



The European Union's Delegation to China

Final Evaluation of the "Support the EU-China Cooperation on Environment and Green Economy"

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AWP	Annual Workplan
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CAAS	Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences
CCICED	China Council for International Cooperation on Environment
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
COP15	15th Conference of the Parties
CRAES	Chinese Research Academy of Environmental Sciences
DDG	Deputy Director General
DG ENV	DG Environment, European Commission
DG	Directorate General
EPD	Environmental Policy Dialogue
EQ	Evaluation Question
EU	European Union
EUD	European Union Delegation
FPI	Service for Foreign Policy Instruments of the European Commission
FYP	Five-Year-Plan
GOPA	Gesellschaft für Organisation
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem services
IR	Interim report
KPI	Key performance indicators
LFM	Logical Framework
MEA	Multilateral environmental agreements
MEE	Ministry of Environment and Economy
MEP	Ministry of Environmental Protection
MOFCOM	Chinese Ministry of Commerce
NDRC	National Development and Reform Commission
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD/DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

PCC	Project Coordination Committee
PCSD	Policy coherence for sustainable development
PI	Partnership Instrument
PIMS	Partnership Instrument Monitoring System
PRCEE	Policy Research Centre for Environment and Economy of the Ministry of Environmental Protection of the People's Republic of China
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SOE	State Owned Enterprises
SOE	State-Owned Enterprises
SSI	Semi-structured interview
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
WB	World Bank
WEF	World Economic Forum

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The objectives of this final evaluation are to provide the relevant services of the European Union (EU) and the interested stakeholders with i) “an overall independent assessment of the past performance of the “*Support the “EU-China Cooperation on Environment and Green Economy”* project”, paying particular attention to its results measured against its expected objectives; and the reasons underpinning such results; ii) key lessons learned, conclusions and related recommendations in order to improve current and future Actions” (ToR, page 4).

The evaluation is focused on the assessment of ultimate results (outputs and impacts) with an approach focused on accountability, but especially on learning. The evaluation applied a mixed-methods approach to data collection and data analysis. The evaluation matrix provides the backbone of any evaluation and features 17 evaluation questions. The main method for primary data collection were Semi-Structured (SSI) and in-depth Interviews. Secondary data collection relied on desk review, including any Key Performance Indicators and statistical data. A participatory approach was strictly followed, by promoting the assessment of the experiences of a variety of stakeholders with the use of techniques that are inclusive, participatory as far as possible, and respectful of the socio-cultural context in which the evaluation is carried out.

The main limitation had to do with getting hold of key Chinese stakeholders, which substantially limited the availability of information to assess impacts (response rate for interviews standing at 45%).

Conclusions

Relevance

The Action through Component 1 of the project promoted the overall foreign policy objectives of the EU with China and responded sufficiently well to support the EU-China political dialogue for environment by working on joint priorities. With Service for Foreign Policy Instruments of the European Commission (FPI), the focus got centred around global issues, vis-à-vis a focus on China’s internal issues, with the direct involvement of policy-making institutions.

The project’s *modus operandi* was flexible, adaptive and responsive to the Chinese context and its explicit needs. This was key to circumvent the problems which emerged since the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the project’s intervention themes captured mostly immediate priorities and rather low-hanging fruits (e.g. pollutant system, COP15), in areas in which the EU was allowed to “break into”, without a clear strategy on how to approach more cumbersome topics on which China is not keen to work on (e.g. air pollution stemming from coal production, soil pollution) while staying an attractive partner for dialogue, despite the tense political context. Having Policy Research Centre for Environment and Economy of the Ministry of Environmental Protection of the People’s Republic of China (PRCEE) as part of the consortium can facilitate some approaches, but can also make it more difficult to address more sensitive topics given it is part of the Chinese Ministry of Environment and Economy (MEE). Governmental cooperation with China is a challenge, even on the more consensual environmental field - given the inherent rigidity of the Party-State.

Activities and outputs of Action (Component 1) were consistent with respectively the overall and specific objectives of the Action. The dialogue approach hinged mostly on research (i.e., in-depth studies, short papers), trainings, expert workshops, policy visits and a final policy seminar. Events were considered critical as they allowed for face-to-face interactions and thus trust-building relationships.

There was practically no visibility of this project outside China and within the EU space. The project remained mostly confined to the MEE and its partners, and to the participants of the project’s activities.

Effectiveness

The project worked on joint priorities centred around global issues and responded well to support the EU-China political dialogue for environment. Although the pandemic caused delay, planned outputs and activities are on a good path to be delivered.

Events (expert workshops, trainings and policy visits) were well organized, well attended, well balanced between formal and informal exchanges and to the point but were not the most visible though.

All topics - biodiversity, permitting system, green economy and investment, pollution and environmental governance - covered the "specific topics of particular interest" identified during the first Project Coordination Committee (PCC) meeting.

Unclear dissemination and disclosure policy for sharing of knowledge products in general is a major shortcoming of the project, which consequently reduced the sharing of results and lessons with wider policy target audiences, and with a broader Chinese and European public outside the project. Collaboration with the China Council for International Cooperation on Environment (CCICED) and the joint hosting of meetings were highly relevant. However, visibility of the EU in these events was minimal.

The project was somehow more limited in bringing in other players, namely from civil society, other governmental ministries and the private sector to maximize effectiveness, also in line with its core target of target groups.

The trust relationship developed by the EU with MEE is a considerable acquired capital, but other more diversified connections within the MEE would allow to reach out more effectively to other departments and relevant ministries working in related areas, to increase the project's impact through enhanced inter-institutional cooperation and dialogue. The presence of PRCEE within the project implementation consortium helped gain access inside the MEE and the Chinese government to build such trust. However, it would be relevant for the EU to ensure that access to relevant departments does not rely only on PRCEE's connections within MEE or those of the project team. Having the European Union Delegation (EUD) to engage directly and bilaterally with all relevant actors – governmental and non-governmental - would ensure the advancement of this agenda.

As to outcomes and impacts, the project gets merit for putting topics high on the agenda, making important breakthroughs, namely on green economic recovery, discussions on biodiversity and the European Green Deal. Additionally, MEE officials are now more knowledgeable about European approaches and experience, which has allowed them to identify the best policy implementation options.

Efficiency

The pace of implementation is good and the project has run smoothly, but COVID-19 has caused some delays. Efficient project management was supported through the involvement of both MEE's Policy Research Centre for Environment and Economy (PRCEE) which is part of the consortium running the project, and the quality of the implementation team and their networking abilities. However, the modalities of project management implementation are not totally obvious and the role of PRCEE in the project's setup is not totally clear.

Although collected evidence for impact is limited, not only due to the data collection limitations from the Chinese side, but also because of the opacity of Chinese policymaking, it is unanimously recognized that acting to keep the dialogue and the communication with China flowing is fundamental. It can be feasible to admit that most of the research work had some degree of influence, and that some of the project's recommendations served at least as the basis of formulation of MEE's recommendations for the 14th Five-Year-Plan (FYP).

Interviewees also unanimously recognized the lack of evidence to support the claim that the project directly contributed to the Chinese institutional/governance or management practices on challenges of global concern.

The project worked mostly at the institutional level and the private sector was not often directly targeted due to the complexity of bringing it on board at this stage of the process. However, the private sector is increasingly seen in China as a driving force for transformation.

Sustainability

There is, in principle, willingness of Chinese key target groups to cooperate with the EU on the global challenge of environmental conservation. However, China's positioning as a developing country and the constant reference to the common but differentiated responsibility limits the potential for convergence of EU and China's policies to address global challenges.

COVID-19 affected negatively the project's sustainability due to delays of meetings, but above all due to the project's team lack of proximity to decision-making processes.

Institutional sustainability and the maintenance of a "champion" in the process is key to sustainability and the future progress of the work after the end of the project. The project's sustainability in the long term can be hampered by two main factors. First, project ownership. Sufficient engagement from EU headquarters would be needed from the outset to ensure cooperation with China in a sustainable way. Second, sustainability can be put at stake with lack of sufficient stakeholder participation from other relevant ministries, as well as from provincial level governments, due to political competition and the deeply embedded vertical governance culture within China. Institutional stability and the involvement of Chinese "champions" in the process are key to sustainability and future work in this domain.

Impact

The impact of the Action (Component 1) is hard to gauge and is still materialising. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused some disruption throughout 2020, affecting the normal course of events.

Despite the Chinese focus on "no interference", it is consensual that the EU needs to maintain a relationship with China, keeping dialogue and communication open and that this project's approach has served the intended purpose. All the respondents unanimously declared dialogue as fundamental and that the project is working in the right direction, but there is scarce evidence of new institutional/governance or management practices which can be directly attributed to the project. The "black box" of Chinese policy decision-making process makes this very hard to gauge.

Information abounds on the trends of Chinese policy convergence in the environmental domain. It can be feasible to admit that some of the dialogue and the research work managed to have some degree of influence, and that some of the recommendations served at least as the basis to formulate MEE's recommendations for the FYP, the ultimate strategic policy document in China. However, the impact of the research work is below its potential for direct policy influence, especially in the wider scientific and academic community.

The biodiversity stream of work served to exchange European and Chinese views and foster a common understanding about the topics, but was limited as to the alignment of positions, also considering the COP has not yet taken place.

There is a new mindset within Chinese experts touched by the project, they are now more aware about how to build future policy related work.

Concerning the latest Chinese legislation on plastic waste, the extent to which it was influenced by the European legislation could not be proven given the limitations of the evaluation to reach out to Chinese stakeholders.

EU Value Added

In the view of consulted EU countries, the EU-China dialogue on the green economy is filling a gap that is not covered by anyone, through “impactful dialogue” and by creating a proximity space for close interaction with China. The EU work also serves to speak consistently with one voice with China. Due to its mobilisation capacity and diplomacy ability, the EUD managed to also serve as an entry point for EU Member States’ activities in China. Without EU funding, these activities would not have taken place or been supported by any other Member States, nor would it have this level of reach and coverage.

However, there is still scope to further capitalise on value added and synergies between the EU and its Member States as part of this project. Another value-added factor is the EU’s ability to act as a wide convener at the regional and multilateral level, able to draw together a whole range of European stakeholders, from the public to the private sectors, and academia from several countries.

Coherence

The Action (Component 1) and its activities are aligned with EU policy interests, and its activities coherent with other EU external action policies. This project also works in conjunction and synergises with several other EU projects (e.g., the EU-China Energy Cooperation Platform, the Strategic Partnerships for the Implementation of the Paris Agreement, the China Biodiversity Facility, the EU-China Cooperation on Water and Implementation of the China-EU Water Platform) with the EUD minimising overlap.

There is also a high degree of coherence with EU Member States’ actions in this domain. Further, there is a substantial ongoing potential for complementarity between the EU and its Member States actions in China. The European Green Deal was launched in December 2019, at the end of the second year of project implementation, and China has a recognisable current interest in it related to its ecological civilisation strategy. Thus, there is still scope to further capitalise on these synergies and for the EUD to serve as an information and coordination platform among all EU Member States. There are also substantial thematic synergies due to the existing complementarities with other sub-areas in the environmental field (e.g., the recent establishment of the EU-China High-level Environment and Climate Dialogue).

It is advantageous for all partners dealing with China to be coherent, and to support the implementation of international agenda commitments, by supporting China’s ecological and energy transition in compliance with international standards on climate change and biodiversity.

The project reveals a considerable degree of coherence with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and has the potential to contribute to some of its indicators.

Lessons learnt

Lessons learnt from the project's implementation are:

- Overall, the political level dialogue with China has become quite challenging and less open - with several restrictions to communications - with policy-making processes in China also becoming increasingly opaque, making assessing external influence of EU projects onto the Chinese government policymaking increasingly difficult in recent years.
- Lack of engagement from Chinese stakeholders in sufficient numbers during the evaluation combined with the lack of awareness on the importance of independent evaluation work, caused an insufficient number of Chinese stakeholders to respond to the evaluation process.
- High-level commitment and buy-in from the Chinese government's side is key to speed the implementation of the environmental and green agenda and the operationalization of the project, given the hardened political context and the issues brought about by COVID-19.
- Adaptability to a changing environment and responsiveness to Chinese needs were key to circumvent challenges.
- Good partner communication between the EU and China and the synergies which arose between the two blocks favoured the implementation of the project.
- Keeping an ongoing open technical dialogue with China is a meaningful means of communication and proximity.
- By combining work on Chinese demand-driven topics with joint priorities centred around global issues, and with a greater margin to propose, explore and dare given the EU-led nature of this initiative, the project managed to stay an attractive partner for dialogue and make important breakthroughs, by putting topics such as biodiversity or green recovery high on the agenda, despite not being able to address more sensitive topics, such as environmental aspects of coal extraction (air and water pollution), in parallel with other aspects (energy and climate related).
- The EU has the mobilisation capacity and the diplomacy ability to serve as an entry point for EU Member States activities in China.
- Remote meetings were not as effective to reach and engage Chinese stakeholders, gather consensus, and spread influence as presential meetings.
- Without proper dissemination within and outside China and a disclosure policy for the dissemination of its research track's knowledge products, the project's visibility, learnings and ability to contribute to the widespread discussion on these topics with key policy target audiences and broader Chinese and European public outside the scope of the project will remain beyond its potential.
- Without a clear strategic agenda on how to make use of multi-stakeholder platforms to foster project's objectives, the project will find itself confined in its ability to derive impact from bringing in other players from civil society, governmental ministries and the private sector.
- There is scope to explore other engagement modalities for greater long-term sustainability and ownership.

Recommendations

Recommendations to the European Union

Recommendation 1. The project should enhance its role as a networking platform to serve EU interest possibly on three different fronts: i) serving as a wider network hub, namely striving to provide more space for public engagement, ii) striving to better link up different departments and divisions within the MEE and across other ministries, iii) adoption of a pragmatic implementation approach to support the development of solutions for China, based on EU interest.

