



EU IN THE INDO-PACIFIC JEAN MONNET NETWORK

NEWSLETTER ISSUE 9

PROJECT UPDATE

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We have entered the last year of this Network and I am happy to report that things are progressing nicely.





The Network recently completed 8 sandpit workshops across the Indo-Pacific, starting in New Zealand and then moving to Australia, Thailand, China, India, Taiwan, South Korea and finishing in Japan.

The sandpits were designed to connect EUIP researchers with EU officials based in each of the locations to discuss the results of our research. The sandpits proved to be highly successful and a great stimulus for the next phase of the Network: the publications.

Two major outputs are planned for this Network: an edited volume with a leading academic publisher and a special issue in a highly reputable journal. At this stage, the expectation is that these outputs will be published in 2026.

Nāku noa, nā

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'N. Smith'.

Nicholas Ross Smith

INTERNS

The EUIP Jean Monnet Network has been fortunate enough to have had two interns over the summer” Anna Doak and Jasmine Barry. Later this year, we will also welcome Emma Husband, Eva Gundersen, and Monica Yu as interns.



EUIP Intern: Anna Doak

Anna is a scholarship recipient at the National Centre for Research on Europe's studying towards a Master of European Union Studies. She has a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and Sociology and a Graduate Diploma in Political Science and International Relations. Anna is also on the Student Advisory Executive Board at the University of Canterbury and a Youth Councilor for Christchurch, New Zealand.

She was a Research Intern over the 2024-2025 summer break with the NCRE investigating the Delphi Policy Process of the EUIP project. She is especially interested in ASEAN approaches to globalisation and the European Union.



EUIP Intern: Jasmine Barry

Jasmine served as an intern with the EUIP project during the summer of 2024/2025 as a part of her MEuro course work . Her primary responsibilities included helping interpreting data and consolidating a report on the EU and Indo-Pacific.

Having completed her BA specializing in International Affairs in 2024, also at the University of Canterbury. Her research interests include EU public diplomacy and strategic narratives, which connected well with aspects of the project's work.





ANNA DOAK:

RIPPLES OF POWER: THE INDO-PACIFIC QUEST

After spending three months working as an intern on the EUIP project as part of Mainstream Tertiary Internship Programme, Anna was asked to share her thoughts on the EU in the Indo-Pacific. Here is her essay.

The scope of the Indo-Pacific is a broad phenomenon often spanning varying geographical regions or areas. Whilst some countries had a focus on sustainability or mitigation policy towards climate change others were prioritizing security or even digital governance through investments in technology. Comparatively, I live in New Zealand and there is this contingent notion of how rising sea levels and rising temperatures will impact future sustainable solutions. There are ramifications of this of what that means for neighbouring islands or countries. This was often discussed through France's stake in the Indo-Pacific with Mayotte, La Réunion, New Caledonia, and French Polynesia- home to approximately 1.8 million French citizens. This geopolitical centrality of their "Indo-Pacific power" as iterated by President Emmanuel Macron in 2018 is apparent as an actor for the EU's influence in the region.

Strategic autonomy was a reoccurring theme throughout my time at the National Centre for Research on Europe, a term to promote EU interests and values. Yet through shared cooperation of open strategic autonomy, there can be a form of interdependence and engagement with other allies and partners. The focus on The Global Gateway Strategy allowed a political realignment of what priority areas need to be focused on or, alternatively, what particular investment gaps need to be filled in a globally challenging time.

Throughout my time as a Research Intern, I was able to focus on the data and infographics for India, help analyse the Taiwan and New Zealand sandpit meetings and write a general findings report for New Zealand, Australia, Thailand, South Korea, Japan, Mainland China, Taiwan and India. The ideations

of political posturing varied greatly but due to cultural differences and diversity in policymaking, there was often a range of views of what the Indo-Pacific should or could be doing for security or reinforcing stability in the region. New Zealand has committed to this ASEAN regional architecture of working with others to promote institutions; Winston Peters, New Zealand's Minister of Foreign Affairs portrayed this in a speech at the end of 2023 to show commitment to strengthening the region, "Both to maximise opportunities and to manage risks." Working with Pacific nations will rigorously reinvent the rules-based order which engages with working alongside Australia, Asia and the EU.

Being a pioneer for reform the EU helps to bridge the gap between building cooperation and intrinsically linked economies. It is also important to recognise that the Indo-Pacific encompasses 2/3 of global growth. Emerging economies like Indonesia and India also have agreed upon The Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) to give them access to the EU markets in turn reducing poverty, increasing employment and helping supply chains.

China has also been a large transformer having roughly a 9% GDP growth since 1978 as portrayed by the World Bank Group. I think to have an intrinsically linked network globally with the EU and the Indo-Pacific there should be a range of political voices instigating new ideas. If every nation was supporting the exact same ideology, it would be inward-looking or trivial for the wider outlook of global nuances. Stagnant discourse never helps with international policy evaluations. Political epistemic approaches need to be examined to reach this criterion of overall truth.

