

Chinese Views of EU: Key Policy Implications

**EC Directorate-General of Research
Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) Project**

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**EUROPEAN
COMMISSION**



**SEVENTH FRAMEWORK
PROGRAMME**



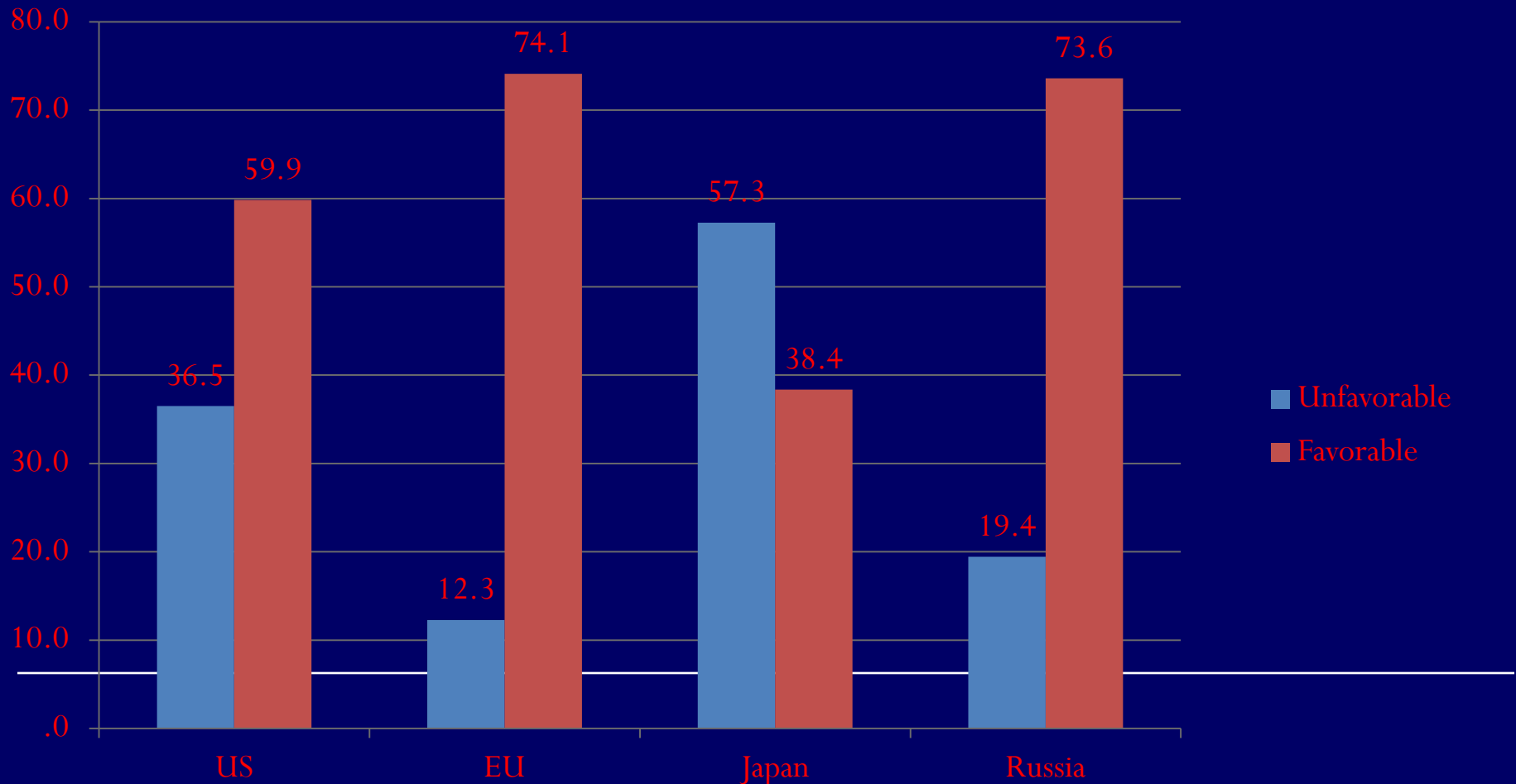
Multiple methods: May-Aug 2010

- 3,000 questionnaire surveys of residents in six cities
- 200 surveys of five elite groups: government officials, media workers, business people, intellectuals, NGO activists
- Interviews with these elite members
- Focus Group discussions in six cities
- History textbook analysis, media content analysis

Affect towards the EU



Favorable or unfavorable impression of the US, the EU, Japan, and Russia.