Recommendation 2. Foster the project's role as a dissemination platform to create a common narrative around these topics in China: i) enhance the project's external communication and visibility for project areas that can be made public, ii) diversify project event formats to reach a wider public.

Recommendation 3. Harmonise terminology across all documents from the outset for clarity purposes and performance monitoring.

Recommendation 4. Integrate evaluations within the project cycle management timing.

Recommendation 5. There is room and apparent willingness from the Chinese side for the EU to also consider conducting policy dialogue through other shared initiatives - beyond the EU-led Partnership Instrument – namely through shared financing collaboration areas and co-financed scientific projects, in which the Chinese would feel more involved and at the steering wheel.

Recommendation 6. Restore the annual Project Coordination Committee meetings and, independently from the operation of this single project, the EUD should continue to engage bilaterally with relevant MEE departments to maintain the good relationship.

Recommendation 7. Implement a closer articulation and coordination mechanisms with EU Member States and their activities in this domain. The project would also benefit from a more systematic engagement from EU headquarters.

Recommendations to both the EU and the Project's Steering Committee

Recommendation 8. Explore other potential collaboration areas deeply related to the EU interest and endeavour to achieve higher-level goals through more regular convening and joint coordination between the China team in DG ENV and EUD.

Recommendations to both the European Union and the implementation team

Recommendation 9. Establish a consistent and integrated monitoring system.

Recommendation 10. Assure constant and close interaction with Chinese stakeholders to increase impact, increasing the connection of the project to the policy dialogue at the Ministerial level, while reinforcing resources at the EUD in line with the ambitions for policy influence.

Recommendation 11. Firm up and explicit the criteria and process for the selection of Chinese experts.

Recommendation 12. Take the opportunity to foster cross-cutting work to break silos across both China and EU stakeholders.

1.1.1 Recommendations for the implementation team

Recommendation 13. Establish clear typologies for short papers and distinguish the research track of the project from the administrative and advisory work streams.

Recommendation 14. Continue to foster joint collaboration within the research track with clear criteria on the choice of contributors.

1 Introduction

According to Terms of Reference (ToR), the **overall objectives** of this final evaluation are to provide the relevant services of the European Union (EU) and the interested stakeholders with:

- “an overall independent assessment of the past performance of the “*Support the “EU-China Cooperation on Environment and Green Economy”* project”, paying particular attention to its results measured against its expected objectives; and the reasons underpinning such results;
- key lessons learned, conclusions and related recommendations in order to improve current and future Actions” (ToR, page 4).

This document presents the final evaluation report. Section 2 describes the findings per evaluation question and Section 3 elucidates on the conclusions and recommendations of the work.

1.1 Overall approach

The evaluation focused on the assessment of ultimate results (**outputs and impacts**) with an approach focused on **accountability**, but especially on **learning**. **External factors** that may have facilitated or impeded the achievement of the expected results were considered, along with unintended effects.

A **mixed-methods approach to data collection and data analysis** was used. As such, the evaluation used **Contribution Analysis** and apply **deductive reasoning**, whereby conclusions and recommendations are based on evaluation findings. The main method for primary data collection were **Semi-Structured (SSI) and in-depth Interviews**. Secondary data collection relied on desk review including any Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and statistical data available. Governing **evaluation principles** are described in Annex I.

A **participatory approach** was strictly followed, by promoting the assessment of the experiences of a variety of stakeholders (stated in Annex V) with the use of techniques that are inclusive, participatory as far as possible, and respectful of the socio-cultural context in which the evaluation is carried out.

The use of multiple data sources and **triangulation** ensured rigour and are useful for permitting the evaluation to determine a wider range of unexpected project behaviours. As such, particular emphasis was given to triangulation across methods, data sources, informants and theory triangulation.

1.2 Evaluation matrix and questions

The evaluation matrix provides the backbone of any evaluation and includes evaluation questions and methods. Evaluation Questions (EQ) are described in the Table below. A detailed evaluation matrix is available in Annex III.

Table 1 – Evaluation questions overview

Evaluation Criteria	Judgement criteria	Indicators	
Relevance	1 To what extent have the EU strategy in China, the EU sectoral approach in environment and this specific Action (component 1) promoted the overall foreign policy objectives of the EU with China and were implemented according to China's priorities and the evolving needs and opportunities of its institutions? o To what extent are the programme priorities in line with the sectoral policies and the programming/ strategy documents adopted by the EU and China in the environment sector? o Could the EU priorities have been better matched through different Actions or activities?	EU support has been aligned with China's strategic and environmental priorities and the evolving needs and opportunities of its institutions	-Extent to which interviewees recognise EU foreign policy objectives were promoted - Degree of influence of the EU on the chinese environmental priorities - Evidence of change in chinese environmental priorities concerning alignment with the sectoral policies and the programming strategies of the EU - Extent to which activities can be connected to contributing to a change in chinese environmental priorities
	2 To what extent and how this specific Action (component 1) responded to: o support to the EU-China political dialogue for environment? o the visibility given to the achievements of the EU in its internal market in terms of environment policies and institutional/ governance mechanisms, in particular when dealing with challenges of global concern?	EU support through this Action has been relevant for addressing environmental and green economy issues and existing constraints	-Extent to which the EU was able to support to the EU-China political dialogue for environment according to the perceptions of interviewees -Level of political dialogue engagement for environment according to the perceptions of interviewees - Level of satisfaction concerning the political dialogue engagement for environment according to the perceptions of interviewees -Extent to which the achievements of the EU in its internal market in terms of environment policies and institutional/ governance mechanisms are recognised by chinese officials
	3 Are the activities and outputs of the Action (component 1) consistent with respectively the overall and specific objectives of the Action?	The Action's activities and outputs have taken into consideration the overall and specific objectives of the EU and China Environmental policy dialogue	- Level of articulation and connection between intended objectives of the EU and China environmental policy dialogue and the activities performed and their subsequent outcomes -Level of connectedness and synergy between activities and outputs
Effectiveness	4 To what extent has the Action (component 1) progressed towards the achievement of its expected results, namely: o expected outcomes and impacts, especially considering: § policy engagement with the EU § Bi-lateral environment dialogue between China and the EU § addressing in China and working together with the Chinese authorities on challenges of global concern? § Environmental and green economy policies and regulatory measures o outputs?	This Action has supported the delivery of a better political and policy engagement and bilateral dialogue with the EU, and environmental and green economy policies and regulatory measures and the promotion of environmental and green economy business practices etter enabling environment through improved policy, legal and/or institutional frameworks	-Level of policy engagement as perceived by interviewees - Quality of political dialogue as perceived by interviewees - Extent to which chinese policy-makers were drawn to discussing the topics proposed by the EU - Extent to which chinese policy-makers were drawn to accept the positions proposed by the EU - Number of initiatives dropped - Number of initiated thematic dialogues which did not yield a concrete action -Number of environmental and green economy policies and regulatory measures originated directly from the project's activities •Total number of events organised and supported •Number of people participating in events •Number of EU companies participating in the events •Number of visits, exchanges, •Number of technical meetings •Number of group events •Number of training activities •Person-days of expertise or technical assistance provided •Number of public/media/communication campaigns organised and implemented •Number of outreach and advocacy activities •Number of press releases/policy briefs/opinion pieces etc. produced
	5 To what extent this Action (component 1) managed to factor in the evolution of the political context in China (e.g. such as the reorganisation of the MEE)? o To what extent have the EU's strategic approach, along with its institutional and operational framework been flexible enough to anticipate and deal with emerging problems in this particular Action (component 1), find solutions and integrate lessons learnt? o Has the Action (component 1) been able to engage with the appropriate interlocutors? o To what extent did the Action (component 1) brought in other players and were leveraged for maximizing effectiveness?	The Action was responsive and took into account China's evolving context	-Extent to which the political context in China was integrated in the project -Level of adaptability to deal with emerging problems and change activities and intervention approach - Extent to which intended and relevant stakeholders (and interlocutors) were involved in the activities - Extent to which other relevant players were brought into the activities, leveraging effectiveness
	6 Which were the key success factors and constraints that influenced the achievement of results?	The Action was responsive and took into account China's evolving context	- List of key success factors - List of key constraints for the achievement of results

(Table 1 continued)

Evaluation Criteria		Judgement criteria	Indicators	
Efficiency	7	Is the implementation of the activities cost effective? o Was the pace of implementation of the project satisfactory according to the budget and timeframe available? o Are the modalities in place for an efficient project management and implementation, (e.g. contractor set-up, location of the programme team, as well as any sub-contractors involved)? o Were the Action (component 1) and the activities properly budgeted? o Were procedures transparent, efficient and easy to apply?	EU's resources were conducive to a timely and cost-effective implementation of activities and efficient monitoring arrangements	- Pace of project implementation according to internal reports, M&E frameworks and interviews - Types of modalities of project management implementation - Appropriateness of budget to intended activities - Level of transparency of procedures - Level of efficiency of procedures
	8	Are the monitoring arrangements both for the Action (component 1) and its activities satisfactory?	idem.	- Extent to which suitable monitoring arrangements were in place - Extent to which monitoring arrangements were satisfactory
Impact	9	To what extent has this Action (component 1) contributed to make progress towards positive long-term outcomes and impacts on the environment and green economy policies, along with targeted beneficiaries? o Is the impact of the Action (component 1) satisfactory, especially considering the EU-China political dialogue? o Did the Action (component 1) help to increase the environmental level playing field between the EU and China? o Has the Action (component 1) been able to promote EU and/or international standards and regulations related to environment?	EU's institutional set-up and political dialogue was conducive to an efficient implementation of the activities and the materialisation of long-term outcomes and impacts on the environment and green economy policies	- Level of satisfaction concerning the quality and relevance of policy dialogue according to interviewees - Extent to which the project was perceived as increasing the environmental level playing field between the EU and China - Extent to which the project was able to promote EU and/or international standards and regulations related to environment
	10	Were new institutional/governance or management practices on challenges of global concern applied by China during the implementation of the Action (component 1)? o Did the Action (component 1) have a direct influence on those, and has it contributed to an improvement of the environmental governance and policy development in China?	EU support has contributed to a better enabling environment through improved policy, legal and/or institutional frameworks, namely by fostering improvements in environmental governance and policy development in China	- Number of new institutional/governance or management practices on challenges of global concern adopted by China - Extent to which new institutional/governance or management practices on challenges of global concern were effectively implemented by China - Extent to which the project had a direct influence on the improvement of the environmental governance and policy development in China
	11	Has this or could this have been translated into economic opportunities for the EU industry, by promoting the existence of European expertise and solutions on particular subjects of the EU- China environment dialogue?	Promotion of EU standards and regulations has translated into economic opportunities for the EU industry	- Extent to which the project opened up new economic opportunities for EU companies
Sustainability	12	To what extent have achieved benefits continued or will be likely to continue once the Action (component 1) is completed? o What are the major factors influencing the potential sustainability of the Action (Component 1)? o How can these factors inform the sustainability of the Action (Component 1), especially considering the EU- China political dialogue and challenges of global concern?	EU strategic support will have a long-lasting effect on the quality and governance of environmental policies and foster a greener economy in China	- List of factors inform the sustainability of the Action - Extent to which each factor influenced the EU- China political dialogue and challenges of global concern
EU added value	13	What is the additional value and complementarities resulting from the EU cooperation, compared to what could reasonably have been expected from China acting bilaterally with EU Member States organisations directly? o Did the Action and its activities bring about benefits that could not have been provided by other EU Member States' actors? Which ones? o To what extent did the Action (component 1) and its activities complemented or added value to other EU and Member States initiatives in the field of environment and green economy?	EU strategic support has been used for interventions which would not have been better, or equally well, addressed at the national or regional level EU support has been used strategically and operationally to complement and synergise with other mechanisms to deliver assistance at the national, regional and international levels	- Extent to which each additional value and complementarities existed and were explored - Extent to which the Action (component 1) and its activities complemented or added value to other EU and Member States initiatives in the field of environment and green economy
Coherence	14	What is the coherence of this Action (component 1) with the EU strategy in China and the EU sectoral approach in environment? o Is the Action (component 1) and its activities clearly aligned with EU interests, and if so, in which ways? o Is the Action (component 1) and its activities consistent with other EU external action policies, and if so, which ones? o Are there any particular overlaps or synergies with other EU funded actions?	EU support has been used strategically and in coherence with other EU external action policies to complement other EU external action policies, and Member States and donor's mechanisms to deliver at the design and programming stage in accordance to the SDGs	- Level of coherence with the EU's strategy in China - Level of coherence with the EU's sectoral approach in environment -List of overlaps with other EU funded actions -List of synergies with other EU funded actions
	15	What coherence exists with other Member State actions in China in this domain?	EU support has been used strategically and in coherence with other EU external action policies to complement other EU external action policies, and Member States and donor's mechanisms to deliver at the design and programming stage in accordance to the SDGs	- Level of coherence with other Member State actions in China
	16	What coherence should be sought with other international donors in this domain?		- List of coherence issues and potential approaches with other international donors
	17	What coherence and complementarity the Action (component 1) shows with: o the EU Green deal? o the SDGs?		- Level of coherence with EU Green deal - Level of complementarity with EU Green deal - Level of coherence with the SDGs

Source: Evaluation team.

1.3 Evaluation limitations

There were substantial problems in getting hold of key Chinese stakeholders. This substantially limited the availability to assess impacts due to the lack of stakeholders on the side of the Chinese Government. The remote interview phase collected insights from 31 interviewees, six of which were Chinese (see Annex V, Table “Statistics on planned and conducted interviews”). Overall, 69 emails were sent, with a favourable response rate of only 45%.

2 FINDINGS

2.1 Relevance

EQ 1. (Relevance) To what extent have the EU strategy in China, the EU sectoral approach in environment and this specific Action promoted the overall foreign policy objectives of the EU with China and were implemented according to China’s priorities and the evolving needs and opportunities of its institutions?

