23rd July.

Following the announcement, several media outlets ran articles on China's export control regime. Both the NYT and Caixin cited the Chamber's report *Exporting Control: China's New Strategic Toolkit* in their coverage and highlighted how China's imposition of export controls on rare earths had disrupted global supply chains and heightened the uncertainty experienced by companies doing business in/with the country.

European Chamber spokespeople on the heatwave in Europe

This summer, much of western Europe experienced a record-breaking heatwave, which contributed to severe health impacts, including heat-related deaths. On 30th July, CNN published an article on how ongoing heatwaves in Europe are contributing to the EU's growing trade imbalance with China. It included Chamber President Jens Eskelund's comment that, "The EU is neither looking for complete balance—in the sense that every euro of goods imported must correspond to a euro of goods exported—nor to reduce its reliance on China for more widely available household appliances."

Guangxi investment event widely covered in domestic media

From 24th to 26th June, the 2026 Guangxi Tour for International Enterprises was held. A delegation of over 100 representatives from foreign-invested enterprises led by the European Chamber attended the tour, to understand and explore business opportunities in Guangxi.

Vice President Fabian Blake was interviewed by *Caijing* on the sidelines of the event, during which he pointed out the potential for Chamber members to deepen co operation in automotive, logistics, consumer goods and healthcare industries in Guangxi. His comment later featured in the *People's Daily* and the *China News Service's* coverage of the tour.

外企探寻广西投资新机遇

来源 | 《财经》杂志 文 | 《财经》记者 张建锋 编辑 | 朱波
2026年07月16日 17:06

Cajing article on why foreign invested enterprises (FIEs) are exploring opportunities in Guangxi

Media: *Caijing*

Date: 16th July 2026

广西打造全球产业合作高地 引外资深耕智能经济赛道

2026年06月25日 18:25 来源: 中国新闻网

A+ 大字 A- 小字

China News article on Guangxi's industrial strengths

Media: *China News*

Date: 26th June 2026

Events Gallery

BEIJING, 1ST SEPTEMBER 2026

C-Suite Perspectives on AI Era Reputation Management



- As geopolitical fragmentation, divergent regulation and rapid technological change make reputation harder to manage, companies must treat communications and public affairs as inputs to business decisions.
- Artificial intelligence (AI) has become a national imperative with policies encouraging 'AI Plus' business applications, while leading Chinese large language models have rapidly approached US frontier-model performance at generally much lower token prices.
- AI sovereignty is a strategic concern with ideological and cultural implications beyond technical capabilities.

BEIJING, 10TH SEPTEMBER 2026

Roundtable with Prof Liu Qiao: Rebuilding Growth Paradigms



- China's long-term growth prospects will largely depend on whether it can revive total factor productivity through technological innovation, structural reforms, industrial upgrading and more effective investment.
- AI could become an important driver of productivity growth, but its economic impact will depend on large-scale investment, widespread application scenarios and complementary investment in infrastructure and people.
- Breaking the 'low price, low profit, low income' cycle requires a shift towards demand-side policies that raise household income and consumption, improve social protection and make people's wellbeing a more central measure of economic performance.

BEIJING, 11TH SEPTEMBER 2026

Breakfast Roundtable with Timothy P. Stratford



- United States-China economic relations are in an uneasy truce marked by frequent shifts in tariffs, export controls and entity-list measures, creating substantial operational uncertainty for businesses.
- While both sides seek to avoid full-blown escalation, they strive to boost their own leverage and reduce the other's strategic pressure.

