

The China-Europa Forum format

The Forum's general specifications comprise five points:

- *workshops*, the cornerstone for dialogue between societies. They reflect the aim to conduct in-depth dialogue, involving the various parties in China and Europe, and covering highly diverse themes of common interest;
- *one or more regular events to raise awareness of this dialogue and all-encompassing ambition*;
- *production of content*, both by *workshops or groups of workshops* and *worldwide*, to show how China and Europe identify and assume shared challenges;
- *partnerships* with other organisations and institutions, the Forum being a point for convergence and a label for any cooperation initiative between China and Europe wishing to participate in a shared adventure;
- well-honed *methods and tools*, especially the databases, helping us assume the complexity of the organisation, a shared website to situate each cooperation in the global effort and methods to link the diversity of workshops and unity of the process.

In 2007 and 2010, these specifications gave rise to the organisation of a large-scale meeting, with the successive and simultaneous holding of a great many decentralised workshops followed by a plenary session attended by workshop representatives, both as the expression of the overall society-to-society dialogue, as the means to getting to know each other, propitious for future discussions between workshops and as a stage to pool everyone's work and ideas. It was this format which ensured the Forum's high profile and made it an unique event, appreciated in spite of oft-reported shortcomings. But the point of the Forum is not to organise regular, large-scale events, in between which nothing happens. These meetings are of value only as an opportunity to share the results of in-depth dialogue, cooperation, and getting to know each other as a long-term project.

We have now decided that the large-scale meetings are to be held every three years. The formula adopted in 2009, the workshop coordinators' meeting proved beneficial. Some would also like to diversify the formats, harnessing the Forum, its positive image, its methods and human networks to facilitate itinerant conferences on topics of interest to both societies. Others hope that the Forum workshops can lead to a tangible programme of cooperation between China and Europe. Yet some others think that thanks to the quality of the participants and its interactive working methods, the Forum can become a great reservoir of ideas and proposals available to both societies regarding certain topics. The sheer wealth of proposals is highly stimulating, provided that they are implemented collectively and in a decentralised manner.

What about you? What proposals would you like to make? What do you wish for? How do you imagine the Forum in ten years' time? Would you like to see the large-scale meetings held more regularly or change their scope? How?