The collective wisdom of many nations can highlight how to evaluate government processes but also reframe perspectives, by allowing marginalised groups or countries to discuss vis-à-vis social structures or political legislation. Creative propositions succeed through active participation, and this is the core of the Indo-Pacific Strategy to prosper and engage. There is an analogy that draws connotations to this, Aristotle compared a politician to a craftsman; both can reshape society either by retrogression or hopefully for the better.

Pivoting to utilizing the Brussels Effect will certainly have implications for the future of strategic autonomy/open strategic autonomy. Enabling countries to

adopt sustainable practices alongside adopting EU regulatory processes could streamline production capabilities. However, geopolitical uncertainties particularly with the Trump-era tariffs pose challenges for Asian countries. Possible taxes on Japanese and South Korean cars, Taiwanese semiconductor chips, and Indian pharmaceuticals raise issues around trade stability. What will this domino effect do for regional alliances or trade flows? The Indo-Pacific plays a vast role in shaping contemporary world affairs and is often ignored in the realm of politics. Allowing open dialogue and novel discussion aggregates resources as well as amalgamates ongoing strategies.

An insightful work experience allowed me to deepen my knowledge of leveraging strategic partnerships to create a more interconnected political future within the Indo-Pacific. Aristotle once eloquently stated, “...The basis of a democratic state is liberty...” and undeniably intertwining liberty with equality paves the way for trust and cooperation between the EU and the Indo-Pacific.



EUIP PRIORITY: CONNECTIVITY

As one of the EU's priority areas in its Indo-Pacific Strategy, Connectivity represents a critical domain where success is necessary in order to ensure a secure, fair and prosperous Indo-Pacific.

In a January 2024 publication, the EU outlines the goal of Connectivity is “to promote sustainable connectivity for all and establish common standards”. Through this and the EU's actions in the area, the underlying goal of Connectivity as a priority area is to bring the EU and the Indo-Pacific together, both in metaphorical and empirical terms, providing a fair and equal playing field for sustainable social, economic and industrial development. This is to be achieved through the development of greater transport, energy and infrastructural links while also establishing common standards, all under the auspices of environmental, economic and social sustainability.

One of the members of the task force behind the EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy, the current Deputy Head of the EU Delegation to New Zealand, Zuzanna Bieniuk, said at the EUIP New Zealand sandpit that connectivity was designed as a priority area that links all the other six priority areas together.

Connectivity

to promote sustainable connectivity for all and establish common standards

- Comprehensive Air Transport Agreement between the EU and ASEAN;
- ASEAN Sustainable Connectivity Package spanning the transport, energy, digital, people-to-people, trade and economic , and connectivity sectors;
- Horizontal Agreement on air services between the EU and Japan;
- Increased partner access to Copernicus programme's earth observation data;
- Partnership on Sustainable Connectivity and Quality Infrastructure between the EU and Japan;
- EU-India Aviation Summit under the EU-India Connectivity Partnership;
- First High-Level Transport Dialogue with the Republic of Korea.



CONNECTIVITY IN PRACTICE: EU-ASEAN SUSTAINABLE CONNECTIVITY PACKAGE

This particular EU policy works in collaboration with its more central Global Gateway Programme and ASEAN as a partner and critical player in the Indo-Pacific with the ambitions of promoting regional inter-connectivity in skills and academia alongside collaborative EU-ASEAN research programmes and networks. Announced earlier this year, the programme is worth €9.3 million and runs up until January 2028, with a specific focus on the Green Transition, Blue Economy and Digitalisation, linking closely with other priority areas of the Indo-Pacific Strategy. The EU and ASEAN identify three pillars of the strategy:

- Academic Mobility – focuses on capacity building within ASEAN academic institutions by encouraging and facilitating dialogue to share successful practices. Comparability studies with the EU will also be conducted as an opportunity for learning and improving frameworks with the ambition of creating a more robust educational environment and enhancing qualification recognition.
- University Network – seeks to improve research connectivity and networking between institutions in the EU and ASEAN with a focus on capacity building and networking for students and prioritisation of Green Transition, Blue Economy and Digitalisation research. Also features the introduction of thematic symposia and a mobility scheme for academics to foster greater inter-regional innovation.
- Vocational Network - aims to improve graduate employability through greater dialogue and connectivity between the private sector and educational institutions. Workshops, mentoring, graduate research and the development of an ‘ASEAN-wide Labour Market Insight’ website are all proposed to contribute to graduate employability, with a focus on sectors relating to the Green Transition and Digitalisation.

FOCAL LOCATION SPOTLIGHT: CHINA



2025 marks the golden anniversary of the official diplomatic relationship between the EU and China. In May 1975, the then European Economic Community (EEC, the predecessor of the European Union) established official tie, which added one more level of interaction between China and Europe apart from bilateral state-to-state relation with the EU member states.

