

INFORMATION NOTE

Subject: Sectoral cooperation between the EU and China

Summary

Sectoral cooperation with China has experienced a very **rapid growth** over the last five years. From the 17 areas of cooperation covered in 2004, bilateral cooperation has expanded to cover in a more detailed and specialised manner more than 50 areas.

This process has been demand-led and has mirrored the rapid development of our bilateral trade and economic relations, particularly since China joined the WTO in 2001, a process that has been accompanied by a simultaneous deepening and strengthening of bilateral political relations, particularly since the EU and China agreed a strategic partnership in 2003.

The sectoral dialogues have helped to develop a solid foundation for the EU-China relationship, which is now characterised by increasingly close policy co-ordination in many important areas.

The dialogues constitute an **effective tool for further widening and deepening EU relations with China**, for exploring new areas of common interest and for exchanging know-how and, especially in the area of economic reform.

EU-China dialogues report to the EU-China Joint Committee, and ultimately, to the annual EU-China Summit. Since 2007 two additional high-level mechanisms have been established:

- **A High Level Economic and Trade Dialogue**
- **A High Level Strategic Dialogue**

Most of the dialogues that had started before 2004 have gradually expanded the scope of their cooperation. This has been the case, for instance, in the following fields:

- **Customs cooperation**, where the mutual assistance agreement signed in 2004 has paved the way for cooperation not only on intellectual property rights enforcement issues, as mentioned above, but also on container security, where a pilot project is underway; and on drug precursors, where a bilateral agreement was signed in January 2009 with the aim of jointly preventing the diversion and trafficking of drug precursors in international trade;
- **Education and culture**: cooperation was for some years focused on the Erasmus Mundus programme (launched in 2004) and its China Window. Since 2007 cooperation has expanded into areas such as Education and Vocational Training and multilingualism. A policy dialogue on culture was launched in 2009 during the first ever EU-China Cultural Industries Forum, which took place in Shenzhen (China). Upcoming activities in this field include the “high level forum on culture” in the margins of the EU-China summit in 2010 and the Europe-China Year of Youth in 2011.

- **Environment:** the dialogue has been driven by bi-annual work-plans and paved the way for the Bilateral Coordination Mechanism on Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG), signed on 30 January 2009, whose objective is to contribute to the reduction of illegal logging and associated trade globally.
- **Regional Policy:** since initial contacts took place at the end of 2004, this dialogue has provided a basis for sharing EU experiences in developing and implementing its regional policy, governance and partnership issues and other related topics. It examines in particular how regional policy can stimulate economic growth in regions which are lagging behind and help narrow income disparities.

In addition to further expanding and deepening the cooperation in traditional fields, policy makers on both sides have sought to address the new kinds of issues that have arisen as a result of our growing trade and economic relations. **Consumer protection** is a case in point, but also environmental concerns and civil society considerations. Other areas include:

- **Employment and Social Affairs:** the cooperation in this field has greatly developed since the signature at the 2005 Summit of the MoU on Labour, Employment and Social affairs, with the signature in 2009 of an MoU on Health and Safety at Work, which will first look at the pressing problem safety in the coalmine sector in China.
- **Civil Society:** The Economic and Social Committee established relations with the Chinese Economic and Social Council since its creation, in 2001. The 2006 Summit encouraged the establishment of a regular Round Table to contribute to the enrichment and development of the EU-China strategic partnership and charged both bodies with setting it up. Since 2007, they have met twice a year.

Other important dialogues include, for example:

- **nuclear energy**
- **economic and financial issues**
- **trade dialogues**
- **Political and human rights dialogues**