SHANGHAI, 21ST SEPTEMBER 2026

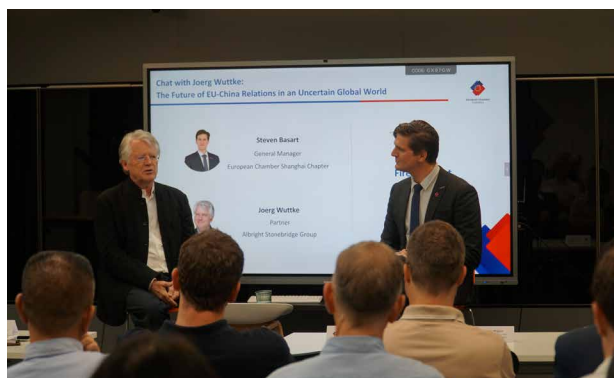
HR Excellence Conference 2026: Empowering the Future of HR with Global Strategy and AI



- AI can improve efficiency in areas such as talent acquisition, while also changing the design of jobs and roles.
- Companies need to distinguish between work that can be automated by AI and work that should be redesigned by AI augmentation.
- In China, the rapid adoption of AI by local competitors is increasing pressure on multinational companies to accelerate workforce transformation.

SHANGHAI, 23RD SEPTEMBER 2026

Joerg Wuttke: The Future of EU-China Relations in an Uncertain Global World



- China's structural economic challenges are becoming increasingly difficult to separate from the business outlook. Geopolitical fragmentation is making business operations more complex and costly.
- Mounting debt, a rapidly ageing population and demographic decline are long-term constraints on economic dynamism and innovation.
- European businesses remain deeply embedded in the Chinese economy, while China's combination of market scale, manufacturing capabilities, engineering talent and increasingly sophisticated innovation ecosystem continues to make the country an important competitive and technological base.

SOUTH CHINA, 10TH SEPTEMBER 2026

Visit to Shenzhen Court of International Arbitration



- European regulatory requirements are increasingly shifting from market-entry checks and post-market enforcement towards ex-ante compliance and lifecycle management.
- Cross-border dispute risks can often be reduced through better contract design. Companies should ensure that related contracts adopt consistent dispute-resolution mechanisms and clearly specify the governing law.
- New Chinese rules concerning supply-chain security and improper assertions of extraterritorial jurisdiction may create a dual-compliance challenge for European companies operating in China.

SOUTHWEST CHINA, 8TH SEPTEMBER 2026

Business Confidence Survey Launch 2026 (Chengdu)



- European companies in China are still struggling, but confidence is starting to pick up.
- Market potential, labour advantages and supportive government policies in the southwest are the main factors that attract firms.
- Businesses expect improvements to government services, with expanded business-matching channels and improved market-access conditions.

SOUTHWEST CHINA, 18TH SEPTEMBER 2026

Seminar on AI Agent Standards and Compliance



- Agents handle execution, while humans retain authorisation, judgment and accountability.
- Artificial intelligence should serve human dignity, not displace human accountability. The more powerful the technology, the clearer its boundaries must be; the deeper the automation, the more indispensable human authorisation remains.

Advisory Council News

Merck opens metrology and inspection site in France for global chip industry

Merck KGaA, a leading science and technology company, recently opened its new metrology and inspection site in Saint-Ismier, France. The 4,500-square-metre site, representing an investment of 20 million euros, strengthens the company's capacity to develop and manufacture precise metrology and inspection tools to address the growing demands of the semiconductor industry for high-performance chips. This demand is driven by the rapid growth of AI applications. Strategically located in the Grenoble area, one of Europe's most established semiconductor clusters, the site reinforces the company's role in building a more resilient and competitive European semiconductor ecosystem.



Photo: Jerome Guillou



Photo: covestro.com

Covestro takes bio-based aniline production process to next level as EU-funded project kicks off

Covestro has launched Bio4PURConti (Bio-Based Continuous Production for Sustainable Polyurethane Industry), acting as project coordinator of the pioneering European Union (EU)-funded initiative. The project aims to develop the world's first continuous production process for bio-based aniline. Aniline is a key raw material

for the plastics and chemical industry, notably for methylene diphenyl diisocyanate (MDI), a core building block for polyurethanes.

Fossil-based aniline production generates approximately 20 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions annually worldwide. To specifically reduce the carbon footprint of aniline production, Covestro uses a tailored microorganism in its bio-based process that converts industrial sugars from plant-based biomass into an intermediate product through fermentation. In a second step, chemical catalysis converts this intermediate into aniline with 100 per cent plant-based carbon.