Similar to most of the relationship with Asian partners, the EU's relation with China has begun with economic exchange, especially trade in goods. The first and second agreements between China and the EEC was both trade agreements (signed in 1978 and 1985 respectively). In 1980, the EEC granted China Generalised System of Preferences (GSP). The relationship was complemented by development and technological assistance from the European side to China, as well as numerous high official visits. The inter-parliamentary meeting between delegations of the European Parliament (EP) and of the National People's Congress began in 1980.

The relationship was further enhanced in 1988 when the European Commission and China opened diplomatic representation offices in Beijing and Brussels

respectively. Then, the 1989 Tiananmen incident had resulted in a temporary frozen relationship. The European Council Summit in Madrid decided to suspend all military contacts and arm sales with China. Shortly after, the European Council and EP decide to re-establish bilateral relations with China step by step. The beginning of the 1990s did not only witnessed drastic post-Cold War changes, but also a restoration of EC-China relationship. In 1992, the diplomatic visits resumed and the EC lifted the sanctions on China except the arm embargo. A re-normalisation to full-scale relationship took place in 1995 when EU announced its first strategy paper on China “A long-term policy for China-Europe relations”. The two sides also started the human right dialogue, to discuss divergence.

The decade between 1995 and 2005 witnessed close exchange between the EU and China, including active support of the EU on China’s accession to the WTO, the EU-China High-Education Program and annual China-EU Summit launched in 1997 and 1998 respectively. The two sides established a constructive partnership in 1998, which was upgraded to a bilateral comprehensive partnership in 2001, and then to the EU-China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in 2003. China issued its first-ever policy paper towards the EU in 2003, while the EU published “A maturing partnership: shared interests and challenges in EU-China relations”. Both sides continued to add substance to the partnership. In 2004, the EU welcomed China as the first ever non-EU member of its Galileo satellite navigation system project. After the EU’s historical eastern enlargement in May 2004, the EU became China’s largest trade partner especially as an export destination, while China was the Union’s second ranked trade partner, as well as the leading source of imports. The period between 2003 and 2005 in particular was considered as the “honeymoon” of the EU-China partnership.

On the other side of the same coin, soaring trade brought together increasing trade disputes. For instance, in 2005, the EU started imposing anti-dumping duties on Chinese textiles as well as other tariffs on a range of Chinese goods. The Chinese side protested against these decisions. The EU, however, was increasingly worried about a flood of Chinese exports and the growing trade imbalance favouring China. As the three figures from the [Eurostat](#) show, the EU has had deficits in the trade in goods with China but surpluses in service trade. The volume of service trade remains much smaller than that of goods, resulting in an overall trade deficit of the EU side.

In the political front, disagreements also appear in the mid-2000s. Due to the pressure from the US and the adoption of Anti-Secession Law by China in 2005, the EU decided to maintain the arms embargo. Moreover, China was excluded from the core technology parts of the Galileo project. In order to enhance communication and resolve dispute diplomatically, the EU-China High Level Economic and Trade Dialogue was established in 2008. After a change in leadership, the then new European leaders hardened their criticism against China's human rights situation. In December 2008 former French President Sarkozy, who held the then EU rotating presidency, met the Dalai Lama. In response, China, for the first time ever, cancelled the scheduled annual bilateral summit.

The outbreak of the Global Financial Crisis in 2008 underscored the strong mutual need between the EU and China, two of the three largest economies in the world. The lingering impacts of the financial crisis and the then outbreak of the Eurozone sovereign debt crisis prompted the two to re-focus their bilateral agenda on pragmatic cooperation around economic issues. The EU-China High Level Strategic Dialogue was established in 2010. Both sides agreed on joint efforts to boost bilateral relations. They set 2011 as the EU-China Year of Youth and 2012 as EU-China Year of Intercultural Dialogue. The EU-China High Level People-to-People Dialogue was also launched in 2012. In addition, the mechanism of Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries (CEEC) was launched in 2012.

With willingness and efforts to sustain good tie, conflicts namely China's opposition against the EU's unilateral airliner carbon tax in 2011, the EU's anti-dumping and anti-subsidy duties on solar panel from China in 2012 and 2013, and disagreement about the arms embargo and China's market economy status, were managed to settled diplomatically between the two sides. In 2013, the EU and China celebrated the 10th anniversary of the bilateral strategic partnership in 2013 and issued the China-EU 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation. The annual bilateral summit of this year also reached agreement to launch negotiations on a bilateral investment treaty, so as to foster economic exchange beyond trade in goods.