EU in the World



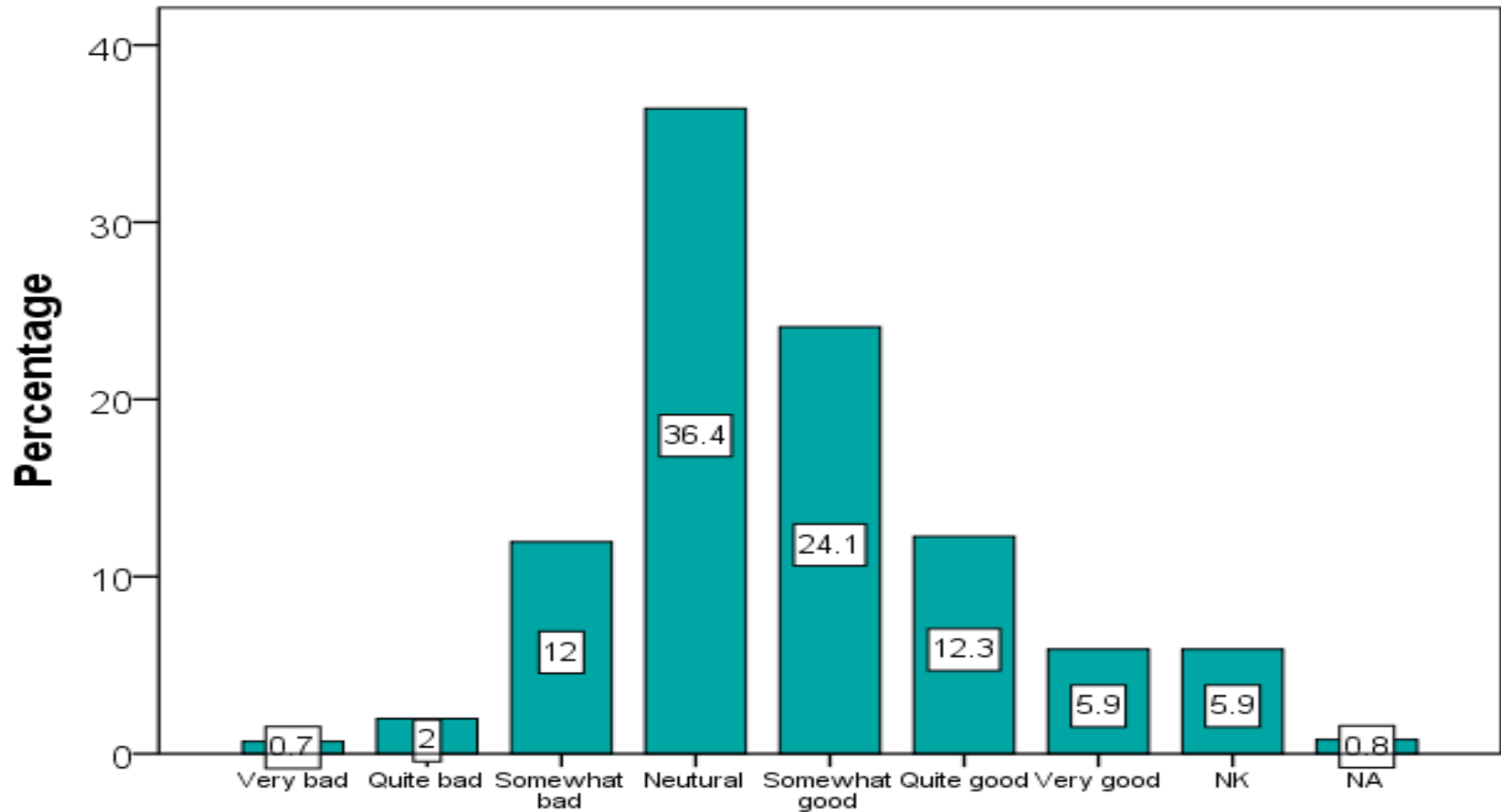
- Attitudes towards the EU's role regarding international issues (percentage)

| | Positive | Negative | It depends | Do not know | No answer |
|----------------------------------|----------|----------|------------|-------------|-----------|
| Peace in the world | 69.8 | 8.3 | 12.0 | 8.7 | 1.3 |
| The international economy | 75.4 | 5.8 | 9.2 | 8.0 | 1.6 |
| Protection of the environment | 81.6 | 3.6 | 6.5 | 7.0 | 1.4 |
| Scientific progress | 85.2 | 1.9 | 5.1 | 6.4 | 1.5 |
| Fighting poverty in the world | 62.2 | 10.5 | 13.2 | 12.3 | 1.9 |
| Fighting international terrorism | 62.9 | 10.3 | 12.3 | 12.2 | 2.2 |