Boehringer Ingelheim expands strategic presence in China to serve patients and customers

In August, Boehringer Ingelheim announced its intention to further grow its operations in China, strengthening investments across research and development (R&D), manufacturing and commercialisation in human pharmaceuticals and animal health. The company plans to expand its presence in China's innovation ecosystem, enabling scientific capabilities and clinical expertise in China to contribute earlier to Boehringer's global drug development and bringing more innovative solutions to patients and customers in China and around the world.

"China is becoming an increasingly important location in the global pharmaceutical innovation landscape," said Dr. Ioannis Sapountzis, president and CEO of Boehringer Ingelheim Greater China. "Expanding our presence in China reflects our long-term commitment to the market and is fundamental to our global innovation strategy. By connecting China's scientific capabilities, clinical insights and industry ecosystem, we aim to bring Chinese innovation into global R&D in a more integrated way and accelerate its translation into solutions that improve health outcomes for patients."

In recent years, Boehringer Ingelheim's operations in China have become an important part of its global R&D network, with multiple innovative medicines launched first in China or approved simultaneously with other markets. The two innovative products launched in China in 2026 include JASCAYD® (nerandomilast), the first new therapy approved for Idiopathic Pulmonary

Fibrosis (IPF) in a decade and the first new therapy approved for Progressive Pulmonary Fibrosis (PPF) for more than five years, and HERNEXEOS® (zongertinib), the first targeted therapy approved in China for the first-line treatment of HER2-mutant advanced non-small cell lung cancer. In recent years, China has been making significant contributions to the company's clinical development and is playing an increasingly important role in advancing the company's innovation pipeline.

As a key step in this strategy, Boehringer Ingelheim plans to establish a new R&D centre in Zhangjiang, Shanghai, to strengthen both external business development and early clinical development capabilities in China, reinforce partnerships with the Chinese biotech sector, and accelerate the discovery and development of breakthrough therapies.

Leveraging China's high-quality and efficient clinical resources, diverse patient populations and dynamic innovation ecosystem, the centre will accelerate the generation of early clinical evidence and proof-of-concept data in patients with high medical need, driving key decisions to advance promising assets into late-stage development pathways.

Beyond innovation, China is also an important hub connecting R&D, manufacturing and supply. Boehringer Ingelheim will accelerate local production and supply of key medicines. Beginning in the third quarter of this year, Boehringer Ingelheim plans to supply JASCAYD®, an innovative medicine for pulmonary fibrosis, from its human pharmaceutical manufacturing site in Zhangjiang to better meet the needs of patients in China. The company will further strengthen its commercialisation capabilities, improve access to innovative medicines and work with local partners to expand market reach, enabling more Chinese patients to

benefit from innovative treatments in a timely manner.

In animal health, Boehringer Ingelheim will leverage its Animal Health Global Innovation China Center to address evolving local market needs, with a focus on livestock vaccines and pet healthcare. The company will accelerate the development and introduction of innovative products, strengthen its portfolio for China and global markets, and continue upgrading its manufacturing sites in Nanchang and Taizhou. By expanding animal vaccine technology services and building a supply network serving China and global markets, Boehringer Ingelheim will further bolster its integrated R&D, manufacturing and commercialisation capabilities in China.

With enhanced R&D and commercialisation capabilities in China, Boehringer Ingelheim expects to achieve up to 20 regulatory approvals in China by 2030 across key areas including cardio-renal-metabolic diseases, respiratory diseases, oncology and eye health. In animal health, nearly 10 new products and new indications are expected to be approved and launched by 2030, covering key livestock and companion animal species. Looking ahead, Boehringer Ingelheim will continue to build on its investments in China through R&D, manufacturing and access, integrating China's innovation, speed and insights in its growing pharmaceuticals industry into its global value chain to create greater value for patients and customers worldwide. 

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- Facilitating coordinated efforts among the Chamber's membership

- Working with China to achieve its 2060 carbon neutrality goal