



## **RESPECT Policy Brief**

### **EU's cooperative approach with China for sustainable development**

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#### **1. Introduction**

The EU has long been concerned about sustainable development in China. This pre-occupation refers to two NTPOs (non-trade policy objectives): the 'green' pillar consisting of environmental policies and those pursuing the mitigation of climate change, and the 'social' pillar of internationally recognised labour standards in ILO core Conventions and the accomplishment and sound implementation of adequate social protection for its citizens, in particular workers. Our research in the RESPECT project has focused on how and how effectively EU/China cooperation with respect to these NTPOs has been over a period of some 25 years, without having a bilateral FTA in place.

Our work covers a long time span, some 25 years since the mid-1990s. Initially, the cooperation (and trade policy where relevant) with China was mainly development-oriented for both pillars, but this began to change once the EU and China concluded the Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership in 2003. Ever since, China and the EU usually worked via Dialogues, at ministerial level as well as with annual Summits, in which joint programming was decided. They spawned several series of projects (some, very large), applied programmes, working groups, exchanges and action plans with significant funding for a period of nearly two decades, and in energy even longer. This long-run working relationship avoided a legalistic approach with enforceable standards and/or targets set in FTAs or otherwise. Nevertheless,

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the EU and China have worked fairly consistently on sustained progress in both pillars, and frequently in operational, technical and practical terms rather than mere declaratory statements. However, this does not mean that the two partners did not enter commitments. Thus, in the green pillar both partners adhered, with ratification, to no less than 12 MEAs and related Protocols and Amendments. This is far more than the specific MEAs referred to in EU FTAs, even though China and the EU have never concluded a FTA together. In the social pillar the situation is more complicated and also less satisfactory. The leading multilateral set of commitments are ILO Conventions, and in particular the eight core Conventions. But China has not ratified four of these eight. Moreover, there are no international legal commitments for social protection, except for some aspects (in other ILO conventions), although this field has been effectively broadened via more encompassing ILO Declarations, for example (to which some FTAs refer).

There is another critical difference between the green and the social pillar : whereas the green pillar generates major negative cross-border or global externalities (mostly, via global warming but selectively also with air and water pollution; and positively with forestation if large enough), this is basically not the case for the social pillar, unless one is willing to argue that poverty risks and neglect of OSH (occupational safety & health) distort the level-playing field in trade and investment by avoiding significant labour costs when exporting. However, if one would support the level-playing field argument, this may also apply to the green pillar when observing a strong avoidance of the cost of 'clean' production. The level-playing field argument has not played a significant role in EU/China trade relations when it would have been best applicable, that is when China was still a relatively poor developing country. However, China is now an upper middle income country and the argument is much less plausible insofar as sustainable development is concerned, because – as we show – today's China has significantly increased (costly) social protection and invested in stricter green laws as well as their (more) credible enforcement.

We understand 'coherence' of external policies with respect to sustainable development as the coherence of EU trade and investment policies vis a vis China with the pursuit, if possible jointly with China, of sustainable development in China. It is possible, especially recently – but only in the green pillar – that the EU can actually improve or be stimulated *by China* in the area of green technologies such as renewables, e-vehicles and some of its components. For most aspects, however, 'coherence' should be read as the pursuit of EU values – such as sustainable development – via EU trade and investment policies *and* the accompanying EU-China cooperation. In the case of EU/China, the combination of EU trade policy and very elaborate and active cooperation is truly unique. The underlying papers by Hu (2021) and Hu & Pelkmans (2020) demonstrate this in considerable detail. This uniqueness is reflected in the sheer quantity of EU/China Dialogues (some 68 !, with 50 or so on economic and trade-related issues, including sustainable development) but also in the consistency and continuity over time since the Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership began. Many of these Dialogues or activities create bilateral working relationships and this is often – although not always, for example when issues are sensitive - generating a degree of trust and recognition. In turn, this can often lead to better and more tangible results. And such results may inspire further cooperation.