This Action through Component 1 of the project promoted the overall foreign policy objectives of the EU with China. There is an overall consensus that the project fits within the EU priorities for dialogue with China and falls within the realm of possibilities to cooperate with the Chinese government. It aimed to foster dialogue and policy convergence, towards the protection of a common good, the environment. Key focus areas were biodiversity conservation, pollution prevention, plastics management, with a greater focus on climate policies becoming increasingly the focus of both Chinese and global actors as the project progressed due to the approaching COP26 and recent Chinese commitments.

The EU’s strategy on China from 2016 and later updated in 2019 (European Commission, 2016 and 2019) remains the cornerstone of EU engagement with the country. The world and EU’s prosperity are no doubt intrinsically linked to sustainable growth in China¹ and to the problem of the “global commons” - notably the environment and the oceans - and in the finding of the right solutions to these shared social and environmental challenges. Many areas were considered “ripe” for dialogue and enhanced co-operation, in particular “climate change, energy, oceans and resource efficiency, as well as helping to resolve China’s immense environmental problems (whose effects will be felt by the EU)”, (European Commission, 2016, page 13). It comes thus at no surprise that the EU has stated it should continue actively to support and encourage “economic, environmental and social reforms in China towards a more open, sustainable and inclusive growth model” (European Commission, 2016, page 6). This strategy affirms that the “EU should continue to pursue dialogues with China on standards, regulation and conformity assessment procedures in key sectors in order to reduce costs and entry barriers, and to promote the primacy of international standards in areas such as (...) environmental protection, (...), climate action (...)” (European Commission, 2016, page 8).

The EU-China summit main results, as of 22 June 2020², continue to reinforce that “Engaging and cooperating with China is both an opportunity and necessity”. The COVID-pandemic has shown clearly that the EU-China partnership has become even more crucial, not in environment and climate, but also in the defence of multilateralism. In the Joint statement of the 20th EU-China Summit (EU and China, 2020), it is stated “The leaders welcomed the increase in high-level contacts on

¹ Research suggests that air pollution from China contributes to up to 65% of the ozone increase in the Western United States (Lin et al., 2017).

² <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-summit/2020/06/22/>

environmental protection and natural resource conservation, and the importance of assuming greater leadership on the global environmental agenda, in particular on issues such as pollution prevention and control, biodiversity conservation, CITES³ implementation and enforcement and wildlife trafficking, and elimination of illegally harvested timber from the markets, as well as desertification and land degradation. (...) The EU and China will work together actively with a view to achieving the preservation of biodiversity. The EU welcomes China's commitment to organise COP 15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2020, which should mark the adoption of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework" (EU and China, 2020, paragraph 29). Furthermore, "The EU and China will work together with other Parties to promote the universal ratification of the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol on the phase down of HFCs. The Kigali Amendment is a crucial advance at global level in the area of climate change and environmental protection. Through joint action, the EU and China will facilitate a smooth transition to environment-friendly alternatives used in heating, refrigeration and air conditioning systems" (EU and China, 2020, paragraph 14).

COVID-19 showed how meaningless country boundaries are in the face of a human-wide problem and that the same holds for the environment. It demonstrated there is no other option but to continue to coordinate and work together for common solutions. Adding to this, 2020 continued to provide evidence of the deteriorating condition of the world's natural environment. China is still one of the biggest world's polluters. But on the other hand, its green sector has grown considerably in the last few years. Thus, China remained the necessary partner to work towards global common public goods, such as the environment. "It is a worthwhile investment, China is important from an environmental standpoint"⁴. This has also demonstration effects, in the sense that it shows the international community that climate cooperation can be done jointly, and that cooperation between two big blocks, such as China in the EU, is possible.

However, China has been recognised for being increasingly entrenched in its own views and harder to engage⁵, relying on their unique formulas and definitions "with Chinese characteristics", which are applied in several areas, particularly for human rights. In particular since 2009, China has been particularly hard to engage in "anything that resembles, what Beijing refers to as, "interference" in Chinese domestic and foreign policies" (Berkofsky, 2019, page 3). There was a "dramatic" change in tone and attitude towards China in the EU since early 2019 (European Commission, 2019). China has been considered "simultaneously, in different policy areas, a cooperation partner with whom the EU has closely aligned objectives, a negotiating partner with whom the EU needs to find a balance of interests, an economic competitor in the pursuit of technological leadership, and a systemic rival⁶ promoting alternative models of governance⁷.

It comes without surprise that any intervention designed and implemented in such a context needs a realistic, assertive, and multi-faceted approach to induce policy and regulatory shifts. This requires a flexible and pragmatic intervention style, in which political dialogue is a viable approach. The Action Fiche responds to this appeal and context very well, by setting its goals as to "influence Chinese policy making on environment, green economy and wildlife protection by

³ Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

⁵ It has long dismissed dialogues on rule of law, security, freedom of speech and expression, freedom of religion, the right to social protection, right to life and liberty (Berkofsky, 2019). Beijing dismissed EU statement on human rights as "illegitimate interference" in Chinese internal affairs. "The EU-China dialogues on human rights, the promotion of rule of law coupled with Brussels urging Beijing to embrace values such as freedom of speech and expression etc. have not produced any tangible results either" (Berkofsky, 2019, page 3).

⁶ Somewhat answered at by the speech of H.E. Wang Yi in 2019 in Brussels (Yi, 2019).

⁷ The words "cooperation partner" and "systemic rival" are articulated in the same sentence. "Gone are the days, or so it seems, when Brussels' policymakers boasted about their "strategic partnership" with Beijing, their "mutual understanding", "common interests" and "sectoral dialogues" all of which created the instrumental basis to adopt joint policies and resolve problems through strong bilateral trade and an investment agenda" (Berkofsky, 2019, page 1).

reinforcing EU-China policy dialogue and cooperation in these fields". It is designed in two different components. Component A starts by stating the importance of greater regulatory convergence in environmental regulations which is key to provide the right frameworks to level the playing field.

Programming priorities are thus aligned between the strategy EU adopted in China in this domain, the Action Fiche, and the project (Component A). These same EU priorities are already being addressed by other complementary initiatives, as mentioned in the Action Fiche, but given the nature of China and its context, trying to influence environmental policy through policy dialogue and a mechanism such as the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments of the European Commission (FPI) is appropriate and very relevant. Through this Action, the EU is also capitalising on its linkages across other policy areas, sectors and initiatives (e.g., on water and forests) in order to exert more leverage in the pursuit of its objectives.

Concerning the second part of the question, the evaluation could not fully assess whether the project was implemented according to China's priorities and the evolving needs and opportunities of its institutions because of the lack of responsiveness from Chinese stakeholders to the evaluation exercise.

This EU project was not perceived by Chinese - along with other stakeholders - as big, but it was seen as relevant, as it provided important contributions in some areas. However, these themes capture mostly the low-hanging fruits, in areas in which the EU was allowed to "break into", with no clear vision on how to impact more difficult topics, such as addressing water and air pollution emissions from coal production, while staying an attractive partner for dialogue. Lowering air and water emissions is not only important for the climate, as often underlined in the public discourse, but also in terms of air pollution, and it was widely acknowledged by all interviewees that China needs to transition out of coal energy. The 14th Five-Year Plan (FYP) comes into force after China committed to carbon neutrality, ground-level ozone pollution climate and energy targets. Targets for air pollution are ambitious. Still, in the FYP, China "committed to ambitious anti-pollution targets, but they did not promise to cap total energy consumption and even left the door open to increased coal output"⁸. Thus, coordinating and synergising environmental protection and climate action will be even more crucial for the future and the EU can have an important role to play.

Whether these EU priorities could have been better matched through different actions or activities is difficult to answer for the same reasons mentioned above. FPI replaced previous DEVCO's instruments for development cooperation with China⁹. The objective was to leverage mutual political understanding, promote EU interest and level the playing field with China on different environmental policy issues. Although dialogue through the FPI approach gives the EU many degrees of freedom without it being dependent on a formal approval from Chinese stakeholders, effective policy dialogue at the government level with a country like China still hinges on its willingness to engage.

EQ 2. (Relevance) To what extent and how this specific Action (Component 1) responded to: i) support to the EU-China political dialogue for environment?; ii) the visibility given to the achievements of the EU in its internal market in terms of environment policies and institutional/governance mechanisms, in particular when dealing with challenges of global concern?

Component 1 of the Action responded sufficiently well to support the EU-China political dialogue for environment by working on joint priorities. The Partnership Instrument (PI) was designed as an instrument reflecting a specific logic, the promotion of EU strategic interests with a global reach. Stakeholder views confirm that the Action's specific objectives reflect global challenges.

⁸ Foreign Policy (2021) and confirmed by interviews.

⁹ There are also other possible synergies with other EU projects which were not explored in this evaluation.

China has been transitioning fast through the field of environmental conservation requiring flexibility with respect its emerging priorities. There was a clear need to carefully match the country's dynamics, but also to balance between pushing sensitive topics that are of interest to the EU, with those that China is willing to cooperate on. Contrary to China Council for International Cooperation on Environment (CCICED)¹⁰, which is increasingly driven by the Chinese, and whose recommendations are filtered before they are sent to higher level Chinese leadership, the EU was more in control, in the sense that the project team had a greater margin to propose, explore and dare.

With FPI, the focus got centred around global issues, vis-à-vis a focus on China's internal issues, with the direct involvement of policy-making institutions, such as the Ministry of Ecology and Environment (MEE), (e.g., the dedicated support to the preparation of the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP15)). The consultations revealed how challenging it is to be considered as an attractive partner for dialogue, let alone to find a commitment on the Chinese side for buy-in. The political level dialogue with China was widely recognised by non-Chinese interviewees as extremely challenging, and the space for manoeuvre is getting more limited¹¹.

The Action was designed within the FPI spirit and principles with the objective to closely respond to the to the EU-China political dialogue for environment. The type of political dialogue it proposes is supported by a range of regular and close activities with Chinese government offices, which foresee high level contacts and meetings, especially at the level of the MEE, and the dissemination of knowledge. The former is done through a range of knowledge products that are used and presented in meetings on hot/topical and emerging issues, but also by the eight Experts Workshops foreseen and most of all by the two policy or scoping study tours for senior officials to the EU. The organisation of a joint seminar with Chinese and European stakeholders to present the final results of the action is the culmination of this work, displaying the results of this interaction and exchange over time.

At the **project level**, its overall objective is stated as not so much "influence" but to "reinforce EU-China cooperation on environment", and on granting "more convergence" between the EU and China on environmental governance, along with greater integration of environment into other areas of government decision making. It placed greater emphasis on EU discussions with Chinese officials and the MEE "on environmental policy/green economy and to foster the adoption of environmental best practices in the country" (project ToR). Drawing from the action fiche, it tailored activities to further improve shared understanding and knowledge on how to achieve better environmental protection and green development and establish good working contacts between EU and Chinese experts. It concentrated on holding targeted and specialised expert exchanges for sharing new approaches, lessons and good practice in areas where the EU has substantial experience to offer China or where developments in China are of most relevance to the EU, trying simultaneously to be responsive to China's fast developing needs in terms of advice from the European experience on the design and implementation of environmental policy and measures.

The **project's *modus operandi* was adaptive and responsive to Chinese context and explicit needs**, taking a somehow fluid and iterative decision-making approach in order to manage uncertainties, allowing for adaptation of the project's design when necessary. The Action Fiche left enough room of manoeuvre for the project to adjust its priorities during the dialogues, to make it more adaptive to the dynamics of the Chinese context. The fact that room was made for more flexible types

¹⁰ CCICED is the main umbrella for joint Chinese-international environmental research in China.

¹¹ China is becoming increasingly powerful, and it is moving in its own direction. China is not seeking to get advice; it already has substantial technical knowledge and resources to move on its own. Even CCICED's work is less of a two-way street, there is a greater level of screening from the Chinese experts and there is now less imprint from international experts than in the past. Overall, Chinese CCICED colleagues are less daring in what they are willing to put forward to the State Council.

of dialogue and policy articulation, opened up the potential for greater effectiveness and impact, as Chinese stakeholders welcomed - beyond being exposed to the EU experience - the case studies it brought, the examples, and good practises. How coordination is done across the EU – a strength in EU’s provision of support in this area – is no doubt of interest to China and more so in the future development of its provinces.

Without a doubt the project contributed to enhance the communication channel between China - and namely between the MEE and EU - and to “strengthen the relationship”¹², which also draws on a previous EU project in the same domain and in synergies with other EU projects in related domains. Dialogues with China have expanded since, with new dialogues starting on water and circular economy.

Concerning the second part of the question, there was practically no external visibility given to the achievements of this project in the EU’s internal market, either in terms of environment policies or institutional/ governance mechanisms. Only EU and international stakeholders who participated in the events noticed that the EU was behind it, and even so not in all instances (e.g., sessions jointly organised with CCICED did not clearly stand out as EU’s, to several, if not most participants)¹³. The project’s website was not updated at the start of the evaluation and there was hardly any evidence of the activities and availability of project’s outputs¹⁴.

Further, according to the views of the limited sample of interviewees, the project implementors (i.e., Client Earth and PRCEE) got more **visibility** and recognition for the activities than the EU project itself. There is often a confusion between project implementers and the EU lead of the project, partially due to lack of effective branding and communication, which is an area for considerable improvements in the future. There has not been much visibility in the EU, as the activities are happening mostly in China and the website is still being updated. In China, the visibility has remained mostly confined to the MEE and its partners and to the participants in the activities. Few outreach activities were planned within the Action Fiche and the project itself. However, within the activities, knowledge was disseminated about EU environment policy, regulations and arrangements and ideas passed on how this could be applied in China.

EQ 3. (Relevance) Are the activities and outputs of the Action (Component 1) consistent with respectively the overall and specific objectives of the Action?

Activities and outputs of Action (Component 1) were consistent with respectively the overall and specific objectives of the Action. Activities were considered a good breeding ground for the preparation of COP 15 and the Agenda 2030.