In 2014, the visit of President Xi Jinping to Brussels marked the first Chinese President's official visit to the headquarter of the EU. His trip brought together China's second policy paper on the EU "Deepen China-EU Comprehensive Strategic

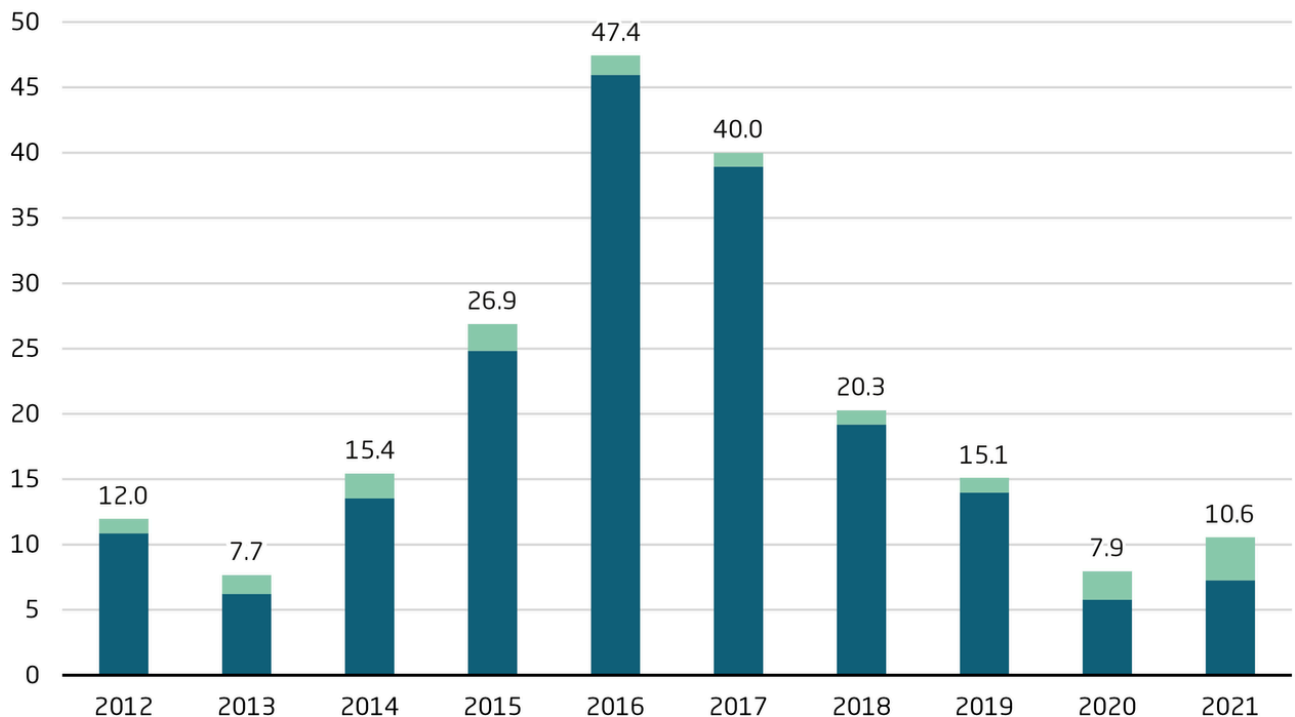
Partnership for Mutual Benefit & Win-win Cooperation”. 2014 marked an addition watershed that China’s outward investment in the EU surpassed the FDI it received from the EU and continued so until 2017. As shown in these figures, China’s FDI to the EU peaked in 2016.



China’s FDI into Europe remains stuck at low levels

Annual value of completed transactions in Europe, in EUR billion

■ M&A ■ Greenfield



The mounting investment and goods flow from China to the EU have again caused conflicts. As China has been rapidly advancing its role in the global value-added chain, the complementary trade relation witnessed some competition which caused unease in the EU side. There was also a rising unease in the EU side on “unfair” regulations and treatment on the EU companies investing in China. It was accompanied by a growth of populism and anti-globalisation worldwide. The EU demanded China repeatedly for reciprocity and a level-playing field. For the first time, the two sides did not manage to reach a joint statement in the 18th annual summit in 2016. No joint was published either in the 19th summit in 2017. The growing strategic competition between China and the US added also pressure on the EU-China relationship.

In December 2018, China published its third (and the most recent) policy paper on the EU to reiterate its insistence in deepening the relationship with the EU. The response from the Union was the “EU-China - A strategic outlook” released in March 2019 (also the most recent), which remarked China as simultaneously a cooperation partner, a negotiation partner, an economic competitor and a systemic rival. Also in 2019, the EU established a framework for the screening of foreign direct investments, in which investment from China was an unsaid target. Beijing government has repeatedly opposed the new tripartite definition of the EU-China relationship, insisting pragmatism and cooperation as the core of the bilateral relation. The outbreak of COVID19, in early 2020, hindered exchanges and political trust between the EU and China. Despite that the annual summit could only be conducted online, it marked the signature of the EU-China Agreement on Geographic Indications and the creation of the China-EU High-level Digital Cooperation Dialogue. The decade, eventually, concluded with the completion of negotiations of the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI) on 30th December 2020.