The typical EU cooperative approach to sustainable development in external policies has never been practiced with other trading partners anywhere near to the same extent as with China. More activities and greater efforts do not necessarily produce better results, of course. In Hu & Pelkmans (2020) we show that, selectively, the great efforts of pursuing a multiple set of goals via many EU/China Dialogues have paid off. Our detailed research on the EU cooperative approach in promoting sustainable development with and mainly in China has culminated in two lengthy papers focussing respectively on the green pillar (Pelkmans, 2021) and the social pillar (Hu & Pelkmans, 2021). In some respects these papers have a common foundation, to wit, in order to establish more accurately what exactly the EU preferences in values under the heading of ‘sustainable development’ are, we rely on an ambitious FTA – the EPA with Japan, ch. 16 – and itemise both for ‘green’ and for ‘social’ what provisions can be found. This high standard of sustainable development is used for inspecting EU/China cooperation in this area, conscious of the fact that the EU and China do not have a FTA together and that China is not yet, although close to, a developed country.

The research has been conducted on the basis of three research questions for each one of the two pillars. In the green pillar, we query whether and to what extent respectively the *indicators* in and subsequently the *policies* of China reveal a process of convergence. This is followed by a third research question, also central to the RESPECT project more generally, whether EU trade policy and cooperation vis a vis China with respect to sustainable development systematically pursued the ‘green’ NTPOs since the late 1990s and whether this pursuit has been effective in supporting a process of convergence.

In the social pillar, we query first whether China has addressed, when transforming to a market economy, the respect for international labour standards and began building up a system of social protection based on individual entitlements (which never existed before in China). Subsequently, we ask whether one can observe a process of convergence in policies, laws and entitlements with respect to labour standards and social protection between China and the EU over the period 2000 – 2020. Subsequently, we answer the third question, whether EU trade policy and cooperation on sustainable development vis a vis China has systematically pursued the NPTOs of labour standards and social protection since around 2000 and whether this pursuit has been effective in supporting a process of convergence.

## **2. Do ‘green’ indicators reveal convergence between China and the EU?**

The first research question is whether and to what extent *indicators* reveal that China and the EU converge in terms of environment and climate mitigation. The relevant period is from 1995 to 2020. The answer to this double query has to start with the *initial deterioration* in China of practically all indicators of environment and climate. The sharp contrast with the EU in the first decade or 15 years of this period, or for e.g. GHGs even longer, amounts to a clear divergence, not convergence. At least for some years and in the climate realm for most of the period, indicators were worsening despite (1) EU/China cooperation, projects, programmes, transfer of technology (e.g. CDM under Kyoto) and Dialogues, and (2) increasingly firm Chinese policy intentions and strategies. One explanation is paramount: exceptional Chinese economic growth ‘at all costs’, driven by the desire to move the country towards developed economy status and the determination to lift hundreds of millions out of extreme poverty first. Indeed,

there was no such thing as ‘linear convergence’ in indicators, not at all. The pattern seemed more like a U-curve. Initially divergent trends changed over time in a complicated fashion, dependent on the type of environmental issue. In other words, China began to converge *only after* first letting both environment and climate issues go out of hand.

