



EUROPEAN POLICY COMPETITION

How can the EU and China cooperate on tackling climate change?

European Studies Review is delighted to introduce the *European Policy Competition*. This flagship initiative represents an invaluable opportunity to showcase your expertise in EU-China relations and climate diplomacy, draft a policy memo on a crucial topic, and present it to a panel of experts.

POLICY PROBLEM

As two leading carbon emitters, China and the EU have a significant responsibility to tackle climate change. However, bilateral cooperation on the matter faces important obstacles, including growing political tension, the need to safeguard their competitiveness and diverging geopolitical interests. How can the EU and China best cooperate on combatting climate change, when taking into account this context?

Your policy memo will describe an action that the EU should take to collaborate with China on fighting climate change, taking into account the obstacles to such cooperation. Your recommendation should be concrete and action-oriented. It could involve, but is not limited to:

- a change of strategy (e.g. the EU should direct its efforts to energy cooperation)
- a unilateral move with external consequences (e.g. the EU should increase investments in green technologies. Such move has to have an important impact on China and/or EU-China climate diplomacy)
- a joint action (e.g. the EU should call China to set up a common carbon market together)
- a new institution (e.g. the EU should work with China to create an international organisation to pool resources)

WHO?

This policy competition is open to all students or recent graduates (<2 years since graduation).

HOW?

Send your 1000-word policy memo to europeanstudiesreview@gmail.com before January 15, 23:59 EST.

KEY DATES



DECEMBER 2ND, 2022

Launch of the competition



JANUARY 15, 2023

Policy memo submission deadline



FEBRUARY 1ST, 2023

Announcement of finalists



MID-FEBRUARY, 2023

Presentation of your policy memo to senior diplomats and researchers

PRIZES

- Winner:
 - Private online meeting with a panel of experts
 - Promotion of your memo on social media.
 - Publication of your memo in the ESR journal
- Finalists: publication of your memo in a compiled report

CRITERIA

- Your policy memo should be
- Original
 - Politically feasible
 - Evidence-based



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GUIDELINES

STRUCTURE:

1. Description of the policy problem
2. Policy recommendation
3. Risks and opportunities of your recommendation
4. Conclusion

FORMAT:

- **Font:** Open Sans, size 12, single-spaced
- **Header:** at the top of your policy memo, you should include the following:
 - To: The organisation or individual to which your memo is directed
 - From: Your name
 - Subject: Title of your policy memo
- **Length:** Max 1000 words, excluding footnotes and bibliography

BACKGROUND

EU Member States and China are both parties to the 2015 Paris Agreement, under which they agreed to reduce their emissions to prevent global warming from exceeding 2 degrees above the pre-industrial baseline.

Due to coal's importance in its energy mix and its large population, China is the world's biggest emitter of greenhouse gases, representing 33% of global emissions in 2021. The country vows to reach peak emissions by 2030, and net zero emissions by 2060. For their part, EU member states account for 7% of total emissions. The EU as a whole reached peak emissions in 1990, and wants to produce net zero emissions by 2050.

Most countries understand that tackling climate change is important, as evidenced by the 195 states that signed the 2015 Climate Accords. But they don't want to work on the problem alone, since some countries may be tempted to "free-ride": rely on the efforts of others to reduce global emissions, without reducing their own. This collective action problem is one reason why climate action has been underwhelming. Thus, there is a need to cooperate.

According to the European External Action Service, "the EU and China are reinforcing their cooperation in areas like carbon markets, long-term emission development strategies, clean energy and energy efficiency, low emission transport and cities". Recent years have shown that cooperation is possible, with the EU and China agreeing a common taxonomy on climate change mitigation in 2021 and the creation of a EU-China High-level Environment and Climate Dialogue in 2020. But these initiatives seem insufficient considering the needed level of ambition.

By the increasingly competitive geopolitical environment in which the EU-China relationship exists, both sides are competing for economic leadership in green technologies, the establishment of global technology standards, access to raw materials, and the supply of green infrastructures to third countries. Domestic factors may also force them to put the brakes on further climate cooperation. Other strategic goals, such as competitiveness, national security, or autonomy, may clash with a cooperative climate agenda and create difficult trade-offs, reducing their appetite for cooperating on other topics.

Indeed, in September 2022, a Chinese diplomat at the Chinese Mission to the EU remarked that "green cooperation cannot be promoted in a vacuum" — meaning that EU-China climate diplomacy could fall victim to growing political tensions. Nevertheless, the EU and China need to work together. Without concerted action, both their citizens will fall prey to the indiscriminatory consequences of climate change.

Taking into account the current political environment, how can the EU cooperate with China to tackle the threats posed by climate change and reach the goal of keeping global warming under 1.5 degrees Celsius compared to pre-industrial levels?

Further reading (optional):

- Joint statement of the 20th EU-China Summit
- EU, China trade barbs over failed G20 climate talks
- It's time for climate competition with China
- Climate superpowers: How the EU and China can compete and cooperate for a green future