Instead of a smooth ratification of the CAI, 2021 witnessed deterioration of the EU-China relationship. First, after losing the British market in Brexit, the EU no longer held the place as the biggest trade partner of China. It was replaced by the ASEAN, while China remains the Union’s second largest trade partner. In March 2021, the EU, alongside the US, the UK and Canada, imposed sanctions on China over Xinjiang human rights issues. China promptly responded with counter-sanction. Such exchange of sanctions is unprecedented. Subsequently, the European Parliament issued a resolution to halt the ratification process of the EU-

China CAI. No annual summit took place that year. The outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war February 2022 and the global geo-political shift kept China and the EU further aloof. Neither of the two most recent EU-China summit (23rd and 24th) in 2022 and 2023 achieved a joint statement. Voices calling for de-coupling or de-risking from China appeared in the EU side, which caused strong opposition in China.

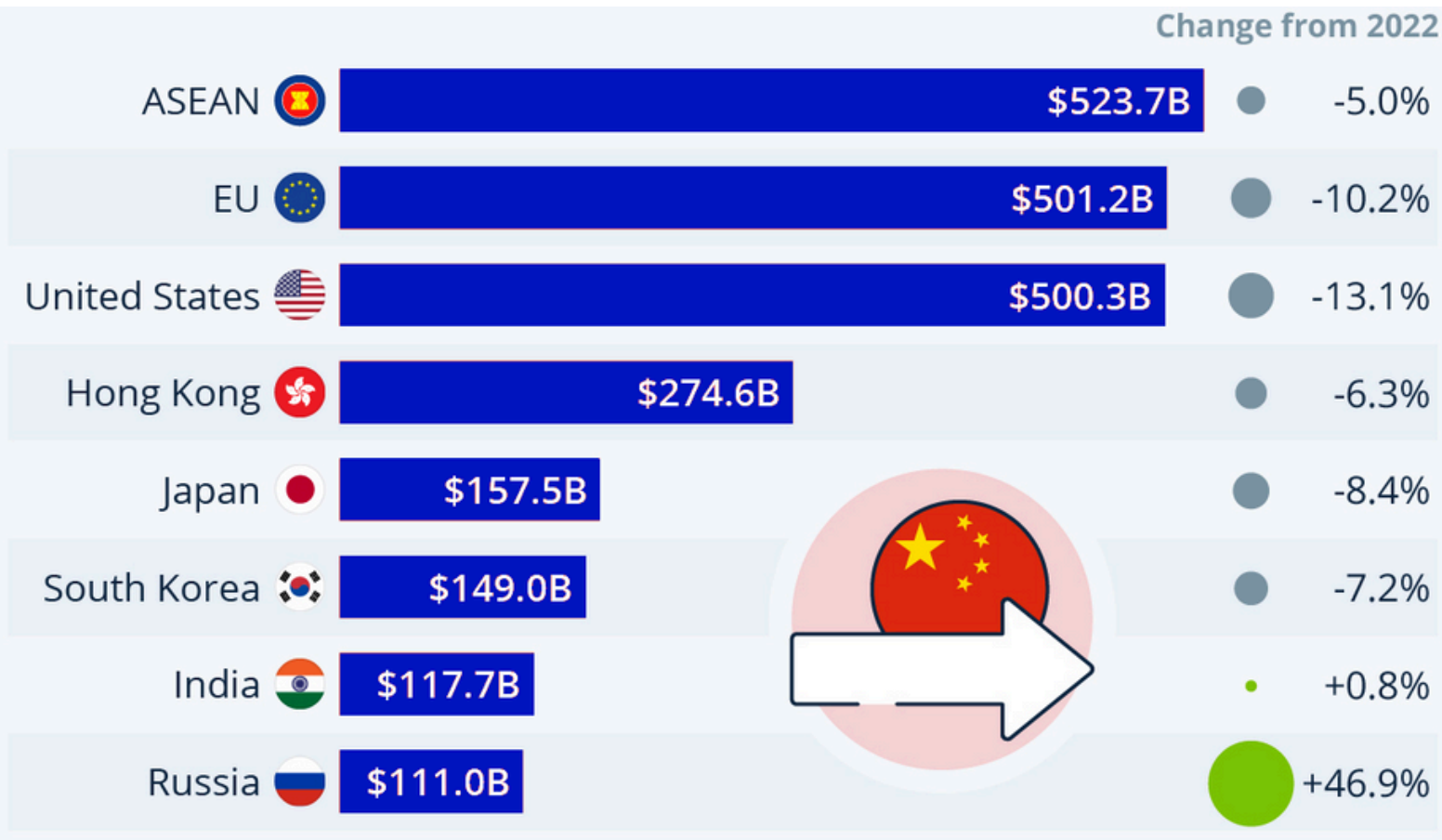
In late 2023, the European Commission initiated an anti-subsidy investigation on electric vehicles exported by China, which led to countervailing duties on Chinese battery electric vehicles exporting producers for five years, announced in October 2024. Meanwhile, the two sides have been undertaking negotiations on an agreed exported price to replace the countervailing duties.