This deterioration or slippage differed between aspects and between the two main classes of policy: climate and environment. The by far worst performance was linked to the use of coal. The coal addiction seems to have been a conscious choice, presumably also influenced by industrial pressures as well as regional lobbying. The enormous negative externalities this caused over time, especially for human public health, not to speak of the broader costs to society both nationally and internationally, were first ignored and later treated with little more than lipservice. When interventionist policy became unavoidable, the options favoured were in the technological domain: end-of-pipe techniques such as filters for denitrification and desulpharization, and the aggressive development of renewables in electricity generation. What was carefully avoided for a long time was both the use of price instruments for coal (say, taxation or an ETS China style) and the quantitative restriction of coal output. The end-of-pipe techniques (first avoided because of the costs) have been successful recently, as far as they reach. They will not do for deep further cuts of SO<sub>2</sub> and NO<sub>x</sub> emissions. Moreover, the taboo on taxation and on the rise of coal prices has finally been removed. Forms of pricing of negative externalities and cuts of coal output are bound to be the only truly effective routes to live up to the Paris Agreement commitments in the longer run. Nevertheless, in climate policies, indicators for CO<sub>2</sub> and some other GHGs (e.g., ozone) begin to show declining growth, but still growth despite the already extremely high level. The peak in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions has not been reached yet. China’s insistence that carbon intensity is falling rapidly should be acknowledged but is little consolation when CO<sub>2</sub> emissions – already the largest in the world – are still increasing. Air pollution is close to the worst in the world and only improved since 2013 – 2015. Water standards slowly begin to improve as well, be it still too selectively. Water pollution has been ignored or belittled for a very long time, although investments in infrastructure and new legislation and better enforcement helped somewhat. Waste is now being addressing more effectively, after recent serious investments in treatment.

On the other hand, China is very active in sustained reforestation, with strong results, and in the swift expansion in renewables, meanwhile generating some 15 % of electricity in 2020. In electric vehicles and lithium batteries it has become a world leader. Expansion in nuclear energy also helps to support climate policies.

Therefore, on the basis of the indicators dealt with so far it is premature to conclude that *indicators* show convincingly a trend towards convergence between the EU and China. One can observe that China has stopped initially divergent trends and *bent them into a converging direction* but a firm conclusion would need still more recent data and clear targets for 2025 or 2030 that are actually met. The most recent indicators should also be read in conjunction with the transformation of China’s strategies and policies, which is what the second research question is about.

### 3. Did China address the social dimension of its shift towards a market economy?

With respect to the ILO core conventions, the answer is simple: China has not ratified four of the eight core conventions and only very recently showed some interest in two of these four, namely on forced labour (with prudent commitments in the draft CAI Agreement). In the other two it has not shown any interest (as far as the authors know). The most one can say is that, on 'collective bargaining', it has arranged some domestic regulations facilitating this at the company level but always under control of the ACFTU (the CCP-controlled labour union).

With respect to social protection, China *has* attempted to build up a system of social protection during the 1990s and later. It depends where one marks the cut-off point but during the 1990s, this build-up was at first fragmented and hesitant. This is understandable because China had to undergo a most radical transformation and also had no experience with separate legal and state-funds supported social protection, based on individual entitlements, even less its administration. What essentially happened in the 1990s is that several social laws emerged, partly on the rights and entitlements of individual workers or categories of workers (e.g. civil servants, blue-collar workers), partly on a more generic basis, the most important of which was the 1994 Labour Law. The latter comprised a series of general commitments of social protection, besides labour rights, and obligations of companies. Unfortunately, this law and some other ones had more the character of promises and a sense of perspective, without as yet the detail and operationality of implementation regulations. The 'implementation' was therefore selective, the then new social protection scheme was started to pilot only in a handful of cities, such as Shanghai. At the same time, given the sad experiences of workers shed by SOEs, but without much social protection at the time, the pressing needs of many jobless workers – often from the heavy-industry-intensive cities and originating from rural areas – had to be addressed urgently. Hence, the *dibao* (in Shanghai) was invented as a MLA (subsistence allowance) and a Housing Provident Fund, a Unified Basic Pension insurance system for enterprise workers, basic medical insurance and unemployment insurance were all swiftly introduced before 2000 to cope with the situation.

In other words, China has improved the predicament of workers (and indeed all citizens) in China, not merely via high economic growth but also by means of a broad system of social protection, eventually with universal coverage where appropriate. We survey at some length the painful social side of 'growth at all costs', mostly at the peril of low or unskilled migrants workers from poor provinces. The SOE reforms in the 1990s were harsh, with dramatic labour shedding and little or no social security at first, and some stop-gap measures later. China in the 1990s was still a developing country and hence it cannot be surprising that the human development indices were also still rather weak, although rising fairly rapidly (though better for per capita incomes and health than for education).

