

## EU-China: Actions speak louder than words

Written by Luliu Winkler MEP on 10 April 2019 in Opinion  
Opinion

China's ambitions as a player in shaping international trade need to be matched with concrete efforts, argues Luliu Winkler.



Luliu Winkler | *Photo credit: European Parliament Audiovisual*

---

The complex dynamics of global shifts and realignments have intensified in recent years. Likewise, trade-related tensions and the volatility of international markets have led to considerable uncertainty.

It is a matter of interpretation as to whether we are at the incipient stage of a trade war, or whether we have already passed that stage into full-blown commercial conflict.

In addition, over the last two years, the White House has displayed an increasingly erratic and fickle attitude, as the Administration's Twitter-based approach to politics are contributing to the high levels of unpredictability on the global arena.

---

## RELATED CONTENT

- [China is an opportunity for our market, but its growing influence in the EU is a source of concern, says David Martin MEP](#) [1]
  - [Group of MEPs throw weight behind EU-Taiwan trade agreement](#) [2]
  - [Parliament's trade legislation: A look back and moving forward](#) [3]
  - [Freedom of religion in China: Silence is not golden](#) [4]
  - [Flourishing trade is bringing Ukraine and EU closer together](#) [5]
- 

The world is certainly in a state of constant change. Against this backdrop, however, one of the most stable elements in recent years has been the increasing level of consistency in the rhetoric governing relationships between the EU and China.

In the various communications and official meetings in both Brussels and Beijing, the political messages too often follow the same templates. These overemphasise the importance of win-win solutions, coupled with efforts to bring reciprocity and a level playing field in the commercial and investment relationship.

Ambitious statements call for advancing negotiations on the investment agreement; there are pleas from European businesses on their non-discriminatory treatment on the Chinese market, with augmented efforts to protect them in the cyber realm as well as guarding their intellectual property rights.

European appeals are always met with Chinese reassurances and promises that the structural elements lying behind the EU's concerns will see a swift remedy. The reality, however, is different, acting as a constant reminder of the distance between words and deeds.

The political promises from Beijing rarely match the facts on the ground. In the preparations for the 21st EU China Summit on 9 April 2019, it is my firm belief that we need to send our Chinese partners a blunt message: "The time to act is now."

"In the various communications and official meetings in both Brussels and Beijing, the political messages too often follow the same templates"

The various commitments repeated so many times over the years by the Chinese government ought to be finally lived up to, with concrete action now needed on China's part. In this context, the Commission's strategic outlook for EU-China relations has become representative of a changing European mood.

This continues to place cooperation at the heart of its external action toolbox. However, it is gradually becoming more assertive in standing up for core European interests and values. In order to preserve a cooperative attitude at all levels, it is vital that the pace of delivering concrete progress accelerates.

It is equally imperative, in the light of efforts to build up mutual trust, that our work begins to bear fruit. A key area for cooperation which, in my opinion, has the greatest potential to bring positive results, is the area of trade.

As Vice-Chair of the International Trade Committee and Standing Rapporteur for EU-China trade and investment relations, I salute the Commission and the High Representative's Joint Communication on the ten possible avenues for improving the bilateral relationship with our Chinese partners.

Of all of them, I am particularly keen to see progress on the fifth point: Technology transfers and opaque state intervention through subsidies. These indeed remain fundamental problems where we want to see a proactive approach on the Chinese side to tackle them.

While acknowledging the complexities of the investment agreement, it is curious that we are still not able to finalise negotiations on the Geographical Indications agreement.

“The political promises from Beijing rarely match the facts on the ground”

Geopolitical and linked strategic calculations are certainly at play here; however, should the relationship seek a more mutually-beneficial future, it is here that one of the first steps has to be taken.

Trust can only be built through concrete action, something both sides need to bear in mind. On a global level, our cooperation on the multilateral aspects remains of key importance. With this in mind, working together to find solutions for the systemic shortcomings of the WTO is a vital pillar of international collaboration.