Despite these challenges, the two sides recognise the essentiality of cooperation in green transition and global fight against climate change, especially when the US repeatedly withdrew from the Paris Agreement. The EU-China High-level Environment and Climate Dialogue was launched in 2021 and has taken place five times already until present. This green leg has made the dialogue and cooperation mechanism between the EU and China more comprehensive.

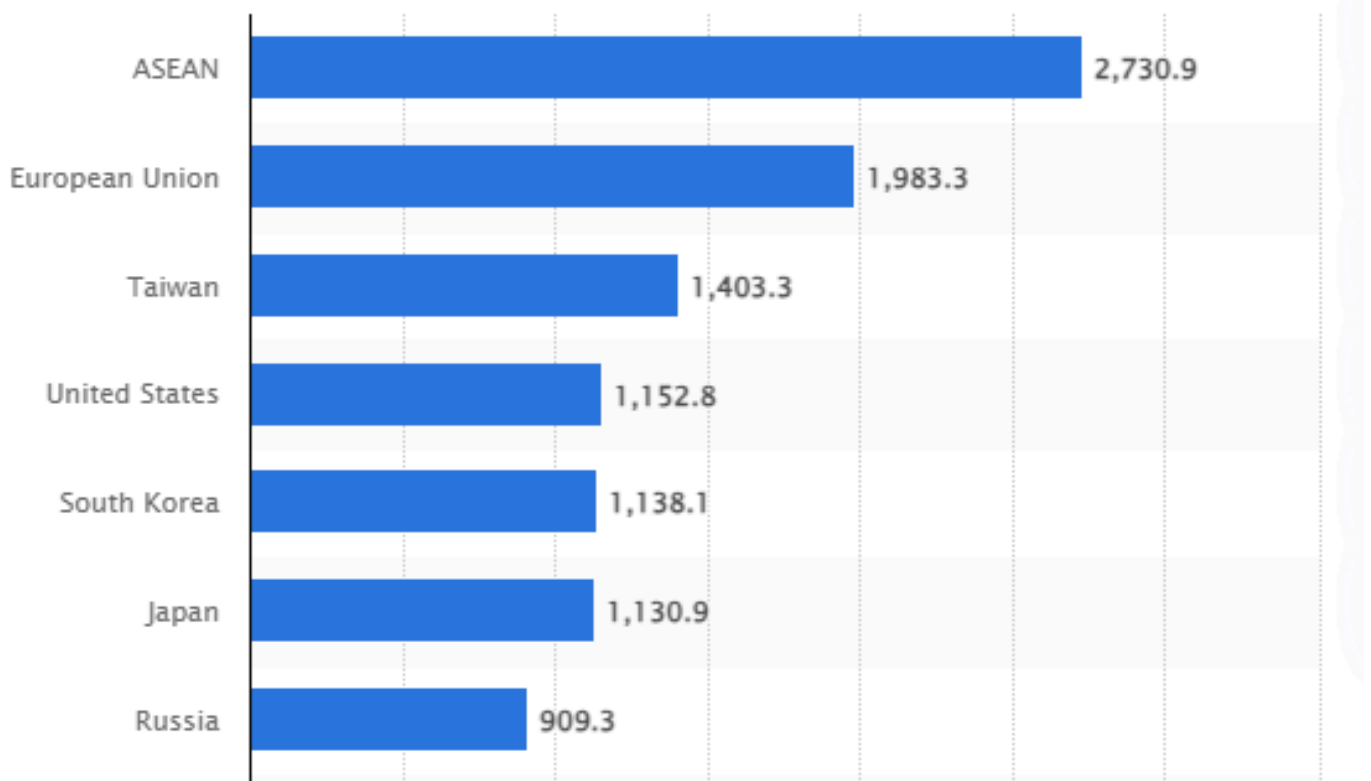


CHINA'S TWO-WAY TRADE

EXPORTS

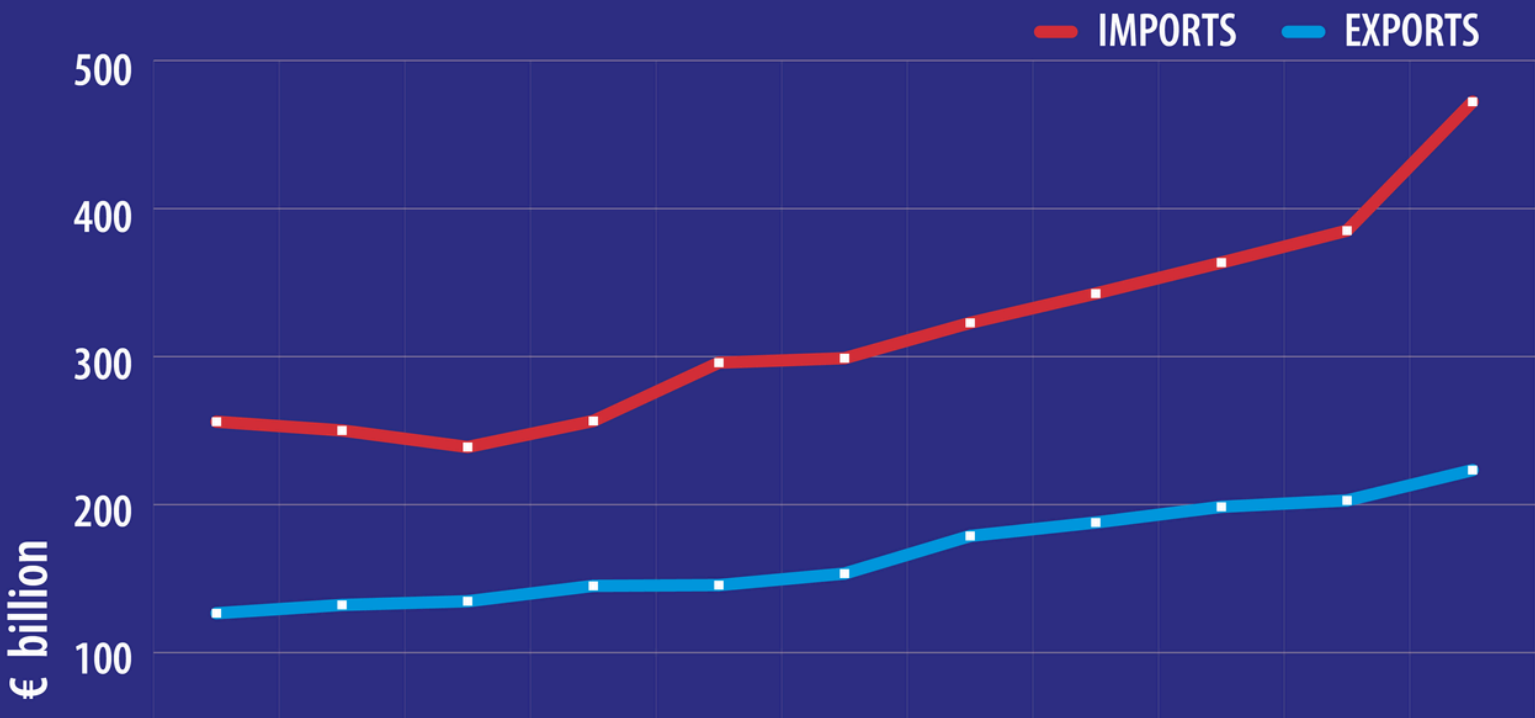


IMPORTS

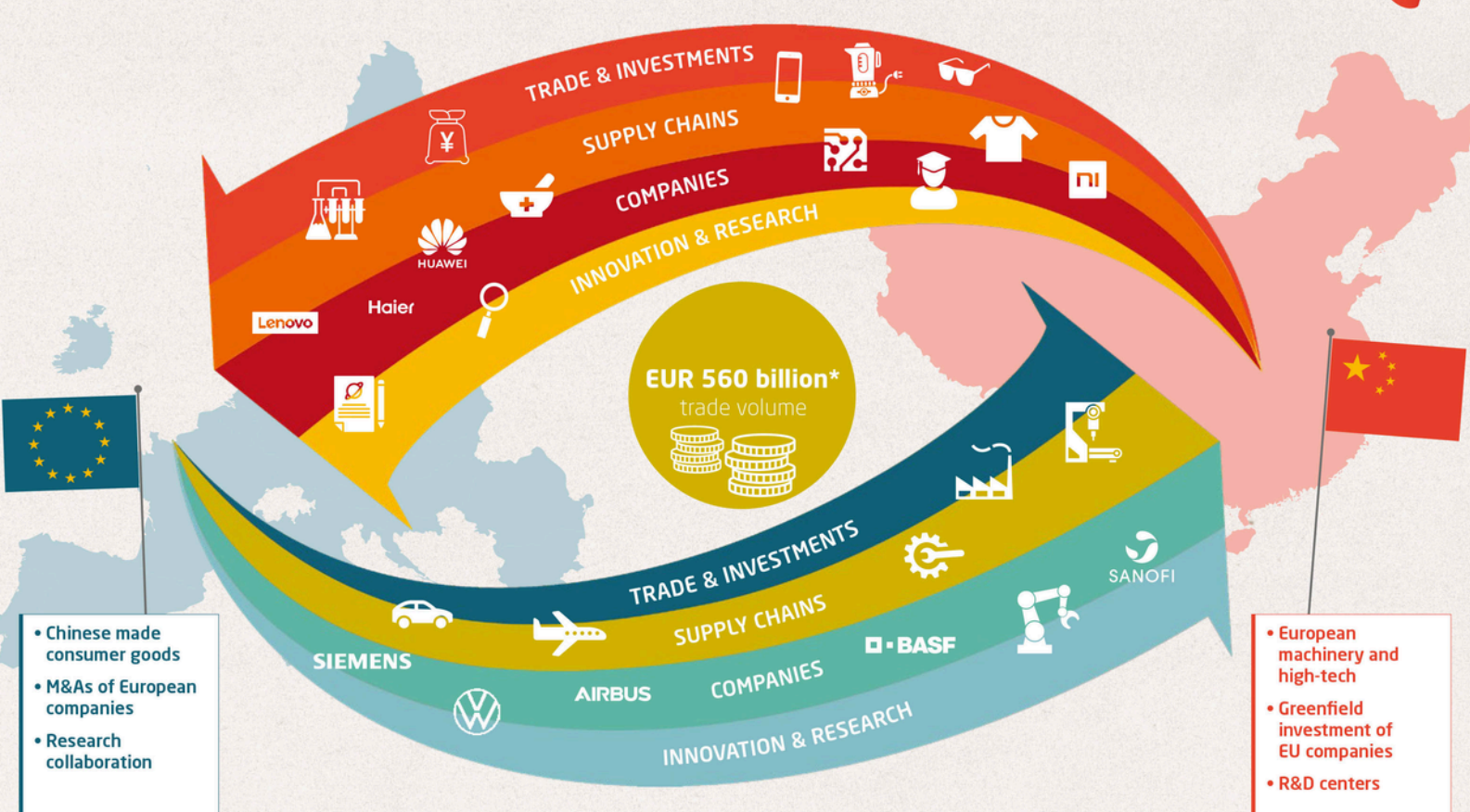


EU-CHINA TRADE

EU trade in goods with China, 2011-2021



Beyond just trade
EU-China relations are as deep as they are broad



*Source: Eurostat

THE CHINA RESEARCH TEAM



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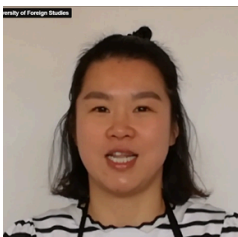
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CHINA AND THE EU IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

In 2024, the mainland China team completed 23 in-depth interviews with key-informants in China’s foreign policy and relations with Europe. Among various images of the EU, the Chinese interviewees acknowledged the most with the success of the European Integration project and Normative Power Europe (regulation and norm setting influence of the EU). The EU’s economic power and regulatory power were affirmed but Chinese interviewees were reserved about the Union’s capability in