### 4. Was there a process of 'green' policy convergence between China and the EU?

The policy interest in China in moving away from the erstwhile very damaging policies or the negligence practiced by the central and provincial governments was there, much before any indicators could signal that. The various Plans from 2000 onwards initially show superficial interest in water and air pollution (next to none in soil) but targets were overshoot (that is,

missed) in some problematic cases and the rate of improvement of other ones (coming from bad scores) was slow at best. There was too little investment in solid data gathering and enforcement was weak or worse. In areas such as soil pollution and waste management matters initially were literally close to disastrous. The predominance of economic growth was too engrained in the system of governance. At times some such bad practices occurred in the EU, too, but the major difference is the voice of the people and the press. That voice sooner or later stems the otherwise perhaps unstoppable continuation of deleterious practices (as some benefit from the avoidance of paying for negative externalities). Although it is known that small scale protests erupted regularly in China, they were too often smothered and hardly ever reached the national press or TV, except when major accidents happened. In other words, a powerful signalling function was lacking.

One perverse consequence was that many SMEs, farmers or individuals also started to (mis)behave, whether with many thousands of illegal sewerage outlets to the Yangtze river or Bohai lake, millions of illegal drillings for water, or illegal dumping of waste by farmers anywhere, knowing to be undetected. For the population, the upshot was the appearance of black-and-odorous waters, air pollution that was unbearable and extremely unhealthy and a more general ambiance of a lack of trust in the government about its messages about soil, air and water pollution. In these days, climate change seemed to be a subject for specialists and - in any event – the blame said to be on those having caused CO<sub>2</sub> pollution since more than 2 centuries ago, not China. But in the area of policy there was at first little interest because the people did not notice CO<sub>2</sub> pollution themselves (in contrast to soot, very fine particulates and some other gases). Of course with such a miserable starting point, there was bound to be a longing on the part of China to improve but the implicit condition was that it should not be costly and could never undermine the determined very high growth path.

Chinese policy-makers have clearly enjoyed the cooperation with the EU, for decades, and asked for more, without at first feeling much pressure to act swiftly and show results. Nevertheless, both for domestic reasons (and with very high growth, the problems were quickly mounting) and due to the insistent nudging by the EU, gradually a slow process of convergence in many policies for environment and climate was set into motion. These convergent policy moves were initially quicker and closely linked to various EU activities in environment, than in climate questions. As far as the latter was concerned, Beijing long stuck to its position (under Kyoto) that the old industrial countries had done most of the (CO<sub>2</sub>) polluting, cumulatively, and China and other developing countries' development could not be constrained by emission reduction programmes. In this respect the EU and China found a common interest, nonetheless, in the CDM (see Box 10 in Pelkmans [2021]) where the two dominated the world market on the demand (China) and supply (EU) side for some 8 years. After 2012 China began to make the U-turn, hesitantly, to negotiate CO<sub>2</sub> reduction commitments at the world level: the 2015 Paris Agreement. Even after Paris its NDC promises merely to improve ratios and – so far – avoids a true coal cap and / or a CO<sub>2</sub> emission cap. In the 14th Plan the two caps are once again avoided although there are other forms of tightening. In environment China seems finally to become much more brave in air and water pollution. The Plan of an attack on soil pollution following from the 2018 law is similar in spirit but its costs are staggering and thus it remains to be seen. At long last, under the banner of a

“beautiful China’, to be accomplished by 2035, there is clearly more drive behind these various fights against pollution.

What is in a separate category is the green quasi-industrial strategy that China has set in shortly after 2005. It consists of e-mobility with e-cars, e-buses and e-scooters, the enormous and rapid boost of renewables and the aggressive and very long term forestation strategy.

