



## **China Links Meeting – 7 December 2011**

### **Mobility of European researchers to China**

#### **Meeting Report\***

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#### **1) Event**

On December 7, 2011, the Science, Technology and Environment section of the Delegation of the European Union to China held, in collaboration with EURAXESS Links China, a meeting to discuss with stakeholders based in China the practicalities of **how to increase in volume and improve in quality the mobility of EU researchers to China**.

The meeting was organized in three discussion sessions introduced by European and Chinese speakers and then opened to all participants who asked questions, expressed views and recommendations.

#### **2) Participants**

The meeting attracted over 90 participants, mainly European researchers from all fields working in China, representatives of European and Chinese research and funding institutions, staff of Member States embassies working on research and scientific cooperation.

#### **3) Meeting's main content**

##### **Introduction session**

The meeting started with welcoming words from Dr. Philippe Vialatte, head of the Science, Technology and Environment section. Dr. Philippe Vialatte and Mr. Jacques de Soyres, Euraxess Links China information officer, introduced the [\*Funding Guide for European Researchers in China\*](#), which

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\* *The information contained in this report is a summary of the main views and suggestions expressed by participants during the meeting. It should not be taken in any way to reflect the views of the European Commission, nor of the Delegation of the European Union to China.*



was prepared in collaboration with the Member States of the European Union and research funding agencies. The brochure [\*IPR in China: Guidance for Researchers\*](#) was also presented.

### **Discussion session 1: Encouraging more EU researchers to come to China**

The lead speakers of this session were:

- Mrs. Yang XinYu, Deputy Secretary General of the Chinese Scholarship Council, the organisation under the Chinese Ministry of Education in charge of most of the students and researchers' mobility programmes in China;
- Prof. Lu RongKai, Deputy Director General of the Bureau of International Cooperation, Natural Science Foundation of China, the main basic research funding agency in China;
- Mr. Stefan Hase-Bergen, Director of the German Academic Exchange Service - DAAD Beijing Office;
- Dr. Kate Woodcock, research in psychology at Peking University and currently the only Marie Curie Fellow based in China.

The session was moderated by Mr. Kari Hiltunen, Head of the National Technology Agency of Finland (Tekes) Beijing office.

#### **Overview of the current situation:**

- The number of European researchers in China is very low, the majority of those here are for short-term research projects and few stay in China for longer periods of research. This contrasts with high numbers of Chinese researchers in Europe where they are likely to stay longer to carry out both PhD studies and sometimes take up academic careers.
- Chinese funding organizations are keen to attract foreign researchers to come to China and have recently developed schemes with attractive grants (NSFC scheme example).
- Many research institutions at the regional or provincial level in China, while not having specific schemes targeted at European researchers' mobility, may welcome foreign cooperation and provide funding opportunities for such cooperation.
- China's economy and research capacity are growing; European researchers should grasp the opportunities offered by the Chinese research system and market opportunities.
- The under-estimation of China as a valuable research destination and of the possible benefits for EU researchers to come to China is still widespread in the European academic and research world (more than in the US).
- The main reasons why European researchers are attracted to China are **resources** (natural, human, financial and in infrastructures, allowing them to carry out their research), scientific excellence in certain fields (in others, the lack of excellence remains an obstacle to mobility) and cultural interest. Family situation (e.g. Chinese spouse) is sometimes a reason for European researchers wanting to stay in China.



- China in some aspects is like the "wild-west" of research, a land of opportunities due to a less rigid research system allowing for decisions to be taken rapidly, a pragmatic and sometimes bold approach to risk-taking, large and growing financial resources, large human and natural resources and research infrastructures.
- Research staff in China tends to receive rather low salaries which reflects an imbalance compared with strong investments in top-notch equipment.

#### Main challenges:

- A key-challenge is the low profile of China as a research destination, and the lack of knowledge of China and of the quality of its research system among European researchers.
- Communication to promote themselves efficiently on the international scene remains a major challenge for many Chinese research institutions.
- Salaries for research staff in China are low compared with the level European researchers are accustomed to, and therefore additional funding is needed.
- Funding, quality and access to information are challenges for researchers in social sciences and humanities.
- Research staff salaries in China are usually lower than in Europe.
- The level of bureaucracy in the research system in China is an obstacle to mobility, in particular the difficulty to obtain visas (complicated visa rules for short and long term stays in China).

#### Main recommendations:

- Informing better European researchers about China, its research capacity and its research opportunities mainly linked to the vast resources of the country (natural, human, financial, infrastructures, etc.) would contribute to raising China's profile in S&T, with a particular emphasis on the access to resources open to researchers here.
- As Chinese research institutions are starting to become more proactive in communicating about their capacity and openness for international cooperation, a joint Sino-European approach should be encouraged whenever possible in this communication work.
- Funding for European researchers to come to China needs to be efficient and adapted to the reality researchers face in China, therefore targeted and **flexible** schemes should be developed.
- European research funding organizations schemes should be jointly implemented with Chinese institutions to establish larger and more efficient schemes.
- Joint-PhDs or even simple co-tutored PhDs (a supervisor in Europe and one in China when the PhD student comes over) are a good way to encourage mobility to China as has been experienced through schemes launched by Member States such as France and Germany.



