



CHINA-EUROPA FORUM

An institutional framework for the China – Europa Forum

The development of continued dialogue between Chinese society and European society, which was started during the second biennial of the Forum, implies a finding institutional and financial forms that ensure its lasting quality, all the while preserving the informality and decentralisation that made the Forum a success.

Through the success of its second edition, the China-Europa Forum has changed nature and become a continued process of dialogue between societies.

1. The change in nature of the Forum implies finding suitable institutional forms.
2. The institutionalisation of the Forum must respect its two major characteristics: precision in work systems combined with informality of the dialogue, as well as diversity and autonomy of multiple workshops combined with the unity of the process.
3. The coordination technique of the Forum will be taken care of by two operational structures, based in Europe and in Hong Kong. The actual assembly of participants at the Forum would remain without legal status.
4. The dialogue will continue based on workshops that represent a good method of decentralised facilitating of exchanges between Chinese society and European society. The organising of each workshop and of the Forum itself will include a great diversity of institutions.
5. Many proposals were made during the Second Biennial of the Forum. They are welcome and must find their own methods of funding.
6. The funding of the Forum must be enlarged and involve the European institutions, States, regions and local authorities, foundations and companies.

1. The change in nature of the Forum implies finding suitable institutional forms.

At the close of its second biennial edition, the China - Europa Forum changed nature. It became a process of society-to-society dialogue, mobilising the diversity of socio-professional sectors around the great common challenges to both European and Chinese societies.

The Second Biennial of the Forum, especially thanks to the work done in workshops, showed that dialogue was desirable and possible. This discovery represents a considerable common capital that gives strong credibility to the Forum. Up to now, the dialogue had only been initiated. If it does not continue quickly, this capital will disappear.

For the first two China-Europa Forums, it was not necessary to create a specific institution, as they were one-off events. To organise them, it was necessary to gather financial and organisational means via cooperation among various public and private institutions. The flexibility of the mobilisation of these means and the methodological, financial and organisational contribution of the FPH were decisive. The Second Biennial of the Forum led the FPH to release exceptional means, as much in terms of budget (nearly 2 million euros) as in terms of team.

The shift to a process of continued dialogue now implies finding suitable and lasting institutional forms.

The success of the first two Forums owes much to the informal character of the dialogues they gave rise to, and to the great flexibility in organisation. The big institutional challenge is now to ensure the lasting quality and enlargement of dialogue, all the while maintaining its informality and its flexibility.

2. The institutionalisation of the Forum must respect these two major characteristics: precision in work systems combined with informality of the dialogue, diversity and autonomy of multiple workshops combined with the unity of the process.

The First Biennial of the Forum was only a one-off event to respond to the request of the Chinese partners to better understand the history and lessons of European integration. Once over, it transformed into a permanent Forum marked by biennial gatherings alternatively in China and in Europe. For this, a constituent Charter was drafted. It distinguishes:

- **the permanent objectives** of the Forum: society-to-society dialogue on common challenges;
- **its ethics**: that of respect and mutual listening and of openness to new ideas;
- **the systems of common work** that keeps developing, including a Founding Committee in charge of seeing to it that the initiatives conform to the Forum's objectives and ethics.

The Second Biennial of the Forum did not bring together members of a formal network. The participants came from varied backgrounds and spoke in their own name. They did not undertake to continue the dialogue above and beyond the Forum. This informal character made for the richness of the Forum. It must be preserved. To do so, we must, in the institutionalisation of the Forum, single out **limited operational structures**, whose mission is to stimulate and follow up on the dialogue and **all the participants in dialogue**. These latter form a **community** whose outlines keep evolving and which does not have its own legal status. Today, this distinction is facilitated by the widespread use of Internet and the Web, which enables the emergence and development of self-organised and self-regulated communities.

The second characteristic of the Forum is to have combined a great number of workshops and unified work methods. Each workshop enjoys great autonomy of organisation, but within the framework of rules of the game accepted by all, for example for the format and facilitating of the workshops. Respect of the rules is made by a free consent. **It's their effectiveness that is the basis of their legitimacy.**

The setting up of workshops has diversified the roles: there are the prime movers, who are the real architects; the organisers, who – without necessarily becoming intellectually involved – hosted and supported the workshops; the participants, who devoted their time and their intelligence to the dialogue; the interpreters, translators, guides, hosts and logistical support. In all, more than 3000

people from at least 1000 different institutions found themselves associated directly or indirectly with the Forum, and nearly 1500 played an active role in it.

This combination of autonomy and unity is required for continuing the dialogue. The Forum will live only through the multiplicity of its decentralised initiatives. But, at the same time, the Second Biennial of the Forum would not have existed and would not have follow-up if all the workshops hadn't been coordinated and hadn't benefited from the systems of common work, and if there hadn't been the plenary sessions **to symbolise** the building of a global society-to-society dialogue. It's this unity that must be preserved.