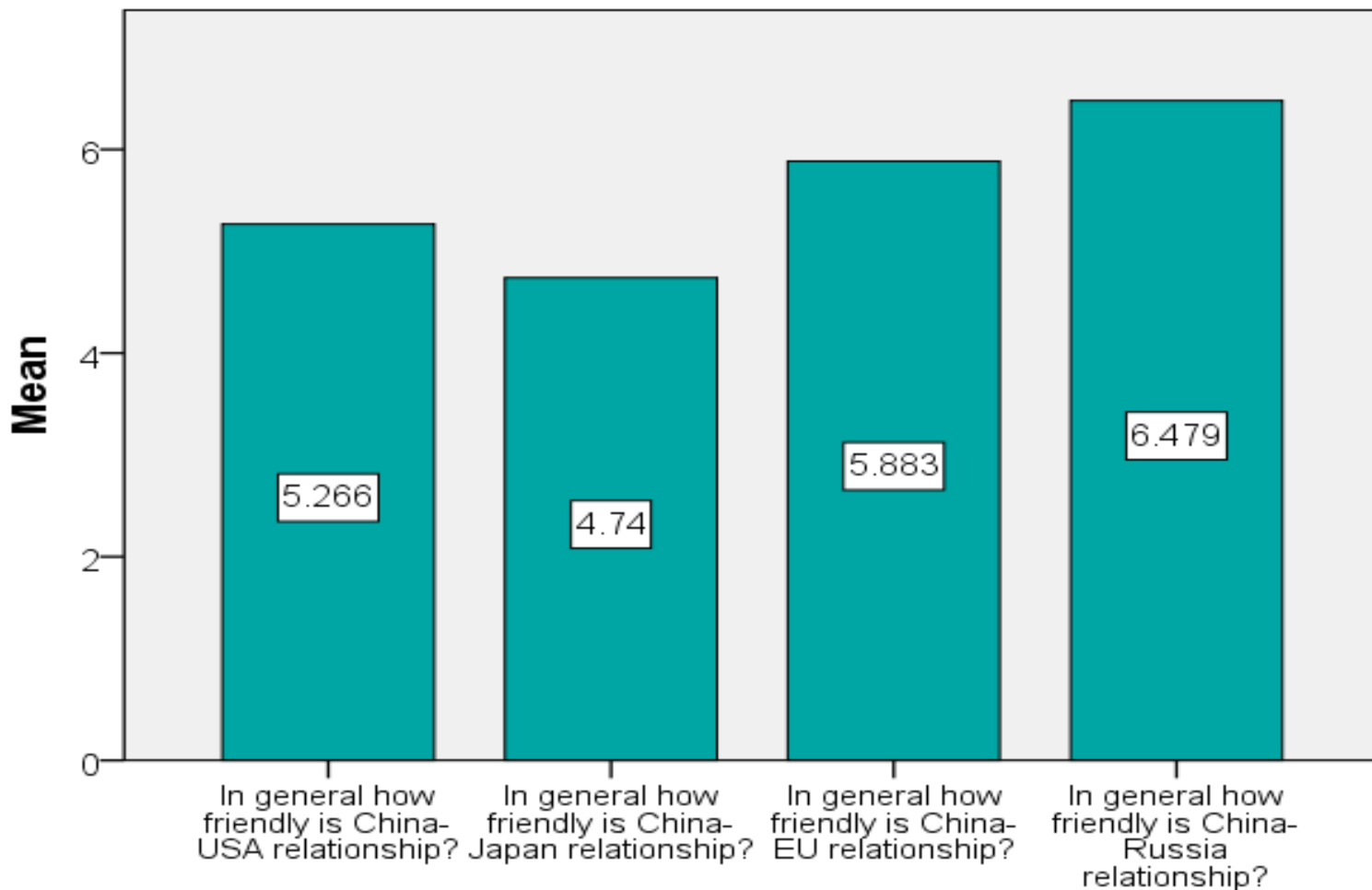
China and the EU



Do you think in general, China-EU relationship at the moment is good or bad?