As to the Action Fiche in itself, and the project overall (which had some adaptations in during 2020), activities and intended outputs are consistent with the stated overall and specific objectives of the Action. The Action Fiche was already specific as to the activities to take place and the project’s ToR followed through. This view is already used by the EU when developing a strategic approach to policy dialogue in environment and climate change, whereby it starts by identifying opportunities and entry points for policy dialogue (common interest themes), along with productive venues to share lessons from practice and what experience suggests. This approach has helped to enforce ownership by the target institutions and ensure sustainability of actions and keep EU’s role as lead development partner in environment and climate change. For the EU’s political and

¹² Quote from one of the interviewees. It also draws on the continuation of previous work.

¹³ Even if during workshops there was evidence that EU signposts were on the wall and despite the distribution of some material with EU logos such as notebooks and pens. The evaluation team did not have access to a sufficient pool of participants but given the consistency of views even from EU citizens we are extrapolating this finding.

¹⁴ Beyond references on Client Earth’s website.

environmental objectives to be fulfilled with China, relationships need to be fostered between the two sides resorting to a range of activities which get the interest and the participation of people with influence in this matter, with the objective to drive China into a more rules-based and reciprocal setting, so as to achieve a better level playing-field between the two sides. A Theory of Change could consistently be built from the stated results chain in the Action Fiche, which is depicted below in Figure 1.

The Action Fiche also contains intended results as to the development of joint development approaches to support green growth and environmental quality, and ambitions to support China's achievement of its international environmental commitments, which were dropped as the focus of the project. However, several project activities indirectly contributed to these, especially those concerning international commitments and the support to the COP process on biodiversity.

Its ultimate objective is also aligned and encapsulated with the Partnership Instrument Monitoring System (PIMS) overall intended impact to “promote and advance EU and mutual interests”, in an area which is a common global good. More specifically. PI outcomes are closely aligned to PI outcome: i) "To influence processes related to EU cooperation and EU partnership strategies at bilateral, regional, inter-regional and international levels, and ii) “To influence processes addressing global and mutual challenges with a special attention to climate change, energy and environmental protection".

This is also in line with what the EU-China strategy states that the “EU should continue to pursue dialogues with China on standards, **regulation** and conformity assessment procedures in key sectors in order to reduce costs and entry barriers, and to promote the primacy of international standards in areas such as (...) **environmental protection**, (...), climate action (...)” (European Commission, 2016, page 8).

Figure 1 – Alignment between the Action Fiche components (A and B) with the PIMS

Action Fiche (Components A and B)					PIMS		
Activities	Expected results	Intermediate Outcomes	Outcome	Impact	PI Outcomes	PI Impact	PI Overall Impact
Research on two in-depth studies	(i) Enhanced the EU-China Environmental Policy Dialogue through the implementation of activities agreed in the framework of this dialogue;	Greater regulatory convergence for environmental regulations but also policies to integrate environment in other areas of government decision making	Green growth promotion by facilitating regulatory convergence between environmental policies/laws in EU and China	To influence Chinese policy making on environment, green economy and wildlife protection by reinforcing EU-China policy dialogue and cooperation in these fields.	To influence processes related to EU cooperation and EU partnership strategies at bilateral, regional, inter-regional and international levels	To enhance EU's bilateral, regional, inter-regional and multilateral cooperation partnership strategies	Promote and advance EU and mutual interests
Research for short papers produced on environmental issues	(ii) European policies, best practices and learnings in environmental governance are promoted, regarded as potentially relevant by the Chinese authorities for the Chinese context, which would open the way for their possible progressive translation, to the maximum extent possible, into revised environmental policies in China at both national and local levels;	Higher environmental standards and new green development approaches in China that would allow environmental goals to be met and should create new opportunities for green technologies/ solutions			To influence processes related to partner country approaches and practises beneficial to the achievement of the EU 2020 strategy (not covered under PI objectives 1 and 3)		
Training workshops organising and implementing	(iii) Green growth concept is boosted in China via promoting regulatory convergence;	Joint development of innovative approaches to support environmental quality and green growth			To influence processes related to increased understanding and visibility of the EU and of its role on the world scene	To improve access to partner country markets	
In-depth Trainings		China's achievement of its international environmental commitments			To influence processes related to the improvement of conditions for accessing partner country markets	To enhance widespread understanding and visibility of the EU and of its role on the world scene	
Organising Expert workshops	(iv) European actors, including businesses in all sectors relevant to the green growth are increasingly involved and business opportunities created.						
Organising Policy visits							
Organising of EU – China Environmental policy cooperation seminar							

Source: Own elaboration.

The **dialogue approach** taken to reinforce EU-China cooperation on environment to help to achieve higher environmental protection standards followed this line of reasoning, hinging on **research** (in-depth studies, short papers), **trainings** (training workshops, in-depth trainings), **expert workshops, policy seminar, and policy visits**. These are policy dialogue instruments which have the potential to result into public authorities taking lead in the sector and translating into actions on the ground.

Events were considered critical. First of all, they allowed to build trust through face-to-face interactions (before the pandemic). Initially, when the project started the EU had few links in this field in China. The **interactions** and close contacts allowed by the sharing of experiences from the EU and Chinese interviewees were considered as one of the best value-added factors in the provision of this support. Good case examples from the EU were able to help China choose what to focus policy-wise. The networking with EU experts and institutions was relevant and very valued by the Chinese experts interviewed.

Workshops were considered pertinent for information purposes but also to harness influence, given that some were attended by high-level policy makers.

Despite this, the **space for public engagement** was considered somewhat limited by all interviewees. Some stakeholders noted the lack of civil society stakeholders and space for greater engagement. It was recognised that China lacks civil society stakeholders – but that has been changing quickly in the last few years - and that EU and activities could involve more of these to share best practises. However, mixing different types of stakeholders in formal policy meetings with the government is still an unconventional practice in China, so the project needed to strike a fine compromise between these aspects.

2.2 Effectiveness

EQ 4: To what extent has the Action component 1) progressed towards the achievement of its expected results, namely outputs and expected outcomes and impacts, especially considering: i) policy engagement with the EU, ii) bi-lateral environment dialogue between China and the EU, iii) addressing in China and working together with the Chinese authorities on challenges of global concern?, iv) environmental and green economy policies and regulatory measures?

As to outcomes and impacts¹⁵ and overall project influence, stakeholders could not come up with straightforward evidence-based answers, as it is hard to assess. The project is on a good path to deliver the planned outputs and activities.

The EU certainly merits credit for putting topics high on the agenda, making important breakthroughs. The green economic recovery topic rapidly became a priority topic for the Chinese government after some convincing explanations on how the green economy could have a stake in an economic recovery plan¹⁶. The EU has done a good job in fostering discussions on biodiversity, and more recently on the EU green deal. At the time, the project made a significant push for circular and plastic economy, which were new issues in China. The situation has since evolved, and China made several projects to ban plastic. China also paid an enormous amount of attention to EU's Green deal, carbon neutrality and decarbonisation work.

China announced important targets for the environment, but these cannot be attributed directly to the project due to the lack of information about policy-making processes, but also due to the lack of Chinese respondents. In 2020, the Minister of Ecology and Environment, Li Ganjie, stated publicly that "Practice has proved that the current direction and path of pollution control are correct and should be adhered to and improved in the long run" (Xinhua, 2020). Further, China announced it will launch the national green development fund and the allocation of a total of 407.3 billion yuan to ecology and environment protection in 2020, a rise from the 390.6 billion spent in 2019. From this total, 25 billion yuan are allocated to air pollution prevention and control, 31.7 billion yuan to water and 4 billion yuan to soil protection (Reuters, 2020). While attribution of these events to this particular Action may be hard it is no doubt that the Action and the project being evaluator could act in fact as an accelerator to these Chinese moves.

MEE officials now know more about European approaches and experience, giving them the possibility to identify the best implementation options. The benefits of having PRCEE - a think tank affiliated to MEE - as part of the consortium is that: i) they can suggest products and interventions that can be made useful to MEE, and ii) are able to promote those internally to ensure they are effectively used, granting a better prospect for the project's impact.

Collaboration with CCICED and the joint hosting of meetings were relevant, as CCICED is one of the highest influential platform in China in this domain¹⁷. It is considered by some as the most effective channel for the international community to influence policy in China. However, visibility of the EU in these events was minimal, with interviewees not remembering EU events or recalling them as CCICED's. It should be noted that CCICED offers more visibility to his main sponsors, starting with Canada and Norway.

¹⁵ Impacts are described in greater detail in EQ 9.

¹⁶ EU companies got invited to green economic recovery workshop through European business representatives present in China. There were also biodiversity negotiators.

¹⁷ Each year it submits recommendations, which go straight to the highest levels of policymaking. The Chinese Premier and Vice Premier are at the opening and closing ceremony and also meet its members.

Turning to outputs, the project is on a good path to deliver planned outputs and remaining activities. The first Table in Annex IV summarizes the overall achieved project output and activity results. It provides an overall analysis of the project activity and output indicators of the project Logical Framework (LFM), including the revised targets after addendum. The second Table in Annex IV shows a more detailed indicator analysis, and achieved output and activity results, including a first attempt at providing a rating for performance and information gaps. This table is discussed again in EQ8. Several elements can be highlighted:

- The Project LFM was updated in May 2020 for five of the seven activities. The core indicator A1 was supplemented by a second core activity indicator, namely A2 – Person days of expertise or technical assistance provided.
- Information for several indicators is not available, in particular for the core activity indicator A2 (Person days of expertise or technical assistance provided)¹⁸ and the core output indicator OP2 (Percentage of participants in an event who report having benefited from an event).
- For some indicators, the sources of verification were not yet made available (see EQ8).
- The Project LFM is not identical to the project logframe shown in the three Annual Workplans (AWP 2018 – 2020). For a detailed discussion of discrepancies see EQ8.

Topics covered in the events included all the “specific topics of particular interest” identified during the first Project Coordination Committee (PCC) meeting. Climate change, as evoked during the first Expert Workshop in Brussels, was however not further deepened in the activities of the Project¹⁹:

- Five out of 10 expert Workshops were on “biodiversity”, which was deemed important. Within the realm of “ecological civilisation”, China has been acting to decrease pollution and restore ecosystems. After COP 15 takes place, comes the implementation stage, where China has shown some pitfalls in the past, and where this project’s support might be relevant to make sure future promises materialise.
- The “permitting system” was another important topic covered in trainings for regional level officials and one policy visit for high level officials, but not in Workshops.
- “Green economy and investment” were covered during the second policy visit first, and become the second focus of the project since COVID-19.
- “Pollution” was treated in two workshops, one on air pollution, one on marine pollution.
- “Environmental governance” in general was treated in the first workshop, held in Brussels, where priority synergies were identified among the three important topics of climate change, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable ocean use.

Events were well organised, well attended, to the point, but were not the most visible though²⁰. Interviewees were impressed by quality of organisation and experts, the range of experiences brought to the table, and the attendance with often very senior people from China and a number of countries, taking matters seriously. There was a high-level participation from the Chinese government in all events.

Expert workshops were considered pertinent for information purposes, with good discussions and content people could follow, but also to harness influence. Two-third of Chinese workshop participants were government representatives and persons from research organizations attached to central or

¹⁸ One of the internal records provides available data for this core activity indicator, but only for non-key experts and external experts. See Annex IV, Table “Person-days used for Non-key experts and External experts”.

¹⁹ See Annex IV, Table “Organized and supported events (1.1.2018 - 31.12.2020)”.

²⁰ It is acknowledged that caution must be used when assessing visibility. In some circumstances, visibility is not desired for the materialisation of results when dealing with Chinese authorities. There are instances, either because of character of topics (e.g., sensitive topics or topics the EU is trying to push), because the need to create intimacy and additional trust, when visibility is not desired.

provincial level government institutions. Only 17% of Chinese participants belonged to the civil society or to the private sector, they mainly participated in the networking events, but not in the closed expert workshops. Affiliation of workshop participants of international organizations was more diversified including representatives from major EU Member States.

The training workshops were perceived very interactive and successful. The participants actively engaged in the discussions and their reflexions contributed for example to the A 1.1 in-depth-study on pollutant discharge permits.

After the pandemic hit, virtual workshops allowed to open up to more people, especially international experts, it made it at the same time more formal and harder to engage for with Chinese stakeholders. Moreover, the break-out sessions which allowed for more informal exchanges were lost with the virtual events.

Informal networking events were helpful for networking but had no clear objectives. The networking events were open to a much wider public, in particular national and international Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) used the opportunity to reach out to Chinese government officials. They were helpful to further connect Chinese with EU stakeholders, but also with private sector and civil society organisations. The level of informality eased interactions between participants and served to build bridges and trust amongst those present but without a mechanism for regular meetings their impact remains minimal.

Most of events were linked to knowledge products. Table 4²¹ in Annex IV shows further details concerning the knowledge products produced and these links. Almost all expert **workshops** were linked to a short paper and the two policy visits were each linked to an in-depth study.

According to the limited evidence collected, policy visits to the EU were very beneficial. According to interviewees, reading EU reports in China did not translate the reality perceived on the ground about how EU countries go about implementing their environmental policies, so visits by Chinese officials were necessary for a good understanding of these efforts and of the EU context. They also allowed more lively discussions on policy implementation between the two sides.

Short papers were considered essential for the Chinese interviewees, because there was a limited amount of people attending the meetings, who were the only to have access to what went on. Through short papers (whose definition is loose in this project including very different typologies of documents and work), knowledge sharing can reach a wider audience (which in China is meaningful), and more people can access to what went on during the events. However, this potential was not exploited.

