



# The Role of Civil Society in Shaping EU's Trade & Economic Policies with China

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# EU supports CSOs in China to increase ownership of reforms

- 2003: EU policy paper: *A maturing partnership - shared interests and challenges in EU-China relations....*
  - “Strengthening of CS in China should be EU priority”
  - grassroot actions, involving citizens... furthering ownership of reforms & supporting reform losers
  - foster links & establish networks between European & Chinese CSOs/NGOs
  - involve civil society more closely in exchanges e.g. environmental protection
- 2006 & 2007 EU-China summits: “recognize the importance of a healthy & developing civil society for the sustainability of the reform process both in the EU & China.”

# EU-CS Dialogues on Trade - not really a Chance to Influence FTAs

- 1998 EU institutionalised *Civil Society Dialogues* on trade policies. Objectives:
  - find out about concerns
  - listen to opinions and expertise
  - take into account the views of interested parties
- *Sustainability Impact Assessments (SIA)*... subject to discussion, opportunity for stakeholders on both sides to provide input into the negotiations ... welcomed by NGOs
- 2002/2005 critique by NGOs: SIAs = “cosmetic exercise to defend EU positions... greenwash & PR exercise... no impact on FTAs... not to mitigate the negative impacts of trade agreements”

# EU Attempts to Cover up the Lack of Transparency of PCA

- Open invitation to discuss the TSIA without information about the PCA negotiations
- High expectations: ...”to feed directly into PCA negotiations” ...”important role in formulating the policy & reduce any negative impacts”
- Lack of credibility of TSIA → striking absence of NGOs, CBOs & trade unions in Brussels meetings & of Chinese NGOs, ACFTU & ACWF at the Beijing workshops

# Civil Society Dialogue on TSIA – Missed Chance

## Brussels

- 3 x 1 ½ hour meetings
- Dominated by private sector representatives: Chambers of Commerce & industry associations
- Absence of NGOs
- Appreciation by business stakeholders

## Beijing

- 2 stakeholder workshops
- Representatives from ministries, academia, private companies & industries, press & internat. organisations
- Scholars criticised bias against China & Chinese business
- Sustainability dominated by economic growth
- Concerns about environment
- No social concerns raised

# EU Seeks Consensus with Business Stakeholders

- Prior to PCA launching & TSIA, EU consulted business & included “voices from the industry” in studies on trade relations
- Meetings on TSIA in Brussels dominated by private sector representatives: Chambers of Commerce & industry associations
- TSIA appreciated by business stakeholders

# EP Report – Likeminded with EU Commission Advocating Business Interests

- No reference made to TSIA & to Civil Society Dialogues
- No difference & no challenge to EU Commission's positions & perspectives, no parliamentary control of EU Commission
- Predominantly corporate interests of EU business represented, no (other) civil society concerns reflected
- No demand for information about the negotiated text

# EU-China-Africa Trialogue - Trade & Business Minded

- Public consultation: 47 CS answers
  - 13 business : 10 research : 8 NGOs
  - 28 EU : 14 African : 3 Chinese nationals
- NGOs perceived as marginal actors despite their prominent role in development cooperation
- Preference given to trade & investment relations over development cooperation
- CSOs from Africa & EU at 2007 EU-Africa summit opposed EPAs, agrofuels & restrictions on migration

# Inclusion without Influence

- EU-China sectoral dialogues & round tables = high level expert meetings, no mechanisms to involve NGOs & trade unions
- Generally: No more exclusion of CSOs
- Beyond inclusion - do CS views & recommendations influence policy making?
- Participation alone does not make a difference & not ensure impact

# Lessons to be Learnt: Preconditions for CS Involvement

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## Procedural/technical level

- Transparency first, information about each stage of negotiations
  - Establish democratic mechanisms in negotiations & decision making:
  - Involvement of democratic institutions
  - Presentation of CS positions at negotiation table
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# Lessons Learnt:

## CS Agency Needs Legitimacy

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- Value & knowledge based agency, need to have sound facts & figures, reasoned judgements, clear arguments
  - Diffused, value based concerns are good for public awareness raising
  - Specific concerns are good to lobby & have better chances to influence policy making
  - Try to establish cooperation & capacity building with CS forces in China
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# CSOs = Autonomous Watch Dogs

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- Highlight double standards & incoherence within EU policies
  - Demand that EU resp. EU business takes on their share of responsibility
  - Be aware that human rights & standards are easily used as a tool in economic relations
  - Avoid China bashing in particular on human rights violation
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# Thanks

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For your attention!

The floor is yours!

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