China has to decide its position on the global level, including its WTO status. For too long, China's convenient oscillation between the statuses of developing and developed country have caused inequitable interactions.

When discussing geopolitics, China assumes an ever-more active global role, with ambitions to contribute to efforts designed to reshape the global order, and with it the desire to exert greater influence in international relations. This comes with responsibilities.

Therefore, the desire to define global development through the WTO needs to be supported through a responsible attitude by China on the international scene, worthy of the notable progress and economic growth in the country over the last two decades.

Only through such sincere cooperation can the EU Chinese relationship become truly and mutually beneficial.

### **About the author**

Iuliu Winkler (RO, EPP) rapporteur of the China agreement in connection with the WTO dispute settlement proceedings

### **Tags**

[US-EU](#) [6]

[Trade](#) [7]

[Foreign Affairs](#) [8]

### **Categories**

[Business and industry](#) [9]

[EU-Africa](#) [10]

[International Relations](#) [11]



## Site Sections

- [Home](#)
- [Content](#)
- [Policy](#)
- [Magazines](#)
- [PM+](#)
- [Thought Leader](#)
- [Climate Crisis](#)
- [Editorial Calendar](#)
- [Policy Events](#)
- [Event Coverage](#)
- [MEP Awards 2020](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

## Services

[Dods PeopleDods](#)  
[MonitoringDods](#)  
[ResearchDods](#)  
[EventsDods](#)  
[Training](#)

## Media & publishing titles

[Politics HomeThe](#)  
[HouseThe](#)  
[Parliament](#)  
[MagazineHolyrood](#)  
[Total PoliticsPublic](#)  
[Affairs NewsCivil](#)  
[Service](#)  
[World](#)  
[PublicTechnology](#)  
[Training](#)  
[JournalDods](#)  
[Parliamentary](#)  
[CompanionVacher's](#)  
[Quarterly The](#)  
[European Union and](#)  
[Public Affairs](#)  
[Directory](#)

## **Dods events**

[Westminster](#)  
[Briefing Digital](#)  
[Health & Care](#)  
[Scotland MEP](#)  
[Awards The Skills](#)  
[Summit Scottish](#)  
[Public Service](#)  
[Awards Public Sector](#)  
[Procurement](#)  
[Summit Public](#)  
[Sector ICT](#)  
[Summit Cyber](#)  
[Security](#)  
[Summit Cyber](#)  
[Security](#)  
[2017 Training](#)  
[Journal Awards](#)

## **Partnership events**

[The Health and](#)  
[Care Innovation](#)  
[Expo Civil Service](#)  
[Live Civil Service](#)  
[Awards Chief](#)  
[Nursing Officer for](#)  
[England's](#)  
[Summit Women into](#)  
[Leadership The](#)  
[Youth Justice](#)  
[Convention Socitm](#)  
[Spring](#)  
[Conference NHSCC](#)  
[Annual Members'](#)  
[Event Dods at Party](#)  
[Conference](#)

---

**Source URL:** <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/opinion/actions-speak-louder-words-0>

**Links**

- [1] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/opinion/proceed-caution>
- [2] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/group-meps-throw-weight-behind-eu-taiwan-trade-agreement>
- [3] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/opinion/parliament%E2%80%99s-trade-legislation-look-back-and-moving-forward>
- [4] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/opinion/freedom-religion-china-silence-not-golden>
- [5] [https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/partner\\_article/deputy-prime-minister-ukraine/flourishing-trade-bringing-ukraine-and-eu](https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/partner_article/deputy-prime-minister-ukraine/flourishing-trade-bringing-ukraine-and-eu)
- [6] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/tags/us-eu>
- [7] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/tags/trade>
- [8] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/tags/foreign-affairs>
- [9] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/categories/business-and-industry>
- [10] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/categories/eu-africa>
- [11] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/categories/international-relations>