military and security terms. Particularly in Indo-Pacific, they showed low recognition of EU’s importance and pointed out that the US, Japan and China itself would be the key players in the Indo-Pacific. The EU’s issuing of its Indo-Pacific Strategy in 2021 was viewed as making little impact.

Focusing on the bilateral EU-China relationship. The interviewees showed pessimism the current EU-China relations, naming the EU’s accusation of China for overcapacity and subsidy in its products namely EVs (electronic vehicles) as well as the European Commission’s policy in de-coupling and de-risking as obstacles. Still, the Chinese interviewees rated the EU as one of China’s important partners, While the average score of the EU was 4.3 (out of 5), the Chinese interviewees rated the US as 4.9 which was clearly higher than the EU.

Wordcloud: three leading images of the EU in the mind of Chinese interviewees



RECENT OUTPUTS FROM PROJECT MEMBERS

Journal articles

Sugiono, Muhadi, and Nurina Aulia Haris. 2025. "The Normative Power of Europe? Indonesian Perspective of the EU." *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, doi:10.1080/14782804.2025.2472630.

Park, Sunghoon, and Sae Won Chung. 2025. "The Global Actorness of the EU Seen from the Korean Media and Elites: A Capability-Expectations Gap or an Expectations Deficit?" *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, doi:10.1080/14782804.2025.2458668.