- Exposure to China at the undergraduate level (e.g. through short-term visits) could have positive results in attracting more European researchers to China later on.
- Promotion by China of its research capacity and its opportunities for international cooperation would be well received among the European research community.\*
- Scientific symposia organized in China could be more systematically open to foreign researchers and be more proactively used by Chinese researchers to increase the attractiveness of China as a research destination.
- Better financial remuneration and working conditions as well as the possibility to participate as PI (not possible in many current schemes) might help to increase the attractiveness of Chinese funding schemes to foreigners.
- The difficulty often encountered by foreign researchers to obtain long-term visas in China should be addressed (via, for example, a similar system to the scientific visa system set up by the EU for non-European researchers).

## **Discussion session 2: Achieve a better integration of European researchers in China**

The lead speakers of this session were:

- Dr. Olivier Martineau-Huynh, French Director of the France-China Particle Physics Laboratory in Beijing;
- Prof. Chen Chun Ying, professor at the Laboratory for Biological Effects of Nanomaterials and Nanosafety, National Center for Nanoscience and Technology, CAS;
- Prof. Andrew Godfrey, professor at Tsinghua University, Department of Materials Science and Engineering.

The session was moderated by Prof. David G. Evans, State Key Laboratory of Chemical Resource Engineering, Beijing University of Chemical Technology and HRD Expert of the STF China programme funded by the European Commission.

### **Overview of the current situation:**

- Different approaches and methods to research funding in Europe and in China can make it difficult for European researchers to find appropriate funding in China, in particular for small innovative projects. Funding is often streamlined to big projects addressing the strategic needs of the country.
- Foreign researchers able to set big projects addressing China's strategic needs may be able to obtain funding and develop their research in China.
- Integration in and communication with the Chinese hosting institution are often challenging.

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\* Green color indicates recommendations of relevance to Chinese policy-makers



- Language and communication problems between European researchers and researchers in their hosting institution in China can be overcome. It requires a strong commitment for the visiting European researchers but also for the Chinese hosting researchers.
- Postdocs may have a lower status in China compared with many European countries.
- European researchers should consider how they can promote their activities and careers in the Chinese system in order to gain value from the experience.

#### Main challenges:

- Communication with Chinese partners/co-workers/interlocutors in general (due to language and, even more, cultural differences).
- Understanding the way the Chinese research system works and extracting value as a foreign researcher wishing to develop professionally.

#### Main recommendations:

- European researchers should take steps to understand the main challenges they may face and ways to overcome them when working in China.
- A platform with information-sharing, based on the intelligence and expertise accumulated by experienced European researchers in China could be set up.
- In order to better integrate, European researchers should insist on the skills and expertise they can offer to their host institution.
- European researchers might need to use networks (including students' networks to help solve daily issues).
- The delegation of the European Union should be more present throughout China (via regional offices in other cities than Beijing and by organizing more activities outside of Beijing).
- **China's academic system may consider ways to encourage foreign talents to stay longer in China.**
- **A platform for Chinese research institutions to share best practices in attracting and dealing with foreign researchers would be a useful tool.**

### **Discussion session 3: Valorize the careers of European researchers with a research experience in China**

The lead speakers of this session were:

- Dr. Ulrike Tagscherer, Associate professor and Project Manager for International Cooperation at the Institute of Policy Management in CAS, as well as researcher at the Fraunhofer Institute for Systems and Innovation Research, ISI, Karlsruhe);
- Dr. Cedric Larricq, working within the R&D center of COMAC, the Chinese civil plane maker, and who was previously doing a postdoc at Tsinghua University, part of it under a NSFC grant;
- Mr. Josef Reinhard Wählen, Senior Director of Public Affairs Department at Huawei company.



The session was moderated by Mrs. Annette Nijs - Executive Director Global Initiative of the China Europe International Business School (CEIBS).

Overview of the current situation:

- China offers interesting resources that might be attracting researchers to come to China but it is difficult for foreign researchers to develop a career in China.
- It seems relatively easy in China to jump from the academic sector to the industrial sector.
- Chinese universities seem more willing to collaborate with industry and private companies in China than in Europe.
- European researchers with a solid experience in China are very valid candidates for working for European companies in China because many of these companies lack an understanding of the country.
- Chinese companies are improving their hiring conditions to attract more foreign talents, in particular for senior positions.

Main challenge:

- The Chinese research and academic system is still largely closed or opaque for foreigners looking to develop a long-term career within it (for administrative, structural reasons such as low salaries, language, cultural reasons etc.).

Main recommendations:

- Raising awareness of the opportunities for European researchers with experience in China to move between the academic and the business sector should be encouraged.
- European researchers could gain value from their experience in China by:
  - o Establishing links with European companies looking for staff enabling them to tap in the Chinese technology market;
  - o Developing links with Chinese companies increasingly looking for highly qualified staff to develop their R&D capacity in China and in the West.

#### **4) Dinner to mark the 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of EURAXESS Links China**

The meeting was followed with a dinner offered by the European Union Delegation to China Science, Technology and Environment section to all the participants. Mrs. Carmen Cano, Deputy Head of the European Union Delegation to China gave a welcoming speech and formally launched the [Funding Guide for European Researchers in China](#) and the [IPR in China: Guidance for Researchers](#). The dinner went in a very convivial fashion.