Short papers did not serve its original purpose because they ended up being of a very different nature. Short papers were intended to be linked to expert workshops and serve as workshop preparation material. But some short papers were in fact more report briefings submitted to the MEE's Minister to support forthcoming meetings (e.g., PREE report brief on plastics for the MEE from March 2019) and a working foundation for deciding further steps. For instance, the plastic issue was a very new issue in China, combined with circular economy on plastic. These short paper briefings were not to be made public as they constitute internal advisory work for the Minister. This type of products stems from the flexibility of the project to adapt to new agenda demands and respond directly to Chinese government needs, but it is arguable whether the EU should be spending its resources on this kind of advisory work for China. Further, interviewees confirmed short papers were never made available in advance to feed into workshops' content or to prepare participants, as foreseen originally. And ex-post, they were not disseminated systematically to participants, nor to a wider public through other channels, as foreseen in the visibility plan of March 2018. On the contrary, most of the

²¹ Produced knowledge products (1.1.2018 - 31.12.2020).

respondents did not receive the related workshops' short papers and were not aware of the dissemination channels nor to whom these were shared with²². Some co-authors could not even tell for who they produced the short papers.

Short papers should be about 10 to 25 pages in length (Project ToR and AWP1). This is the case for most of the papers. They should be prepared by expert specialists in the relevant areas, an average of three external experts for each short paper (Project ToR and AWP1). The AWP1 also states that "There are many potential synergies for the short papers. The most obvious is that their results can be fed into the workshops (activity 5)." However, the short papers were not used to prepare for the workshops, that means, they were not prepared in advance of the workshops²³. Especially in the case of the last three biodiversity short papers, they mainly consisted of an ex-post reporting of the workshops. Only three short papers produced until the end of 2020 state the name of the authors. For the remaining papers, the authorship is unclear, and thus it cannot be assessed whether three external experts were involved in each.

In-depth papers allowed for closer collaboration between Chinese and international experts and working recommendations went both ways - with substantial being made by international experts, as acknowledged by the Chinese side. Moreover, stated benefits of working with EU experts were: i) access to literature and scientific material; and, ii) the discussions, which allowed Chinese researchers to analyse the different aspects of policies. Chinese experts interviewed were very eager to study different kinds of policy instruments and get involved in research, and this is a piece of evidence which we consider can be extrapolated to the wider audience of experts who were not interviewed. They are also interested in sharing policies and case studies based on the Chinese experience. They considered these discussions led to improvements in the recommendations made for the Chinese government.

The in-depth study A 1.1 on China's regulatory framework on pollutant discharge permits is the only which has been finalised by the end of 2020. Chinese respondents claim that it was disseminated within the different departments of MEE involved in legislation, while international respondents were not aware of its dissemination in Europe (this was done to specifically prepare Chinese legislation on this topic, so it might have more limited relevancy for European stakeholders)²⁴. Several respondents underlined that studies and events organised within the framework of CCICED are always published and communicated on CCICED's webpage. However, the knowledge products linked to the two events which were co-organised with CCICED and financed by the project were not also published on CCICED's webpage²⁵.

The knowledge production process differs greatly between the short papers and in-depth studies. The writing process of the in-depth studies of both, A 1.1 and A 1.2 studies was described as a real collaborative process between a mixed team made up of three to five Chinese and two international experts each. The studies' structure was put up together, followed by online discussions on the content and finally international experts made recommendations for the Chinese experts'

²² For example, one respondent explained that short paper A 2.3 on plastic waste and marine plastic pollution was an internal brief for PRCEE, and at the same time this respondent said that the topic was also of high interest to the EU after China's announcement to ban the import of plastic waste in 2018. However, EU Member State stakeholders did not receive it and European government officials are not aware of how it was disseminated within the EU. The short papers on the five biodiversity workshops were not shared with the participants neither. None of the respondents who participated in these workshops received these papers posteriori.

²³ In AWP6 (draft version) it is said that "short papers were prepared following each workshop."

²⁴ The authors of the first in-depth study were made up of the two project key experts, four experts from PRCEE and two external European experts. The draft of the second in-depth study does not state which authors were involved. The only information obtained was through the fourth Interim Report, which states that "the policy officers participating in this visit [2019 Policy visit to Europe] were also drafting the in-depth study report [A 1.2]." The authorship is thus also unclear in this case.

²⁵ Two out of the eight A5-expert workshops were jointly organised with CCICED as partner, namely the A 5.1 workshop on Global Environmental Governance and the A 5.3 workshop on Marine Environment and Plastic Pollution. For further details concerning the mentioned events see p.25/26 below.

sections and vice versa. This process is said to be similar to CCICED's studies' elaboration. The short papers, as described in the desk report, should have been prepared on average by three expert specialists each. However, the five biodiversity short papers were produced by a mixed Chinese-international team of two experts only. As stated by a respondent, the biodiversity papers were like minutes of meetings than short papers. Further, short paper A 2.3 on plastic waste and marine plastic pollution was written by two Chinese experts, one took the role of an international expert due to her experience and the scarcity of experts on these Chinese matters. Further, there is no criteria for the selection of Chinese experts who participate in writing papers for the EU which casts doubts on the transparency of the organisation of the selection process.

The dissemination of short papers and in-depth studies was mainly internal, without a clear dissemination strategy and unclear dissemination channels. Dissemination of knowledge products is a major shortcoming. **The research track** was undoubtedly considered an important feature of this project²⁶, but reports and related outputs were not made available beyond the events' participants, and still not in a systematic way, being still far from the public in China and almost totally unknown in the EU space. There was no workplan for dissemination for the knowledge products. Moreover, no specific target public was defined upfront for paper sharing with Chinese stakeholders. Dissemination did not happen outside China and the network of people (Chinese and international) involved in the activities.

The communication and visibility plan, as outlined in the "Inception Report and Visibility Plan" of March 2018 - which stated that "the project team will place a strong emphasis on communication and dissemination, to ensure that the results and lessons are disseminated among key policy target audiences and made available for broader use outside the scope of the project as appropriate" - was never thoroughly implemented. One Chinese respondent mentioned a communication note on the A 5.3 workshops on the CCICED webpage after the event²⁷, and one in a Chinese newspaper. The visibility plan also included communication on WeChat, starting in mid-May 2018, with several updates per month. Since December 2018, several project communications were disseminated on the WeChat account of ClientEarth, the implementing sub-contractor²⁸, though only in Chinese. The communications generally state that ClientEarth in partnership with a Chinese governmental institution (PRCEE or another) were the organisers, and the EU project "supported" it (see Annex VI for these media communications). In 2020, in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the project team leader released some press communications to stimulate thinking on green economic recovery in China, and on the importance of EU – China cooperation (see Annex VI). According to the project inception report, selected activity-specific publications should have been made publicly available on Website and WeChat within one month following the completion. However, this did not happen, and only before the Chinese New Year 2021 in early February 2021, the project Website has been updated with the publication of four knowledge products, namely the first three Biodiversity workshops summary reports – classified as short papers – and the in-depth study A 1.1 "China's regulatory framework on pollutant discharge permits"²⁹. For the first time, knowledge

²⁶ For instance, CCICED's approach is to rely their work on evidence-based scientific analysis, as this is core to the passing of arguments for policy change.

²⁷ Link to the Chinese version: http://www.cciced.net/xwzx/ghhdt/201811/t20181107_98741.html. The communication was also made in English: http://en.cciced.net/NEWSCENTER/CCICEDActivities/201811/t20181107_98832.html. At this point it has to be noted that CCICED has two websites: <https://cciced.eco/> and <http://en.cciced.net/>. One respondent said that the first one is the "better" one, and should be used as reference. But the communication on the A 5.3 workshop is only on the latter website.

²⁸ The evaluation team could not verify how often communications were released on this social media account. Annex VI lists the main communications shared by the implementing team with the evaluators.

²⁹ See project homepage: <https://www.clientearth.org/projects/eu-china-environment-project/#downloads>

products produced by the project were shared with a wider public in English, but still are not shared in Chinese language for a wider Chinese public.

There is a considerable lack of external visibility of the project. Two out of the eight A5-expert workshops were jointly organised with CCICED as partner, namely the A 5.1 workshop on Global Environmental Governance in Brussels (June 2018) and the A 5.3 workshop on Marine Environment and Plastic Pollution which was held on the Annual Meeting of CCICED in November 2018 in Beijing. According to the evidence obtained, the general policy of CCICED stipulates that the CCICED brand takes precedence in jointly organised events. In general, invitations were sent by CCICED, and the project sent some invitations to people to whom it had a better contact. Although there were pens and notebooks distributed with the EU logo, four respondents were not at all aware of the EU's involvement in the project. But the lack of visibility extends beyond the jointly organised workshops. Six participants of other A5-expert workshop also needed more explanations concerning the involvement of the EU in the project or about the particular project that organised the event. Two participants of Biodiversity workshop - one international, one Chinese - thought to be on a workshop either conducted by CCICED or by ClientEarth (under the leadership of Dimitri de Boer). Three international stakeholders thought to participate in an event within the framework of the EU-China Energy Cooperation Platform and one other respondent did not realise at all that the virtual workshop on Green Deal and green recovery was organised by the project.

Concerning the number of **participants in events**, more than 711 people took part in the project's events until the end of 2020³⁰. A total of 390 people participated in closed expert workshops, i.e., an average of 39 people in each of the ten workshops. In the three biodiversity networking events, a total of 171 people participated, i.e., an average of 57 people per event.

The disaggregation by **participants affiliation** according to the PIMS reporting of 2019, identifies four main domains³¹. A more detailed analysis³², disaggregated for both participants from Chinese organizations and those from international organizations shows:

- More than half of the Chinese participants were from academia or think tanks (55%), with 37% of participants from research organizations attached to central or provincial level government institutions³³. Combined with Government representatives, they make up 72% of participants from China.
- Among participants from international organizations, there were only 13% originating from academia/research. However, there was a higher percentage of civil society representatives (30%). However, 24 of these 58 persons only participated in the networking events.
- Representatives from EU companies mainly participated in workshop A5.3 on marine pollution (five persons) and in the virtual workshop A5.8 on green recovery (three persons). The rest participated in the informal networking events.

Turning to the **gender of participants**, the "Partnership Instrument: Indicator Reporting" for 2019 (PIMS reporting of 2019) states that 47% of the 219 participants in 2019 were men and 53% were women³⁴. Since the gender is not always given in the participants' lists, the figures could not be

³⁰ See Annex IV, Table "Number of participants in events".

³¹ See Annex IV, Figure "Affiliation of 2019 event participants, based on PIMS reporting 2019".

³² See Annex IV, Figures "Affiliation of Workshop participants (Activities 5 and 10) of Chinese organizations (2018 - 2020)" and "Affiliation of Workshop participants (Activities 5 and 10) of International organizations (2018 - 2020)".

³³ These include two categories: (i). national research organizations under ministries, on national as well as on provincial levels (PRCEE, CRAES, CAAS etc.), (ii) central government think tanks (CAS, CASS).

³⁴ The evaluation team's own calculation, based on the participant lists of the event reports, counted 233 participants in total in 2019, excluding the participants of the three Networking events.

verified for all participants with a Chinese name. As for participants from Western organizations with a Western name, there were more men participating than women³⁵.

³⁵ See Annex IV, Figures “Gender of Chinese organizations’ participants in events (2018 - 2020)” and “Gender of International organizations’ participants in events (2018 - 2020)”.

EQ 5: To what extent this Action (Component 1) managed to factor in the evolution of the political context in China (e.g., such as the reorganisation of the MEE)?

The EU's strategic approach was flexible enough to adapt to emerging problems. The major perceived change as to the political context in China was the reorganization of the former Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP) into the MEE. It gained, for example, the management and coordinating responsibility over climate change (which was split before between MEP and the National Development and Reform Commission).

The other major perceived change was COVID-19. Progress got delayed as any meetings were postponed (e.g., COP15, and project discussions). Two European informants mentioned that it has since become more difficult to reach out to their counterparts at MEE and access to MEE and Chinese officials in general became much more complex. Although virtual workshops allowed to open up to more people, especially international experts, it made it at the same time more formal and harder to engage with Chinese stakeholders. Moreover, the break-out sessions which allowed for more informal exchanges were lost with the virtual events.

The project allowed for rapid adaptation to the circumstances under COVID-19. The key emerging problem was the COVID-19 outbreak, which had, and still has a severe impact on the global economy. Post-pandemic economic recovery has become a major concern of governments worldwide. The project, which is informed by the EU's utilization of the PI, allowed to quickly respond to this emerging problem by organizing two workshops that promote the EU Green Deal strategy and European's experience on green investment and green energy transition.

Appropriate interlocutors were engaged on both sides. The interviews confirmed the preliminary assessment from the project documents which underlined that high-level EU and Chinese officials were involved in the different activities. All the respondents, Chinese and international, unanimously agreed that participants of the different expert workshops were high-level, and relevant, for each specific topic. It was underlined that most of the Chinese government officials were not from a ministerial level, but that nonetheless still ranked quite highly (namely DGs and DDGs³⁶ of different MEE departments). International experts were also considerably senior people and judged to be very highly qualified. The two training workshops (Activity 3) were also considered successful in terms of the choice of participants, it is underlined that the organisers managed to involve a good combination of people in both trainings (people with first-hand experience). Another important stakeholder group in the expert workshop were those belonging to national research organizations under the MEE, such as PRCEE or Chinese Research Academy of Environmental Sciences (CRAES)³⁷.

The project was somehow more limited in bringing in other players to maximize effectiveness. High-level EU and Chinese officials were involved in the different activities but that interlocutors of other governmental ministries were not so involved, along with other important actors concerning environmental law and practice in China (e.g., NGOs). A look at the participant lists confirms these statements. **Chinese NGOs**, such as China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development Foundation (CBCGDF), who effectively promoted environmental legislation in the past, were not sufficiently invited³⁸. Overall, only 24 out of 410 A5 and A10 Expert workshop participants (5,9%) belong to this stakeholder group. They mainly participated in the three biodiversity networking events, in Activity 5.3 workshop on marine pollution five Chinese NGO representatives and in the Activity

³⁶ Deputy Director General,

³⁷ One respondent underlined that these researchers conduct policy advice research which only combines together different information, without producing any new original research. Another person noted that Chinese officials often send their researchers to the meetings because they do not want to appear in the frontline.

