

## EU-China relations

Even before the EU's 2019 'EU-China strategic outlook' defined China as a partner, competitor and systemic rival, China's behaviour had become more assertive, not only in terms of domestic security and economic policies, but also in its posture at international level. The Parliament is set to debate and vote on an own-initiative report on EU-China relations. The plenary debate follows the EU-China Summit planned for 7-8 December in Beijing.

### Background

In 2019, the EU [defined China](#) as a partner, competitor and systemic rival. Since then, and as state intervention by China's authorities increases, the EU has adopted a number of measures (including the [foreign investment screening mechanism](#), the [foreign subsidies regulation](#), the [international procurement instrument](#) and the [anti-coercion instrument](#)) to improve its economic security and ensure a level playing-field for EU businesses. At the same time, however, the EU's bilateral [trade deficit](#) with China increased from €154.7 billion in 2018 to €396 billion in 2022. China's foreign policy has become increasingly assertive, with ongoing attempts to change the rules-based international order accompanying rising domestic authoritarianism. China's [ambiguous position](#) on Russia's war on Ukraine, combined with the rising EU trade deficit with China, increasingly leads the EU to emphasise China's role as a competitor and systemic rival. Recently, the EU has also been [focusing](#) on China's disinformation activities regarding Russia's war in Ukraine. At the same time, the EU recognises that partnering with China is essential to tackle global challenges like climate change, pandemic preparedness or debt relief and increasingly global security.

### European Parliament positions past and present

Parliament has repeatedly criticised the human rights situation in China: through its [resolution of 19 June 2020](#), Parliament reacted swiftly to China's national security law for Hong Kong, and stressed the need for the EU 'to defend Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy'. In its [resolution of 21 January 2021](#), Parliament reiterated its call for the 'immediate and unconditional release of all peaceful Hong Kong protesters arrested in recent years'. Regarding Xinjiang, a [resolution of 9 June 2022](#) 'condemned ... the fact that the Uyghur community ... has been systematically oppressed by brutal measures, including mass deportation, political indoctrination, family separation, restrictions on religious freedom, [and] cultural destruction ...'. As far as Tibet is concerned, in its [18 April 2019 resolution](#), Parliament 'criticised in particular that the Chinese Government had been engaging in relentless attacks against Tibetan identity and culture'; Parliament also condemned the arbitrary detentions, acts of torture and ill-treatment in the region. Parliament has also repeatedly commented on developments regarding Taiwan, most recently in its [resolution of 15 September 2022](#), in particular demanding the Chinese government refrain from any measures that could destabilise the Taiwan Strait and regional security.

Reaffirming these positions, the report adopted by Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) on 16 November 2023, also stresses China's responsibility, as a member of the United Nations Security Council, not to circumvent sanctions against Russia, to pressure Russia to stop its war against Ukraine and to commit to peak its CO<sub>2</sub> emissions before 2030. The report calls for UN investigation into human rights violations in China, Taiwan's participation in certain international organisations, inclusion of MEPs in the Human Rights Dialogue with China, EU Member States' suspension of their extradition treaties with China and Hong Kong and the de-risking of trade flows. The report also calls for an EEAS 'Far-East StratCom Task Force' to fight disinformation originating in China.

Own-initiative report [2023/2127\(INI\)](#); Committee responsible: AFET; Rapporteur: Hilde Vautmans (Renew, Belgium)

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