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The EU, China and Central Asia: Global and Regional Cooperation in A New Era

Bruges, Belgium, 7-8 June 2018

CALL FOR PAPERS

[The Brussels Academy for China and European Studies \(BACES\)](#) in collaboration with the [United Nations University Institute on Comparative Regional Integration Studies \(UNU-CRIS\)](#) invites proposals for participation in the workshop “The EU, China and Central Asia: Global and Regional Cooperation in A New Era”, which will be held on **7 - 8 June** at UNU-CRIS in **Bruges**, Belgium.

Theme:

Both China and the European Union (EU) have positioned themselves in Central Asia as leading actors in trade, investment and development aid, as well as significant political partners. China, in particular, while initially even more absent in the region than the EU, has made a remarkable rise in Central Asia over the last fifteen years, up to the point where it is now the region's main donor and investor. Emblematic for this rise was the announcement by Chinese president, Xi Jinping, of China's plans for a Silk Road Economic Belt during his 10-day tour through Central Asia in 2013. Embedded within the so-called Belt and Road Initiative, the Silk Road Economic Belt is a major investment initiative aimed at expanding transport and energy corridors, connectivity and establishing new transport links between Asia and Europe. Despite China's efforts at enhancing connectivity across Central Asia and despite both China and the EU sharing the goal of maintaining the stability and enhancing the resilience of the Central Asian countries, so far, both actors have been engaging in Central Asia separately from each other.

As the EU is currently reconsidering its strategy for Central Asia and is contemplating how to further strengthen its cooperation with the Central Asian states, now is an opportune time to reflect on how the EU could develop relations with China as part of its attempts to contribute to the sustainable development of Central Asia. Analysts have already suggested that China's focus on hard infrastructure coupled with the EU's focus on soft infrastructure could offer a potentially powerful cooperative base for the further development of the region. At the same time, they have also pointed out that there are substantial challenges for possible EU-China cooperation.

The overall aim of the workshop is to take stock of the existing involvement of the EU and China in Central Asia and critically assess potential areas for collaboration and synergy between the EU and China. In particular, the workshop seeks to find out to what extent there is a common ground between the EU and China in Central Asia that could serve as a base for long-term cooperation, able to contribute to the sustainable development of the region.

The workshop will start with a keynote speech on “Opportunities for cooperation between the EU and China in Central Asia” by H.E. Mr Peter Burian, EU Special Representative for Central Asia. This will be followed by parallel sessions on different topics related to the broader theme. The workshop will end with a plenary session in which the main discussion points of the parallel sessions will be presented.

The workshop welcomes contributions on the following topics:

- Common and conflicting interests of the EU and China in Central Asia
- Possible areas of cooperation between the EU and China in Central Asia (connectivity initiatives, governance reforms, border management, ...)
- Obstacles and challenges for EU-China cooperation in Central Asia
- Possible involvement of the EU in the Belt and Road Initiative
- Role of EU member states in the Belt and Road Initiative
- European, Chinese and Central Asian perspectives on the Belt and Road Initiative
- European, Chinese and Central Asian visions of development
- Impact of the EU and China in Central Asia

Submission and deadlines:

Interested paper-givers should submit an abstract (max. 300 words) online at www.cris.unu.edu/baces-workshop by **16 March, 23:59 CET**. Notification of acceptance will be sent by 30 March. The deadline for submitting full papers is 24 May.

Costs:

Participation in the workshop is free. Accepted paper-givers are expected to make their own arrangements for transport. There is no funding available to cover travel expenses, but paper-givers will be offered free accommodation on the night of 7 June. UNU-CRIS can provide an invitation letter for visas.

Preliminary programme:

7 June 2018	
12:00 - 13:00	Sandwich lunch
13:00 - 14:00	Keynote speech by H.E. Mr Peter Burian, EU Special Representative for Central Asia: "Opportunities for cooperation between the EU and China in Central Asia"
14:00 - 16:00	Breakout session 1
16:00 - 16:30	Coffee break
16:30 - 18:30	Breakout session 2
19:00 - 21:00	Workshop dinner (paper-givers only)
8 June 2018	
09:00 - 11:00	Breakout session 3
11:00 - 11:30	Coffee break
11:30 - 12:30	Plenary session: summary of breakout sessions and conclusion

About BACES:

The Brussels Academy for China and European Studies (BACES) is an academic platform initiated by four founding universities: Renmin University of China, Sichuan University, Fudan University and Vrije Universiteit Brussel. BACES was officially established on 31 March 2014. Ghent University became partner of BACES on 1 February 2016.

BACES is a platform for exchanging academic ideas, supporting academic activities and for promoting understanding between Chinese and European people. The Academy is mandated to carry out activities in the field of post-initial education, research, academic services including policy advice, and is supported by scholarship schemes. BACES acts as a critical think tank in support of the High-Level People-to-People Dialogue. The platform performs research on issues of contemporary China and the EU.