#### **5. Was there a process of ‘social’ policy convergence between the EU and China?**

China steadily built on the social protection system and, as of 2014, accomplished a ‘national’ system by finally combining some forms of social security for both rural and urban citizens. Nonetheless, as so often in China, there remain two realities. By sticking to the hukou registration, even if with greater flexibilities, and by maintaining a highly fragmented administration at local or regional level, often with limited capabilities, undeveloped or incompatible IT systems and insufficient pooling, the practical problems of transferring entitlements between provinces are huge. As a result, the system was incomplete initially in many ways. In addition, numerous outbound migrants have remained informal workers (some 65 % !), although the system of social protection is built strictly on contracted workers. The upshot is that precisely those workers mostly in need of social protection obtain the least.

That further reforms are badly needed follows from an assessment of the main tenets of social protection in China today. The picture has once again two sides. It is undeniable that China has done much to improve social protection, both by stricter and more ambitious laws for companies (and workers where relevant) financing five forms of social security as well as contributing to the Housing Fund, and by spending more from the general budget. At the same time, zooming in on details as well as on what the effective results for rural people or migrants from rural areas but working in urban areas are, we show that there are still considerable discrepancies between the overall intentions and the basic social facts on the ground. In terms of redistribution affected by social security – a desirable policy given rather sharp inequality in China – it is striking that these effects are small or very small except for pensions in urban areas. In rural areas, the redistributive effects of social protection are minimal, even though there they might be more desirable. China’s ‘war on poverty’ was formally ended by the leadership in 2020, yet there are serious concerns about lingering poverty, both in terms of disposable incomes being very low and the size of the groups suffering. Again, two realities. The analysis is complemented by a review of Human Development in 2018, because poverty traps comprise more than mere disposable income. China has greatly improved the HDI but the education pillar remains relatively weak. Recent academic work has shown that large parts of rural areas suffer from an educational gap with urban areas, such that simulations show that over 2 decades up to 2035 the secular economic growth rate of China risks to fall to around 3 % (due to low human capital in rural areas).

#### **6. Was the EU pursuit in the ‘green’ pillar vis a vis China sustained and effective?**

The lousy status of China’s environment in the late 1990s and the emerging major problem of global warming mitigation via CO<sub>2</sub> reduction and controlling other GHGs served as wake-up calls for the EU. The strategic partnership with China (1998) and the strategic and

comprehensive partnership (since 2003) created a form of trust and stability, thereby forming the foundation for a steady increase in both the scope and the intensity of environmental and climate mitigation cooperation. With China becoming an upper middle income economy, this cooperation became both more urgent and more feasible. Thus, initially EU policy and EU/China cooperation in environment and climate was directed at stimulating and improving China's policies in this respect, whilst the facts (indicators) on the ground were still pointing to a rapidly deteriorating status. We call this the '*great green paradox*'. In other words, a gradual and at first slow emergence of more sound environmental and climate policies in China coincided with worsening practices in the economy, generating pretty extreme negative externalities for citizens and workers, and similarly for nature in many forms. Only when the persistent and wide-ranging EU/China cooperation matured over several channels and topics, and the indicators had become intolerable, policies and enforcement were significantly tightened. This is of course not only and possibly not even primarily due to EU/China sustainable development cooperation but our research shows in abundant detail that there cannot be any doubt that the EU has been unfailingly pro-active in sustainable development with China for two decades and has been most responsive to any request or policy interest from China in these fields, whether for support or knowledge transfer or for pursuing common activities or a common pursuit in multilateral settings (a key activity given the many MEAs the two partners share).

#### **7. Was the EU pursuit in the 'social' pillar vis a vis China sustained and effective?**

We have attempted to address the social pillar of sustainable development in EU /China trade and investment relations. Although the 'social pillar' remains ill-defined, we have conceived it as combining internationally recognised labour standards and a system of social protection. In the actual practice of EU / China cooperation on the social pillar, most projects and programmes have been on aspects of social protection. China has apparently not been prepared or interested in joint work on labour standards, with one exception: occupational safety & health of workers, where a targeted project on OSH in coalmining and chemicals has successfully been implemented. More far-fetched but not implausible is the possibility that the EU – initially or until recently – perceived risks of a non-level playing field in labour relations and the perhaps artificially low total labour costs per unit of Chinese exports. In that case, jointly addressing the social dimension of the bilateral trade and investment relations would both serve the upholding of EU values and help to pre-empt distorted bilateral economic intercourse.