China and the world



Some Key Findings



- Chinese people think more favourably about EU than the US or Japan
- Only 42% think EU-China relations good, although 46% cautiously optimistic about relations in future
- 55 - 82% were positive towards European ideas of democracy
- Main controversial issues human rights and Tibet
- Weak knowledge of EU overall



Opinions of Chinese Government Officials on the EU

- Over 80% have a good impression of the EU, better than of the US, Japan and Russia
 - Most assess the EU's international influence as positive.
 - Most see the EU's concept of democracy and the spreading of European culture in China as positive
 - Most are unhappy with the EU's stance on climate change, about pressure for the appreciation of the RMB and the EU's stance on human rights
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Opinions of Chinese Government Officials on the EU

- ❑ Most say they lack knowledge on the EU's role in fighting poverty and international terrorism.
 - ❑ Most officials confirm the importance of EU-China cooperation in international affairs.
 - ❑ Most officials say they need to improve their understanding and study of the EU's democratic politics.
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Views of Elites on Most Controversial Questions

- Government officials, scholars, media practitioners and civil society activists surveyed.
 - Human rights and Tibet are the most controversial issues overall in the EU-China relationship
 - For officials, human rights, different political systems and Tibet are the most controversial issues.
 - For scholars, intellectual property, human rights and the environment are the most controversial issues
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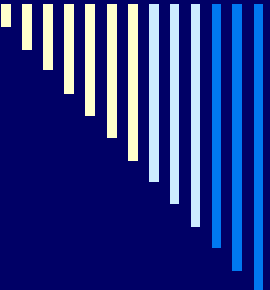
Views of Elites on Most Controversial Questions

- For media practitioners and civil society activists, human rights, Tibet and a different stance on international affairs are the most controversial issues.
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Focus Group Interviews

- Focus Group Interviews can be a useful amplifier of survey results, with caveats
 - FGIs were held in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Nanning in Southwest and Xian in Northwest.
 - Weak knowledge and little attention paid to EU
 - Timing: April – July 2010; responses showed impact of 2008 Tibet crisis and European protests at Olympic Torch rallies
 - Europeans seen as civilised, of high integrity, law-abiding, innovative but also arrogant, stingy
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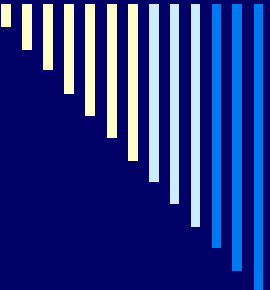
Focus Groups - the Negatives

- Reveal much more negative view on the controversial issues than the surveys
 - Sensitivity towards EU anti-China demonstrations, criticisms on human rights and Tibet
 - Europeans seen as having superiority complex, looking down on China.
 - Feel Europeans misunderstand them
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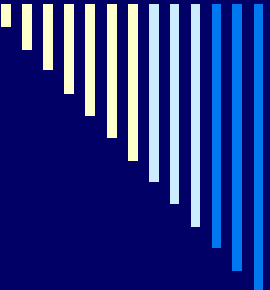
Quotes from Focus Groups

- “Once EU is mentioned, I am immediately reminded of Sarkozy’s meeting with the Dalai Lama”
 - “I had a good impression before, and now I realise they dislike us”
 - “Europeans misunderstand us”
 - “I originally thought the China-France relationship was friendly, or at least not hostile. But the Olympic torch- grabbing events made me suddenly discover French dislike of China. This made me feel shocked.”
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Focus Group – Key Messages

- ❑ EU should not try to impose its own human rights standards on China
 - ❑ Values are often seen as universal, but tend to be prioritised differently
 - ❑ Questioned European motives over Tibet
 - ❑ China still in nation-building phase, and national unity is seen as sacrosanct.
 - ❑ Han Chinese get very upset when Europeans show sympathy for self-determination in Tibet.
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Focus Groups – Key Messages

- ❑ “It’s China’s turn to be hard-line”
 - ❑ China should be on guard against EU (i.e. perceived aggressiveness of Europeans)
 - ❑ China can sometimes concede on interests, but should “never compromise on national dignity”.
 - ❑ This “Cognitive Dissonance” can bring fragility to China-EU relationship and result in pressure on Government to be more hard-line
 - ❑ Important for EU side to understand these views even if we disagree with them
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Key Policy Implications