The Second Biennial of the Forum was an **instituting** event. It enabled the building of a community, but a precarious one. Continuation of the dialogue within the 46 workshops would quickly get lost in the sand without mutual visibility and without coordination between them.

During the Second Biennial of the Forum, some workshops hadn't been planned in the original format. They were added midway through the initiatives of various institutions that expressed their desire to be part of it. **The Forum must keep this ability to welcome unforeseen initiatives.**

3. The coordination technique of the Forum will be taken care of by two operational structures, based in Europe and in Hong Kong. The assembly of participants at the Forum would remain without legal status.

The traditional organisations, for example the big non-profit associations, are characterised by their legal unity: all the members of the association elect an executive who directs and controls the activities of the operational structure. It's a clumsy system that devotes appreciable energy to the functioning of its organs. It's unsuitable with the regards to the desire to make all the participants of the Forum **an open community** with evolving outlines, making it possible for the levels of involvement to fluctuate over time. This is why it's preferable to distinguish, on the one hand, a light operational structure given legal status and whose mission is to give life to the Forum, to maintain and make available to everyone the work tools and methods, and to develop the social capital and methodological capital, and, on the other, the community of participants, which itself will have no legal status. The operational structure is not legally dependant on the community of participants. **It acquires its legitimacy through its usefulness and transparency.**

In order to symbolise the symmetry of dialogue between China and Europe, the Forum's operational structure will have to be made of two structures, one Chinese and the other European. The exclusive mission of these structures will be to give dynamics to the work systems and to coordinate the various workshops.

4. The dialogue will continue based on workshops that represent a good method of decentralised facilitating of exchanges between Chinese society and European society. The organising of each workshop and of the Forum itself must include a great diversity of institutions.

It's the diversity of workshops and of dialogues that were made there that gave the Second Biennial of the Forum its coloring and its meaning.

The number of workshops, the combination of socio-professional and theme-based workshops, and the geographical spread of the workshops over 23 cities of 7 different countries, all this might have appeared excessively complicated. However, each person understood that this distribution in space

and among around 100 institutions that organised workshops embodied the very idea of a society-to-society dialogue, which assumes that different sectors of society become involved in it voluntarily and in an autonomous way.

The concept of « prime mover » of a workshop may have sometimes created confusion (Who was the primer mover? What are its functions?) but was very useful because it conveyed a simple and strong message: **the workshop exists only if there are institutions and people prepared to take initiatives and to give it life.**

Thanks to the demanding rules that we gave ourselves from the beginning in order to guarantee the diversity of participants within each workshop, the Forum was also the occasion to strengthen or generate dialogues within each society: between Chinese participants on the one hand, between European participants on the other. This internal dialogue must itself also continue and enlarge in the future.

The workshops are thus the natural framework for the decentralised continuation of exchanges. The system adopted for the future must **expand this effort of decentralisation** and of mobilisation of public and private institutions and of networks and continue to **maintain what makes the unity** of the process: **a state of mind; systems of common work and common databases** (what demonstrated all their effectiveness in the nine-month organising of such a complicated process and which represent the operational basis of support for continuing the collective work); common methods of **facilitating workshops and of drawing up syntheses**; an **area of common development**; the website, www.china-europa-forum.net ; a **common interpretation drawn** from the synthesis of the workshops.

The Third Biennial of the Forum, to be held in China in 2009, will again make it possible to give a burst to all these decentralised dialogues.

To succeed in this new impetus, we must simultaneously enlarge the circle of prime movers and the **institutions decided to organise** this dialogue and **the circle of people and institutions** that participate in it.

For the Second Biennial of the Forum, the decentralisation turned out to be limited on the European side, through the administrative constraints tied to obtaining visas and by the short deadlines given to organise the Forum. For the workshop locations, we had to limit ourselves to the countries of the Schengen zone, with the notable exception of Romania, which organised two workshops. In many regions and cities, we were not able to mobilise financial support for organising the workshops, as the public budgets had already been voted and allocated. We must also acknowledge that this Forum, of a new type and new scale, may have seemed unfeasible in the eyes of many institutions that are nonetheless interested in becoming involved in a new relation with China. The FPH, which set up nearly all the workshops, thus relied on its own partners, among which it already enjoyed credibility. They showed themselves very reactive. The Forum was moreover the occasion for them to expand their own European and Chinese networks.

On the Chinese side as well, the diversity of institutions that had put a lot into the Forum and of the socio-professional circles that were mobilised were curbed by the administrative constraints and deadlines. Most of the participants were academics. The two Chinese secretariats of the Forum, Renmin University in Beijing and Sun Yat-Sen University in Canton, also had to favour their own networks.