³⁸ See "Environmental law and practice in China: overview" (2021). Online on: [https://uk.practicallaw.thomsonreuters.com/3-503-4201?transitionType=Default&contextData=\(sc.Default\)&firstPage=true](https://uk.practicallaw.thomsonreuters.com/3-503-4201?transitionType=Default&contextData=(sc.Default)&firstPage=true)

10.2 Virtual workshop on green financing three Chinese NGO representatives were invited.

NGO's in China have been strengthening their scope of action. The NGO participation in expert workshops received mixed answers. The implementation team explained that the expert workshop had to reach out to high-level government officials and therefore stayed closed for non-official and non-MEE Chinese stakeholders, like NGOs or private sector representatives. One international expert said that this approach is a standard one, since Chinese government officials do not invite NGOs for official meetings. A Chinese stakeholder confirmed this argument, underlining that in areas such as public disclosure, NGOs have been increasingly involved, and that they are important for policy implementation at the local, regional level. On the other hand, five respondents, including Chinese representatives, clearly stated the lack of civil society stakeholders in the expert workshops. For example, one respondent regretted that the project did not reach out to the "Civil Society Alliance for Biodiversity Conservation"³⁹, a coalition which is composed of more than 17 Chinese and International organisations - among others ClientEarth - with the aim to prepare COP15.

Interlocuters of other governmental ministries were not very involved in project activities. For example, only 13 out of the 410 participants in the Activity 5 and Activity 10 - Expert Workshops were from other governmental ministries. This was perceived as a shortcoming by two respondents. It was stressed that the "ecological civilization" approach concerns almost every ministry and that several ministries share in fact the responsibility to promote the green economy. Representatives from the Chinese Academy of Sciences - which is also an important governmental research think tank directly under the State Council - were not very present neither. They were mainly invited to the biodiversity workshops, and only one or two persons took part in the workshops referring to Activities 5.1⁴⁰ and 5.3⁴¹, none in Activities 5.6⁴² and 5.8⁴³ workshops and the two virtual A10 workshops.

Private business representatives were invited to the virtual workshop on green transition and green recovery and attended some of the informal events after the main discussions in some instances, but their participation was deemed insufficient in other expert workshops (e.g., on marine pollution). It was suggested that it would at least have been interesting to have State-Owned Enterprises (SOE) joining the policy dialogue, since SOEs are supposed to implement Chinese policies.

EQ 6: Which were the key success factors and constraints that influenced the achievement of results?

The following key success factors were identified:

- **Flexibility and adaptation.** The project's modus operandi was adaptive and responsive to the changes in context due to the pandemic, taking a fluid and iterative decision-making approach in order to manage uncertainties. Project topics were pre-determined during the first PCC meeting in March 2018. Some were treated in the first and/or second year of project implementation, others predominantly during the third year (e.g., green financing). New topics were integrated as a result of the global context change due to COVID-19, in particular the topic related to the green economy (leading to the introduction of the European Green Deal to Chinese authorities).
- **Common wish for cooperation.** Despite the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a common wish for cooperation and will to show the leadership of EU and China.
- **High level commitment.** High-level EU and Chinese officials got involved in the activities.

³⁹ This coalition organised more than 20 events in 2020.

⁴⁰ Activity 5.1 - Workshop on Global Environmental Governance, held in Brussels.

⁴¹ Activity 5.3 - Workshop on Marine Environment and Plastic Pollution.

⁴² Activity 5.6 - EU-China Workshop on Regional Environmental Management - Sharing experience on regional air pollution and river basin management.

⁴³ Activity 5.8 - EU-China Virtual Workshop on EU Green Deal and Green Recovery.

- **Informal discussions of EU and China positions on biodiversity⁴⁴.** The participation of chief negotiators on CBD and other high-level EU and Chinese officials, the good balance of interventions, the focused and relevant discussions and the informal discussions in the margins of the workshops helped to better understand each other's position and to work the ground for aligned positions.
- **Balance between high-level participants and the level of formalities.** Exchanges during the close-door events and the easiness of discussions among the same type of stakeholders, helped to create trust and European stakeholders to better understand Chinese positions. Closed door exchanges among a more limited number of high-level officials tended to be more successful towards expected results. The biodiversity workshop, considered informal for the preparation of COP15, allowed for a more honest exchange on the side of the Chinese stakeholders.
- **Credibility.** The fact that the work was rooted on scientific studies, evidence and case studies rooted the discussions on neutral ground and technical issues which eased the discussions from being politically charged.
- **Responsiveness.** Chinese officials were responsive to the participation calls of the EU. Interlocutors were willing to come to the events, listened carefully and were willing to engage in discussions. This made the policy dialogue an entry point for a closer and more direct relationship.
- **Interactivity.** The training workshops were perceived as very interactive and successful.
- **Eagerness to learn.** There was a strong interest from the Chinese government to draw from international best practice and learn from the European experience to get practical and tailored recommendations on how to tackle operational issues.
- **Demand-driven topics were welcomed.** Topics which were requested by China were met with interest and openness (e.g. permitting scheme).
- **Joint work with CCICED.** Synergies were explored with CCICED for greater policy influence.
- **Cooperative research engagements, involving also policy officers.** The writing of the in-depth-studies was cooperative between international and Chinese researchers with substantial learning. Policy officers who participated in the second policy visit to Europe also participated in the drafting the in-depth study report (A 1.2) linked to this policy visit.
- **PRCEE involvement.** It eased the administrative work (e.g., consultation, approvals and invites) and the networking.
- **Team Leader's networking abilities and the quality of the implementation team.** The Team Leader is a very efficient influencer, who managed over time the necessary trust within Chinese stakeholders. His active involvement in CCICED also greatly facilitated the access to senior Chinese government officials.

The following key constraints for the achievement of results were identified:

- **Lack of project visibility and unclear dissemination and disclosure policy for the dissemination of knowledge products.** The project is practically unknown outside China. Within China, its reach has been limited to project participants. Even project participants are not aware that it is an EU project. There was confusion with CCICED and Client Earth's initiatives.
- **COVID-19.** The pandemic put a brake on closer relationships with Chinese stakeholders during the first six to nine months of the pandemic and discussions for the preparation of COP15 only resumed in Autumn 2020. Interactions are now done in a hybrid way, being harder to get the level of involvement and informality of some of the meetings to get the easiness of discussions to produce shifts in options. Virtual meetings are now more formal, being less well attended and with less spontaneity from Chinese stakeholders.

⁴⁴ The workshop series on biodiversity is one of the most important informal negotiation tracks, especially considering that the EU is the biggest group of ambitious countries, and that China is the host country for the COP15.

- **Project ownership.** Without Chinese co-funding (as it was the case of past Devco-funded projects), the Chinese side does not engage sufficiently.
- **Opaque Chinese policy-making.** This hinders the ability to better understand internal processes to better influence policy.
- **Institutional protagonism within the Chinese hierarchy.** The competition between Chinese ministries hinders the participation of all relevant stakeholders and the participation of interlocutors of other ministries, for example on the topic of plastic waste management.
- **Constant and close personal interaction needed.** To get to the bottom of discussions and produce mind shifts in China, several meetings are needed with the same persons.
- **PRCEE's credibility.** This research institution affiliated with MEE is not sufficiently influential within the Chinese hierarchy and does not have the required independence to add sufficient value.
- **Absence of civil society.** Lack of sufficient involvement of civil society stakeholders, which have been emerging.
- **Lack of clarity as to networking events' objectives.** Informal networking events were helpful for connecting people, but there is a lack of a strategic thinking on how and why this could be done with longer term purposes for approaching these to the dialogue with Chinese authorities.
- **Delays with the short papers.** Papers were only prepared after the workshops and took long to be finalised. Relevant evidence to prepare the workshops was thus not made available on time and the opportunity of an even more meaningful participation of stakeholders was missed.
- **Budget constraints.** Highly underestimated budget for in-depth studies⁴⁵ (for more details see EQ7).

⁴⁵ The budget available per in-depths study increased by 18%.

2.3 Efficiency

EQ 7: Is the implementation of the activities cost effective?

The project has run smoothly. It was adapted to respond proactively to the reality on the ground and the evolving agenda. Green economy is present as a more transversal cross-cutting topic.

The modalities of project management implementation have allowed for rapid adaptation to the circumstances under COVID-19. COVID-19 caused some delays in particular as to activities involving more directly Chinese stakeholders due to the strict lockdown in 2020 and the delays in the organisation of international fora (e.g., COP-15 Conference in Kunming). **In July 2020, it was decided to extend the project duration by half a year** due to the pandemic and the delays it brought. The overall budget did not change, but some items have shifted⁴⁶.

The pace of implementation is good overall:

- The production of knowledge products progressed as planned.
- Expert Workshops are still underway, four virtual workshops were implemented in 2020.
- Activities 3⁴⁷ and 6 could have already been completed during the first two years of project implementation.
- Two in-depths trainings in Europe (Activity 4) were planned, but due to COVID-19 one of them was cancelled.

A look at the overall project budget indicates that the budget must be carefully used for the remaining period. During AWP1 and AWP2, 62% of the total budget was used during 57% of implementation period (24 of 42 months in total). In 2020, it is planned to use 28% of the budget for 29% of the implementation period, and during the last 6 months of 2021 9% of the total budget remains for 14% of the implementation period.

A closer look at the budget to intended activities shows:

- The budget for Activity 1 was highly underestimated for both, activity budget and incidental expenditure. The total budget available per in-depths study increased by 18%.
- The activity budget for the research for short papers (Activity 2) was also highly underestimated (35% per short paper), but the total budget available per short paper decreased by 6% due to a decrease of the incidental expenditure.
- Activities three and five incidental expenditures were also highly overestimated.
- The total budget for Activities eight and nine increased due to the six months project extension. The costs per year stayed however the same.
- Activity 10 was added in 2020 to adapt to the COVID-19 crisis.

The change in the project's governance system with the suspension of the steering committee meetings of the project and thus the PCC, was regretted by the project implementors in retrospect. The Inception Report and Visibility Plan of the project, approved in March 2018, describes the process of elaboration and approval of activities. In theory, the PCC should be the first level of authority to overview this process. But the PCC only met once in March 2018 and was considered not the most effective way to host these discussions. The alternative scheme put in place promotes

⁴⁶ See Annex IV, Table "Analysis of Project budget".

⁴⁷ For Activity 3, the organization and implementation of four training workshops was planned. In 2018, one training on pollutant discharge management was implemented in two cities counting for two workshops. In 2019, another training on pollutant discharge management was implemented, also in two cities, also counting for two workshops.

instead discussions between the European Commission's Directorate General of the Environment (DG ENV) at the EU Delegation in Beijing and the MEE, to make sure that all activities implemented through the project are cleared from the Chinese government side. Implementors stated that after the dissolution of the PCC, they get guidance from PRCEE. While this procedure might look more practical to advance the work, the level of transparency of more informal meetings can be however put in question.

The modalities of project management implementation are not totally obvious and the role of PRCEE, as reported in the interviews, not totally clear. PRCEE involvement was considered useful, firstly because they take responsibility for policy research⁴⁸ and thus they can suggest activities and products that can be made useful to MEE, secondly they are able to promote EU activities and products internally to ensure they are effectively used, and thirdly they facilitate the administrative formalities and do the internal coordination with other Ministries when it is necessary to involve them on matters that are more cross-cutting (e.g., send the official invitations to government). However, PRCEE is a very typical research institute under MEE, not considered powerful enough for policy influence, besides not having an established reputation for independent scientific research⁴⁹. To two Chinese respondents, the role of PRCEE in the project's setup was not clear and their participation as an implementing partner also raised two other critical voices. Other modalities of project management such as the process and criteria for the hiring of external experts are not also totally clear, as explained in evaluation question four.

With the valuable support of EUD's networking skills, which was key in securing high level participation outside the MEE, the project team was able to easily reach out and communicate with Chinese stakeholders - also at the highest level - and had a considerable impact on the project, both on getting the right speakers and audience, but also influencing the content and quality of the papers and reports. The Team Leader's active involvement in CCICED also greatly facilitated the access to senior Chinese government officials. However, the project failed in its visibility, and the implementing team was not very oriented to public relations for the project's promotion.

EQ 8: Are the monitoring arrangements both for the Action (Component 1) and its activities satisfactory?

The monitoring arrangements put in place were not sufficiently consistent over time, and consequently do not allow a consistent view on the use of inputs and expected outputs overtime and from the perspective of different documents⁵⁰. This means that activities and their logic pathway to results are not totally perceptible from the results monitoring framework of the project given the results framework did not remain stable and that its changes were not explained.

For project monitoring assessment, the LFM of the project⁵¹ and the PIMS reports are used. These documents are however not totally consistent with one another and also show discrepancies with the Project ToRs. At the beginning of the implementation phase, the Project's LFM⁵² was put in place. However, the number of knowledge products to be produced – two in-depth-studies and eight short papers – was not calculated correctly in the Project's LFM, OP6). In May 2020 it got updated for five of the seven activities and the core indicator A1 was complemented by a second core activity indicator

⁴⁸ They are under the aegis of the MEE.

⁴⁹ PRCEE researchers are perceived as more specialised in putting text together rather than coming up with something new.

⁵⁰ See again Annex IV, Table 2, Detailed indicator analysis.

⁵¹ The document's name is "LFM env protection - ACM updated final (comments FPI May 2020) [4].doc". It is hereafter referred to as "Project LFM" for short.

⁵² It was developed with the intention to align it with the monitoring system for PI actions worldwide, a system created by a team of experts recruited by FPI Brussels. This expert team also assisted in the consolidation of the Project LFM.