We survey EU/China cooperation on labour standards and social protection, effectively begun in 2005. A series of major projects and programmes have been undertaken jointly: on social security (partly inside Chinese ministries), on safety and health in high risk sectors (esp. mining and chemicals), on social protection reforms, besides high level Dialogues for 15 years. The EU has also strongly encouraged China to work still more with the ILO which eventually China has done directly bilaterally (for example, a four-year programme on Decent Work), and also trilaterally (EU/ILO/China), for example, on Improving China's institutional capacity towards universal social protection (2019-2022). Included are two detailed analyses of projects. One is on occupational safety & health in coalmining and chemicals. It is shown what the EU project's



value-added has been (with technical standards but also including an insistence on worker participation bottom-up when improving OSH in mines and chemical plants and storage). In the meantime China has enormously reduced the fatalities in coalmining, although it still remains above e.g. levels of fatalities in India. The other is the project on reforms of social protection where a detailed ex-post evaluation is provided in order to illustrate actual and potential value-added.

The final research question in the social pillar is whether the EU systematically pursued the NTPOs of labour standards and social protection in its trade policy and cooperation vis a vis China and whether this pursuit has been effective in supporting a process of convergence?

There is no doubt that the EU has been ready to cooperate with China ever since China and the EU concluded the Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership in 2003. And right from the start of the first major project (following early meetings of the Social and Employment Dialogue with China), these were joint projects with a strong degree of 'ownership' on both sides. However, apart from the interesting and seemingly effective OSH project for the high-risk coal mining and chemicals sectors, which is essentially about labour standards, the projects mostly covered technical, administrative, financial/actuarial and conceptual questions of social protection. There is very little published evidence of any project activities directly related to internationally recognised labour standards, in particular about non-ratified core ILO Conventions. In this sense there is an obvious discrepancy between the need, as perceived by the EU, to prepare for ratification and full domestic implementation of these four Conventions, and almost certainly some other ones (as China has also not ratified a series of other ILO Conventions that would appear to be desirable), and the manifest – though 'silent'-positioning of China not to do so. There is an opening, however: the recent CAI draft treaty comprises a cautious quasi-commitment by China to strive towards ratification of the two Conventions on forced labour.

In contrast, China and the EU have been active in cooperation on social protection and continue to attempt searches for further improvement. A profound impediment is the domestic multi-layered structure of China's governments, their coordination (or the lack of it) and the limited capabilities at local levels. There is also a high degree of path dependence, with lingering inefficiencies proving hard to iron out. Moreover, there are deep-rooted inequalities between rural and urban, partly resulting from traditions and old barriers to intra-China mobilities. Finally, there are major educational inequalities between rural and urban which are deep-seated and may have caused hysteresis for another generation. Given all the inhibitions, the joint determination of the EU and China to address social protection and help improve it in many ways, already for more than 15 years, cannot be expected to be successful so easily. This determination has recently led to a tripartite set-up together with the ILO (until at least 2022).

The short answer to the third research question is therefore that the EU has pursued, in earnest, durable EU/China cooperation with respect to social protection but this turned out not to be acceptable to China as far as non-ratified ILO core Conventions are concerned. In terms of effectiveness, given the inevitable limits of bilateral cooperation, the social protection cooperation has been effective and practical – not least because activities, projects

and programmes were truly 'joint' – and still continue, whereas, with respect to labour standards, the only breakthrough is the recent CAI draft treaty with its prudent quasi-commitment with respect to two Conventions on forced labour.