Kelly, Serena, Brittany Baugh, and Paul Bacon. 2024. "Examining EU Action and Actorness through External Perceptions: A Comparative Study of Asian Media Coverage." *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, doi:10.1080/14782804.2024.2441151.

Weil, Steffi (Stefanie), Joern-Carsten Gottwald, and Markus Taube. 2024. "The European Union, Taiwan, and the Silicon Shield Argument: A Conceptual Assessment through the Lens of Grand Theories." *European Politics and Society*, doi:10.1080/23745118.2024.2417028.

Smith, Nicholas Ross. 2024. "The End of New Zealand's "Asymmetrical Hedge"? Assessing New Zealand's Indo-Pacific Outlook Post-Ardern." *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs* 7, no. 7: 77-92.

Commentaries

Smith, Nicholas Ross. 2025. "New Zealand need not fear China's growing ties with Pacific nations". *South China Morning Post*.

Smith, Nicholas Ross. 2025. "Trump and Vance: American Wolf Warriors", *Global Policy*.

Gottwald, Joern-Carsten. and Markus Taube. 2024. "Education and Connectivity: China's Li'an International Education Innovation Pilot Zone", *CEAC Policy Brief Series*,

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

2025 EUSAAP Conference - Macau

*The EU, its Policies and Relations
in Times of Transitions*

CALL for papers

Closing

Sunday, 30 March 2025

Conference Date

*Sunday and Monday,
8 - 9 June 2025, Macau*

Venue

University of Macau

details



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Joint organisers



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