(A2 – Person days of expertise or technical assistance provided). The number of knowledge products to be developed was also revised, but still not taken over in the amended Project LFM. As for the PIMS reports, there is no PIMS reporting available for 2018 nor, so far, for 2020 because of late reporting. For most of the indicators it provides aggregated information for 2018 and 2019 only, it does not report the quantification for each year and stream of work. For example, it delivered aggregated information for core activity indicator A2 (“Person days of provided expertise or technical assistance”), which sums up all activities, while not providing actual values for each activity and year to allow to see the annual progress. Consequently, targets, as indicated in the Project LFM for each activity, cannot be not monitored. Also, this information is not always easily available in the annual Interim Reports (IR), especially in the last four IR, i.e., IR three to six which do not contain tables on the utilization of human resources anymore. The core output indicator OP2 (“Percentage of participants who report having benefited from an event”) was only partially informed in the PIMS 2019 reporting saying that “In future events, we will distribute survey questionnaires to all events including workshops and include gender information.”

Moreover, the Project LFM and those in the Annual Work Plans (AWP) indicate different targets for several indicators. Although the target values of the Project LFM and the PIMS⁵³ reporting are used for project monitoring, the AWP are submitted to the EUD and the financial update is also phased along the AWP. According to the Project TORs, AWP are part of the reporting requirements, but with the dissolution of the steering committee (PCC), AWP continued to be submitted to the EUD, but were not validated anymore. This incoherence thus contributes to unnecessary confusion and does not allow for an efficient monitoring. The following is worth of note:

- The target values for several indicators are different, namely IMP2, OC3, OP6 and OP7.
- The formulation of Output one is different, but the indicators, sources of verification and assumptions are identical.
- Output two in the Project LFM has three different indicators (OP2, OP6, OP7). In the AWP logframe, it is split into three outputs, with one indicator, either OP2, OP6 or OP7 for one output.
The sources of verification and the assumptions are identical for the output of the Project LFM and the three outputs of the AWP.
- The total of Output six in the project LFM, incorrectly calculated (see above), does not correspond to the target value in the AWP.
- The AWP logframes do not integrate the two “Customised non-matched output indicators”.

Lastly, the sources of verification are not always easily available or do not exist. Pre/post event surveys, email exchanges, payments, and plane tickets are not often the ideal sources of verification. Concerning PCC meetings, only one meeting was held at the beginning of the implementation phase and there are no other “records of official meetings”.

⁵³ The PIMS Report 2020 is still in its draft form, so it was not yet approved by the EUD and it is not consequently a final report.

2.4 Impact

EQ 9. To what extent has this Action (Component 1) contributed to make progress towards positive long-term outcomes and impacts on the environment and green economy policies, along with targeted beneficiaries?: i) Is the impact of the Action (Component 1) satisfactory, especially considering the EU-China political dialogue?; ii) Did the Action (Component 1) help to increase the environmental level playing field between the EU and China?; iii) Has the Action (Component 1) been able to promote EU and/or international standards and regulations related to environment?

According to the stakeholders' view, the impact of the Action (Component 1) is hard to gauge. Moreover, it is still materialising. Despite the Chinese focus on “no interference” and the substantial protocol, it is consensual that the EU needs to maintain a relationship with China, keeping dialogue and communication open and that the approach has served the intended purpose. In more generic terms, information abounds on the trends of Chinese policy convergence in the environmental domain. For instance, in the Pelkmans (2020) paper, it is stated that, “The EU has been active, if not very active, in a myriad of activities at all levels and also in markets, with a view to stimulate a Chinese turn-around to radically improve environmental laws, performance and enforcement as well as to go green for the mitigation of climate change”. (...) Equally at multilateral level the EU and China have worked together in global fora to agree on many MEAs⁵⁴. Whether these efforts have been effective in factually stimulating China to become (much) more environmentally friendly and more climate-friendly cannot be rigorously established” (page 73).

Although it is quite hard to say which studies, sections or recommendations areas were selected to be taken up to the higher levels of policy-making, it can be feasible to admit that some of the dialogue during the meetings and the research work has managed to have some degree of influence, and that some of the recommendations served at least as the basis to formulate MEE's recommendations for the FYP, the ultimate strategic policy document in China. However, the impact of the research work is below its potential for direct policy influence, especially in the wider scientific and academic community. Research work was not published in influential international academic journals or magazines, which get a lot of attention in China. Publications like Science Times and Nature (not necessarily Chinese) are now translated into Chinese and are already making a difference for opinion setting. The project research work is not known outside China, and even within those that attended the events, several did not receive the related knowledge products.

There is a new mindset within Chinese experts touched by this stream of work, in the sense that they are more aware of how to build future policy related work. The interviewee sample is quite limited, but the evidence obtained indicates that Chinese researchers involved in the research streams are now able do deeper analysis and better perceive environmental policies as more interrelated, as a system, and connected to each other. According to one interviewee, benefiting from these range of studies allowed not only to go more in-depth but to bridge between different areas. Within the FYP, the idea is to make policies more integrated, as a system. As some of the research analysed different polices' interactions, they consider themselves as better equipped to apply integrated policy analysis into their analysis. Moreover, the in-depth papers collaboration with international experts allowed for better reporting of Chinese policies and more in-depth knowledge about the process of structuring policy recommendations.

The biodiversity stream of work served to exchange European and Chinese views and foster a common understanding about the topics, but was limited as to the alignment of positions, also

⁵⁴ MEA or Multilateral environmental agreements.

considering the COP has not yet taken place. A Chinese respondent said that the biodiversity workshops' impact from the perspective of fostering alignment between the EU and China was rather limited. However, the workshops helped to keep a research-based dialogue with access to a Chinese state audience. Within the process of preparation of the COP15, it no doubt created an opportunity for informal discussions, in which Chinese stakeholders were perceived as more open and engaged. It was also underlined that through a series of events around the same topic – as the case on biodiversity – it was possible to create the necessary relationship of trust, to possibly have an influence on the policy-making process.

Concerning the latest Chinese legislation on plastic waste, the extent to which it was influenced by the European legislation could not be proven in the interviews, which focused on the stakeholders associated with the project that is being evaluated. It was underlined that other donors, such as Asian Development Bank (ADB), the WB or United Nations Development Program (UNDP) are also working on plastic recycling in China and the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, with which the EUD in China is also working, is a very important stakeholder on this topic as well⁵⁵. Aside of this project the EU Delegation also cooperate with NDRC (in charge of legislation on plastic and circular economy) and organised a large event and specific bilateral meeting on this topic. The project supported the process of establishing an environmental permitting scheme (pollution permits system) which has become the core system of compliance in China, but assessments as to the EU's effective influence vary between European and Chinese views. European stakeholders underline the success of the project events, which in their view have significantly impacted the Chinese permitting system. In their opinion, the project - and thus the European experience - has directly influenced the new legislation: the Chinese permitting system is also based on an integrated system, and also requiring an environmental impact assessment. The permitting scheme was in fact a Chinese demand made during the PCC project meetings, thus the choice of this topic was completely demand driven from the Chinese side. But according to the interview with one Chinese stakeholder, China looked at other countries' experiences, such as the US and started to have exchanges with these countries. China acknowledged the US and European systems and experiences, and that the integration of the different items – air, water, soil and solid waste - into one comprehensive permitting system is actually based on the European experience⁵⁶. That was why China decided to go with the EU's experience. However, it was underlined that this reform had been under way. China had already stated a permitting scheme in 1989 where it granted local certificates. In 2013 they started a national wide policy leading to the first national level "Implementation Plan for the Pollutant Emission Control Permit System", issued by the General Office of the State Council in 2016. In 2017, MEE issued the "Measures for Pollutant Discharge Permitting Administration" and a trial pollution management system (based on the 2016 policy) was set up in January 2018 having since distributed about 300.000 certificates (does not included local ones). It was stressed that the 2018 version focused on the provision of certificates. A new Law went into force in March 2021, with a higher focus put on liability, which is in fact an upgrading of the 2016 Law. Before it was only for large companies, now it also covers smaller companies. Before only a few sectors were covered (oil and air), now the 2021 version covers land, air, water, soil and solid waste. The differences with the European model are said to be twofold. First, the Chinese system includes all kind of industries, not only heavy pollution industries as in Europe. China has, since 2018, elaborated technical regulations for 70 to 80 different kind of industries whereas in Europe there are only 10 to 20 regulations for the different heavy pollution industries.

⁵⁵China's [Law on the Prevention and Control of Environmental Pollution Caused by Solid Waste](http://www.moj.gov.cn/Department/content/2020-05/06/592_3248103.html) was adopted in 1995 and has been revised several times with a latest revision taking effect on September 1, 2020. Specific regulatory regimes are used to enforce the law, including the single-use plastic straw and plastic bag ban which took effect on January 2021. See online: http://www.moj.gov.cn/Department/content/2020-05/06/592_3248103.html. See also: <https://www.loc.gov/law/foreign-news/article/china-single-use-plastic-straw-and-bag-ban-takes-effect/>

⁵⁶ The US has a separate certificate for specific items, while in the EU, they have a unique one that combines it all.

Second, China has its own pollution standards. Regulating machines and technologies would not be feasible in China, so the measurement takes, for example, the location into account.

EQ 10: Were new institutional/governance or management practices on challenges of global concern applied by China during the implementation of the Action (Component 1)?

The Project tries to influence Chinese policy making and thus its institutional/governance and management practices at three different levels:

1. International policy level: Support of the EU-China dialogue on biodiversity to prepare for CBD COP15, to align EU and China positions in biodiversity negotiations under CBD.
2. Macro-policy level: Provision of EU policy experiences and tools on green economy and green transition/recovery to support the process of integrating environmental policy into an inclusive and green economic development and aiming at convergency of policy making processes between the EU and China.
3. Specific policy level intervention: Support to the development of China's new environmental permitting scheme.

The PIMS reporting 2019 for the core impact indicator IMP2 (“number of collective approaches and/or practices to challenge of global and/or mutual concern which have been developed/adapted/implemented”) indicates that the target value of one has not been yet achieved, but that, “as the project is going into its final year of implementation, project results will be clear and project impact will be more clearly demonstrated.” There was insufficient evidence provided on how collective approaches are to be implemented.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused disruption throughout 2020. One project activity was cancelled (namely activity 4.2), some activities were postponed, while others happened through virtual exchanges and online communications. During 2020, the project organized two virtual workshops for biodiversity negotiators from China, the EU and European Member States, and short papers were prepared after each. Impact of these activities on biodiversity cannot yet be assessed as the COP15 has been postponed.

All the respondents unanimously declared dialogue as fundamental and that the project is working in the right direction, but there is scarce evidence of new institutional/governance or management practices which can be directly attributed to the project. According to several respondents, it can be stated as an hypothesis that the project could have had some influence on Chinese policy making options, and even an impact on the 14th Five-Year-Plan (FYP) formulated around March 2021, also through to the close work and synergies developed with CCICED and the positive externality effects stemming from the EUD’s direct engagement with MEE.

Interviewees also unanimously recognised to the lack of evidence to support the claim that the project directly contributed to the Chinese institutional/governance or management practices on challenges of global concern. Three respondents used the expression “black box” when describing Chinese policy decision-making process and how difficult it is to glance inside to understand its inherent mechanisms, with one person adding that it is even a mystery to Chinese

colleagues⁵⁷. Respondents concluded that influencing the Chinese government has become more difficult in recent years and that the space of manoeuvre is decreasing⁵⁸.

At the macro-policy level, the impact of project activities is judged as nontangible. Concerning the green recovery, China is said to adopt, as it did in 2008 after the financial crises, a soft-landing approach. At present, it seems difficult to analyse if a green stimulus has actually happened. Two international experts stated that China was already working on topics which are also discussed under the European Green Deal, and that the country has been progressing on its own anyway. But they still consider the need for a continued dialogue as valid. In terms of macro-policy influence, this type of dialogue is perceived as important for three main reasons: firstly, the Chinese government is facing pressure from its population; secondly, banks are refraining from financing coal; and thirdly, these activities represent an important opportunity for information gathering for Europeans (on the best approach to exert some influence on China).

At the policy level, one in-depth study, one policy visit to Europe and two trainings for mid-level officials were conducted to support the process of establishing a pollutant permitting system in China. The Chinese State Council approved the new permit regulation at the end of 2020. The convergence with the European model is discussed further in EQ9.

The **three informal networking** events, held at the end of the first three biodiversity workshops, were considered by several respondents helpful to connect the different categories of stakeholders, especially national and international NGOs with Chinese government officials. But it was considered that in order to have an impact, these networking events should have established a mechanism for regular meetings, with a clear objective.

EQ 11: Has this or could this have been translated into economic opportunities for the EU industry, by promoting the existence of European expertise and solutions on particular subjects of the EU- China environment dialogue?

The project worked mostly at the institutional level and the private sector was not directly targeted, due to the complexity of bringing it on board at this stage of the process. Despite being an objective mentioned in the Action Fiche, the private sector ended up not being a direct target group of the project. Thus, the benefits accruing to the private sector materialise indirectly only. This could improve the level playing field between European and Chinese enterprises in having more similar standards (e.g., on pollution). It can also create new additional opportunities to invest in green technologies⁵⁹. We could not yet collect on evidence on this and on what kind of companies are starting to invest in China in this area and to what extent this project has made any contribution in the opening of markets or circulating information.

⁵⁷ Several examples were provided to underline this statement. For example, two Chinese respondents said that it is not possible to track back the source of the influence. Furthermore, this influence is a compound of diverse actors operating in this realm in China. Other institutions, countries, and even EU Member States are conducting projects and policy dialogues with China. Different policy options from different countries were considered and integrated into the 14th FYP and it is thus hard to assess which came from where and which country/institution had the greatest influence and how these also synergise in driving decisions.