Our research leads us to suggest the following policy recommendations :

1. Unless there is explicit and sufficiently specific agreement between trading partners and the EU, or a FTA with the EU is in place with a dedicated sustainable development chapter, a legalistic or heavy-handed diplomatic approach by the EU to pursue sustainable development bilaterally is not only unwise but largely unproductive, if not counterproductive.
2. In such instances a long-run bilateral cooperative approach is asked for. Such an approach should be based on a careful and respectful search of areas where the partners agree on objectives to be actively pursued together, within the applicable framework of international commitments.
3. If partners initially do not agree, a loose policy Dialogue can still be organised, testing in greater detail how profound the disagreement actually is and whether or not mutual discussion and engagement might still yield a positive cooperative agenda. Common policy objectives and consensus on what types of cooperation would be undertaken are indispensable for bilateral cooperation to be constructive and possibly successful, (ideally) combining political impetus, technical assistance, and actual deliverables, and this clearly also applies to the 'green' pillar and the 'social' pillar of sustainable development. Where policy objectives or policy agenda's do not meet or remain overly sensitive, there is no point to force common standards, let alone common agenda's, and diplomacy should be expected to act prudently.
4. As our research on the green and the social pillars in bilateral EU/China cooperation over two decades shows, the effectiveness and practicality of programmes, projects and action agenda's is a positive function of joint 'ownership' and joint funding of activities.
5. Bilateral cooperation - here, on sustainable development - is largely a matter of technically working together on specific activities of many kinds, but it should somehow be 'woven into' a broader framework for the bilateral relationship. In the EU/China relationship, a Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership was agreed in 2003 and all Dialogues, Programmes, Projects and other activities have been 'embedded' in this Partnership, led by regular Summits and several High Policy Dialogues. This has proven to be critical for the breadth and depth of the cooperation on sustainable development as well as for its continuity.
6. Bilateral cooperation on sustainable development can and indeed - where appropriate - should be extended to the multilateral level. In EU/China cooperation this has proven to work very well with respect to MEAs (and some other such agreements e.g. on fisheries and timber trade) but not at all for some core ILO Conventions because regime changes (e.g. penal reform) may be involved. In turn, such MEAs and other pluri-laterals form a substantial part of what - in FTAs - would be included in a dedicated sustainable development chapter

This RESPECT Policy Brief is supported by four research papers, as follows:

- i. Weinian Hu, 2021, A survey of the EU-China dialogue architecture, September, see [http://respect.eui.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2021/09/060921\\_FINAL\\_EU-China-dialogues21.pdf](http://respect.eui.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2021/09/060921_FINAL_EU-China-dialogues21.pdf).
- ii. Weinian Hu & Jacques Pelkmans, 2020, Can Dialogues advance EU-China trade relations? , *CEPS Research Report 2020/05*, November, [www.ceps.eu/ceps-publications/can-dialogues-advance-eu-china-trade-relations](http://www.ceps.eu/ceps-publications/can-dialogues-advance-eu-china-trade-relations) ; an earlier and longer version was published under the RESPECT project by the EUI as RCWAS WP 2020/46 (see <http://cadmus.eui.eu>) entitled: “EU-China Trade-related Dialogues, a first assessment”, August 2020.
- iii. Jacques Pelkmans, 2021, Nudging China to go green: how EU trade and cooperation policies stimulated China, April, see [http://respect.eui.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2021/09/Nudging-China-to-go-green-how-EU-trade-and-cooperation-policies-stimulated-China\\_final\\_27April21-RESPECT\\_JP.pdf](http://respect.eui.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2021/09/Nudging-China-to-go-green-how-EU-trade-and-cooperation-policies-stimulated-China_final_27April21-RESPECT_JP.pdf).
- iv. Weinian Hu & Jacques Pelkmans, 2021, Encouraging Social progress in China, EU/China cooperation for the Social Pillar of sustainable development, April, see [http://respect.eui.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2021/09/RESPECT\\_Encouraging-Social-Progress-Social-China\\_final\\_JP-WH\\_29April21.pdf](http://respect.eui.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2021/09/RESPECT_Encouraging-Social-Progress-Social-China_final_JP-WH_29April21.pdf).