To do so, formalising the workshop concept is proposed:

- **a workshop is a regular space of dialogue between people and institutions, either in a given circle** (in the case of a socio-professional workshop), **or on a given theme** (in the case of a theme-based workshop);
- **the participants accept the constituent Charter of the Forum**: they want to promote dialogue between European society and Chinese society on common challenges; they practice dialogue with respect, mutual listening and openness to new ideas; they respect the systems of common work, and to the Forum, in particular the constant enrichment of the databases and the use of the website as a tool for their dialogue;
- **organising a workshop** brings together at least four types of partners, also called pillars: a **local authority** (province or city); **a university**; **a civil society organisation**; **a mediator** (for example a translation or interpreting school). Many European programmes moreover require a partnership between institutions coming from several member countries.

This enlargement assumes an active approach in looking for candidates to organise the workshop follow-up. In Europe, European Parliament, the European Commission, the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Council are called on to play a big role. The participants in the Second Biennial of the Forum will also be essential driving forces.

As with the Second Biennial of the Forum, each workshop will be expected to mobilise the human and financial means to continue and expand the dialogue. As for the operational structures, they will have to provide logistical support, especially for the translations, the methodology of facilitating the interactive forums and the maintenance of the website.

5. Many proposals were made during the Second Biennial of the Forum. They are welcome and must find their own methods of funding.

Continuing the dialogue within the framework of the 46 workshops organised during the Second Biennial of the Forum is already hugely ambitious. Nevertheless, at the end of the workshops, the participants formulated many proposals to extend and enrich the society-to-society dialogue. University networks, for example, have proposed to work together. Others are proposing to create institutes given their own human resources for deepening the dialogue and carrying out comparative research.

All these ideas and initiatives are welcome. It's their very profusion, much greater than the initiators of the Forum can imagine today, that will make for the richness of the society-to-society dialogue.

These initiatives will have to find their own means of financing and functioning. As soon as they adhere to the Forum's constituent Charter and agree to respect the systems of common work, they will be part of the Forum and will benefit from its social and methodological capital as well as its institutional and media visibility, in particular on the website. They will participate in preparing the Third Biennial of the Forum.

6. The funding of the Forum must be enlarged and involve the European institutions, States, regions and local authorities, foundations, and companies.

The first two Forums were cofinanced by Chinese institutions and European institutions. These institutions were for the most part private.

the First Biennial of the Forum was possible only because the entire hosting in China (accommodation, food, logistical means, etc.) was paid for by Chinese institutions: mainly the Henri Fok foundation, which paid entirely for the accommodation of 300 participants over four days, but also the Macau Foundation and companies. On the European side, it's the FPH that took care of the organising cost and travel costs.

For the Second Biennial of the Forum, even if the FPH bore the vast majority of the costs, a similar rule was respected. It's the Chinese side that took care of the costs to bring the participants to Europe: travel costs in China, visa fees, travel costs to Europe. These costs were paid for by Hainan Airlines, the Macau Foundation, the participants themselves or their institutions and a significant private donation. In Europe, the Charles Léopold Mayer Foundation was backed up by several other foundations (Compagnia Di San Paolo of Italy, Bernheim, Evens, and King Baudouin foundations of Belgium), local communities (Rhône Alpes Region, Piedmont Province, City of Turin, Generalitat of Catalonia, City of Barcelona, City of Liège, City of Annemasse, City of Grenoble, Valence Chamber of Commerce and Industry), a part-government owned institution (the French Development Agency -AFD) and three Directorate-Generals of the European Commission: the External Relations DG, the Sciences and Technologies DG, the Education and Culture DG.

Now that the Forum has proven its effectiveness, its usefulness and its ability to mobilise diversified institutional support, **the future of the Forum can be considered on an enlarged and better-balanced financial basis between the different types of institutions.**

The following three principles can be adopted:

- the workshops find, in a decentralised way, the financial and material means to continue, by relying on the institutional diamond described above;
- the funding of the Chinese operational hub is found in China, and that of the European hub in Europe;
- the sources of funding are diversified in order to guarantee the pluralism of dialogue. Four-part funding can be considered:

a) **from public institutions.** In Europe especially, the European institutions that showed their support for the Second Biennial of the Forum must be associated with its follow-ups: the Commission (Relex, Education and Culture, Research DGs), the Committee of the Regions, the Economic and Social Council, European Parliament, the European Council;

b) Chinese and European **foundations**;

c) **companies**, either by capital contribution or by operating grants and private funding for the organising of the biennial Forums;

d) **States**, within the framework of international cooperation.