- EU has huge reservoir of goodwill in China, including, perhaps surprisingly, among officials, despite differences over human rights and democracy
 - The more people know about the EU, the more positively they view it.
 - EU has opportunity to build on its strong soft power base to further improve relations, and to develop a “smart power” approach.
 - Environment, education and culture, civil society development and the internet are major opportunities for the EU to develop closer relations
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Policy Implications – Caveat

- Important to acknowledge that the EU has already implemented a huge range of China-related policy initiatives on a broad range of issues from climate change to the rule of law, from trade to education and culture and civil society.
 - Assessing the effectiveness of EU policies in China was not within the remit of this research project.
 - Our research has implications for a number of areas where the EU could act to further improve and develop its China policies
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The Controversial Issues

- TRUST is important element of affect/liking/respect
 - Perceived Aggressiveness is important for Trust
 - Direct public criticism of China can backfire in terms of trust and affect
 - EU seen as “normative power” – wanting to change China and teach China. This not always liked and can have consequences if approached in the wrong way
 - Megaphone diplomacy can be unproductive
 - On the controversial issues, EU Institutions may want to assess how their own understanding of these differs from Chinese perceptions, and examine the policy options.
 - The EU could benefit from examining why these issues are so controversial in China.
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The Controversial Issues

- EU can leverage its soft-power and considerable goodwill in China to develop a “smart power” approach on the controversial issues, if pursued sensitively.
 - Democracy in Europe is viewed positively, and there is a desire to study it more closely, for whatever reason. The EU has an opportunity to respond to this.
 - On the promotion of democracy and human rights, the EU will benefit from adopting the role of friendly helper and partner rather than that of teacher
 - EU would benefit from expanding programmes that work quietly behind the scenes with Chinese partners on e.g. rule of law, death penalty, use of torture, prison visiting etc that exchange best practice information in a low-key way
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Public Diplomacy Opportunity

- The EU should take note that government officials are generally more positive about it than the Chinese general public
 - The EU could intensify its public information policy in China in a targeted way with an integrated communications strategy, clear measurable goals, prioritized actions and a suitable budget.
 - Internet strategy needed to target the young
 - Different groups should be targeted separately
 - Regional differences between richer east and poorer western China
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Environment Opportunity

- ❑ EU environment work seen as positive but largely invisible in Chinese media
 - ❑ Surveys show not so controversial, though some business concerns about competitiveness
 - ❑ Major opportunity to boost image of EU as a tough and effective environmental actor
 - ❑ Strong public support for strengthening China-EU collaboration
 - ❑ Climate change policies have to take into account level of development
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Environment Opportunity

- Export of pollution a big issue: Some EU firms perceived as behaving worse in China than back home because regulations are less strict
 - EU could encourage its business community to show that show that it works to same tough standards in China as it does in Europe, boosting corporate social responsibility
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Development of Civil Society

- Major opportunity to help China build its civil society despite Chinese Communist Party sensitivity over this
 - EU could further expand its programmes despite this sensitivity, by aligning projects tactically to Chinese objectives
 - European NGOs may be encouraged to focus on China, taking into account China's special conditions and the role of the state, and the interweaving of state and society.
 - EU NGOs could help Chinese civil society develop capacity, in a non-politicised way.
 - EU should take into account the different nature of Chinese NGOs: -- "GONGOs" -- but they still worthy of support
 - More research needed into Chinese civil society development
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Education and Culture

- Opportunity to boost mutual understanding between young people.
 - More cultural channels needed: European films etc
 - Cooperation between teachers and academics on text books and curricula – two-way street
 - Initiatives such as history camps for students
 - Establish a China-EU Young Leaders Training Programme under which groups of young officials from China would attend intensive three-month summer courses in Europe on the history and origins of European thought, and ideas, policies, institutions, and practices promoted by EU.
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Asymmetry – Opportunities to Improve Relations at EU end

- Weak knowledge of China in Europe
 - Imbalance of interest
 - The EU could review its way of receiving Chinese delegations to boost knowledge about the EU
 - Evidence that Chinese business people who visit Europe go home with less liking than before they came.
 - The EU could expand programmes to improve China knowledge among Europeans , e.g.
 - Young Leaders Training Programme for Europeans about China
 - Support for China Studies programmes
 - Support for school exchanges
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