⁵⁸ For instance, several respondents stated the CCICED recommendations contributed to the 14th FYP. But the majority also agreed that the impact of CCICED recommendations is in fact similarly hard to judge, as they lose track of what goes on from the moment recommendations are taken high into the Chinese political hierarchy. The fact that they simply show up in national plans, often with a considerable time lag does not constitute sufficient proof of influence, as a myriad of other factors and influences might have shaped that decision making process during the period, beyond the fact that the Chinese government may progress in their own thinking. The Chinese decision-making process is thus hard to assess credibly without consulting the key stakeholders who determine what goes into the FYP and without a clear understanding of the steps of this decision-making process.

⁵⁹ See also Evaluation Question 9.

What we can say is that **the private sector has not been absent from the project's work**. In the expert workshops, 22 out of the 410 participants (5,4%) were representatives from business and the private sector⁶⁰:

- Eight private sector stakeholders participated in the networking events of the first three, non-virtual biodiversity workshop.
- Eight private sector stakeholders participated in workshop 5.3⁶¹ on marine pollution.
- Three European business representatives participated in the virtual expert workshops on Green transition (A 5.8⁶²).
- In the workshop A5.6⁶³ and A 5.7⁶⁴ there was one representative of private sector in each of the events.
- And in the workshop A 10.2⁶⁵ one Chinese private sector representative participated.

The private sector is seen in China as a driving force for transformation. Big “mammoths” (i.e. SOEs) get subsidised and have a less transparent strategy. Green technology development is happening at this point in time mostly on the private sector side. There are several private companies in China already dealing with marine pollution and the green economy, working hard to solve problems. Several companies announced global commitments to recycled plastic waste. One respondent explained that in the energy sector, China is already making huge commitments in solar and wind energy. Renewable energy investments (solar, wind, hydro) are already a majority of Chinese overseas energy investments (its share increased from 38% in 2019 to 57% in 2020) – amid a total decrease of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) investments of 54%, with SOEs being the dominant partner for investments in the BRI⁶⁶.

The aim for carbon neutrality is driving a huge push for innovation. In biodiversity and carbon neutrality, there is a great potential for collaboration. The Microsoft's accelerator Beijing⁶⁷ has shown success. In the green technology space, World Economic Forum (WEF) has been involving private sector partners on its circular economy endeavours (e.g., Walmart). Some EU Member States are actively promoting their environmental industries in China, such as the Danish efforts on green economy via a project for offshore wind in China at provincial and national levels.

It is the general view that policy dialogue could also cover industrial development. SOE are in fact seeking profits when implementing public government policies. The Chinese Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM)⁶⁸ is dealing with bilateral investment agreements, WTO, etc., which are also connected to environmental industrial products. Environmental green policies must be connected to enterprise policy at the micro and macro industrial level.

⁶⁰ See Evaluation Question 4 and the tables on the workshop participants.

⁶¹ Activity 5 Expert Workshops. Activity 5.3 - Workshop on Marine Environment and Plastic Pollution. 2 November 2018, Beijing.

⁶² Activity 5 Expert Workshops. Activity 5.8 - EU-China Virtual Workshop on EU Green Deal and Green Recovery. 29 June 2020.

⁶³ Activity 5 Expert Workshops. Activity 5.6 - EU-China Workshop on Regional Environmental Management - Sharing experience on regional air pollution and river basin management. 6 November 2019, Beijing.

⁶⁴ Activity 5 Expert Workshops. Activity 5.7 - EU-China Virtual Workshop on Biodiversity Access and Benefit Sharing. 28-29 May 2020.

⁶⁵ Activity 10 New Virtual Workshops. Activity 10.2 - EU-China workshop on green investment and energy transition. 29 Sept. 2020.

⁶⁶ Obtained from <https://green-bri.org/china-belt-and-road-initiative-bri-investment-report-2020/>.

⁶⁷ Microsoft Accelerator in Beijing provides resources and services to Chinese start-ups. “As of June 2018, Microsoft ScaleUp in China has successfully accelerated the growth of 231 startup companies. Microsoft ScaleUp Shanghai has successfully accelerated 43 startups with total market valuation of more than 55.6 billion RMB, including 23 companies each valued between 100 million and 1 billion RMB, 19 between 1 and 5 billion RMB, and 1 between 5 and 10 billion RMB”. From: <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/think-next-microsoft-for-startups-china-enables-chinese-innovations-to-go-global-and-overseas-innovations-to-go-china-300670052.html>

⁶⁸ MOFCOM representatives got invited by the project to several events. Finally, in the virtual A5.8 expert workshops on the EGD and in the concluding project event two representatives participated. This is seen as a great project success by the EUD.

Several interviewees view green finance⁶⁹ as the main accelerator for transition (e.g., green bonds, green conditions for financing). It is certainly important for Chinese stakeholders to develop further their view in this respect. The promotion of clean energy per se does not necessarily open up new opportunities for European companies in China. The predominant question in China is energy supply security. China is opting for nuclear energy, whereas European companies, such as ENGIE, are providing solutions for renewable and solar energy. Another potential area is how to **operationalise global standards** for Chinese firms to be able to meet EU standards and to build consensus and mutual understanding, to facilitate collaboration, supply chain integration, both for the private sector but also SOEs.

⁶⁹ The International Institute of Green Finance is based in Beijing.

2.5 Sustainability

EQ 12: To what extent have achieved benefits continued or will be likely to continue once the Action (component 1) is completed?

Sustainability on the macro-policy international level is key to ensure the materialisation of the gains of this project. Despite China - one of the biggest greenhouse gas emitters globally - pledges to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060, and its apparent unprecedented political will to comply with the Paris Agreement on climate change - it has not yet updated its Nationally Determined Contributions. There are several perceived incongruences between the level of targets and ambition set by the Chinese government and the implementation resources perceived on the ground.

The following factors inform the sustainability of the Action:

- **Willingness and ability of the Chinese key target groups (decision makers and policy makers and policy implementors and enforcers) to converge with the EU on the global challenge of environmental conservation.** There is, in principle, willingness of Chinese key target groups (decision-makers, policymakers and policy implementors and enforcers) to cooperate with the EU on the global challenge of environmental conservation. However, China's positioning as a developing country and the constant reference to the common but differentiated responsibility limits the potential for convergence of EU and China's policies to address global challenges. Most respondents believe that every effort undertaken in the environmental field can act as a trigger and eventually have an impact in the long term⁷⁰. But both Chinese and international stakeholders have pointed out that when there is no co-funding from the Chinese side and no explicit direct responsibility attributed to them in the progress of the work, they observed a lower engagement on the Chinese side. One respondent affirmed that the dialogue could be made more reactive if the Chinese were more involved with the funding, otherwise this is not a sustainable way to engage with China. On the topic of "Green Economy" and "Green Recovery" it is recognized that this willingness can bring about stability in government policies. "Big governments could enact green recoveries. Emissions rose after the 2008-2009 financial crisis, despite green stimulus spending by the US, China, and the EU. The EU and the Republic of Korea have already announced their recoveries will be green. Many have emphasized the need for economic stimulus packages that promote an equitable transition to renewable energy and nature protection while creating jobs. To what extent governments lock in a greener, more equitable future will be a question for our 2021 edition." (International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2021, p. ix). On the topic of biodiversity, China did not sign "The Leaders' Pledge for Nature"⁷¹, which can be telling as to its reservations in keeping aside from the international mainstream actions. This non-signing, however, cannot not been interpreted as a non-commitment⁷².
- **Institutional sustainability and the maintenance of a "champion" in the process is thus key to sustainability and the future progress of the work after the end of the project.** Until the moment, the main Chinese decision-making group involved in increasing the convergence between EU and China is the MEE and its affiliated research institutes. However, in terms of project implementation arrangements, it was acknowledged that it might be unwise and difficult to bring in other stakeholders into the activities, due to political competition issues and the deeply embedded vertical governance culture. In case other government agencies are also involved in the project the outcome might not be as clear cut. On the other hand, the relationship with MEE should be kept and built on, this represents a huge capital the EU has developed over the years, making its contribution in the environmental sector more likely to be sustainable. But the lack of stakeholder participation from other relevant ministries, as well as from provincial level governments might, in the view of some respondents, hamper the project sustainability in the long term.

⁷⁰ However, senior Chinese government officials are described as good listeners, but it is hard to assess how much their opinion changed during these exchanges.

⁷¹ Signed by 75 countries and the EU before the Biodiversity Summit held end September 2020.

⁷² China is said to be generally reluctant to engage in additional tracks preferring to be on the official track. China was not against these pledges but had reservations about the terminology and the ambition of the coalition.

- **COVID-19 encapsulates a probability of a negative impact on project sustainability given the delays in the organization of meetings, the enhanced distance from decision-makers, and the delivery of scientific advice on time for negotiations**⁷³. COVID-19 affected negatively - but not in a major way compared to other EUDEL projects - the project's sustainability through some natural delays in the organisation of events and meetings, but above all it impacted the project's ability to maintain its usual proximity to people and decision-making processes. Informants confirmed that the pandemic postponed many discussions, that counterparts from the MEE are now much more difficult to reach⁷⁴ and that they do not participate and share as openly in webinars as before when they were presential. Furthermore, working virtually has challenged the character and effectiveness of the discussions. In China - as stressed by several interviewees – personal proximity and contact is key to good relationships. Maintaining a trust relationship demands continued direct personal interaction. Virtual discussions (and recordings) provide a more rigid and formal framing – despite its wider reach - thus excluding people from a more open and frank exchange.
- **Issues remain as to how or where cooperation on a global green recovery could find its way onto a multilateral agenda**⁷⁵.

Going forward, it is key to understand how China perceives itself and the relationships it wants to develop with other blocks and countries. China is becoming increasingly powerful, and it is moving in its own direction. China is not seeking to get advice; they know a lot. They want a more equal footing relationship. These features change the balance of the relationship for everyone. The EU must also balance security and trade issues in the equation, and remain true to its democratic convictions, while perceiving China's new identity and level of ambition.

2.6 EU value added

EQ 13. What is the additional value and complementarities resulting from the EU cooperation, compared to what could reasonably have been expected from China acting bilaterally with EU Member States organisations directly? i) Did the Action and its activities bring about benefits that could not have been provided by other EU Member States' actors? Which ones?; ii) To what extent did the Action (Component 1) and its activities complemented or added value to other EU and Member States initiatives in the field of environment and green economy?

In the view of EU countries, the EU-China dialogue on the green economy is filling a gap that is not covered by anyone through "impactful dialogue", while striking a good balance between formality versus informality. The EU work also serves "to keep one voice with China", in view of some dissonant attitudes that can be seen as aiming to divide the rule within the EU. The Danish Embassy in Beijing, which historically has had close links with China, has now been working even more through the EU. It is expected that given recent political developments, that these patterns are repeated with other EU countries.

⁷³ For instance, the impact of COVID-19 on multilateral environmental agreements on scientific advice, "Scientific advice is the lifeblood of multilateral environmental agreements. (...) But the pandemic poses a significant threat to how quickly scientists gather, draft, agree, and communicate their advice. Scientific bodies face additional challenges working in a virtual environment that can amplify serious structural inequalities across gender and development lines. In the case of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report, the wave of successive lockdowns has led to serious delays in scientific advice being ready in time for negotiations. ... It raises an essential question: how can scientific advisory bodies, such as the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) or IPCC, manage an immense workload equitably and effectively in a pandemic? (International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2021, p.5-6).

⁷⁴ Especially during the first six to eight months of the pandemic China almost completely closed down.

⁷⁵ "The issue [green recovery] doesn't have a home on the UNFCCC agenda. Some suggested the SDGs are the framework for recovery, but this agenda was designed to be implemented voluntarily and is not tied to a global decision-making body." (International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2021, p.15).

Without EU funding, these activities would not have been done or supported by any other Member States, nor would it have this sort of coverage and effort. With this project, the expertise of the implementation team, the accumulated experience from previous projects and engagements in related areas, the EU managed to mobilise resources that would hardly be put in place by single EU Member States. This was instrumental for achieving the purpose of policy dialogue at this level. In every workshop, the EU managed to mobilise high-level participation on the Chinese side. EU countries considered this very impressive, not only regarding the level of participants, but also in terms of the timeliness of the issues addressed and the contents of meetings. In the perception of the interviewees, the Chinese seemed to be quite loyal to the EU, they have been responding well to all EU calls for participation.

Still, China has the internal resources to do its own research even about other countries' policies and what worked for them. It has resources, capable institutions and staff, and an open door to approach its partners to provide information in this regard, especially from the EU and its Member States. It has also access to other forums (e.g., China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development⁷⁶) where it can search and get information about other countries' policies, successes and failures.

However, China's nuanced type of "authoritarian environmentalism"⁷⁷ is known to be more effective at producing policy outputs than outcomes. The nature of China's environmental programme has over time relied substantially on the efficacy of a huge and complex state machinery to deliver results. But these bureaucratic officials can be easily distracted or overwhelmed by other priorities, while the rest of society lacks the motivation to seek and withstand environmental gains. One of the gains this project brought was the proximity space it created to interact closely to policy if not makers at least possibly influencers. With the trips to Europe, Chinese officials could also see first-hand how these matters are dealt with in the EU and this has been no doubt a substantial value added, as it is human interaction experiencing and seeing that leaves greater marks and arguments for policy shifts in the minds of people.

Due to its mobilisation capacity and diplomacy ability, the EU also managed to also serve as an entry point for EU Member States' activities in China. EU countries operating more actively in China (e.g., Sweden, France, Denmark, Germany, United Kingdom*) used the EU as an entry point to their activities in China. At present, some Member States are reverting to the EU even more than before, due to a change in the political relationships which have hardened relationships at the country level, while the EU Delegation seems to have maintained the communication going. Even countries, such as **Canada**, mentioned that given the tightening of the recent diplomatic events, communication opportunities are expected to be harder and more uncertain in the future, so it is even more fundamental than ever that other partners on the ground maintain their communication channels open. With **France** and **Denmark** was clear complementary in joint efforts.

However, there is still scope to further capitalise on value added and synergies between the EU and EU member states, and for the EUD to serve as a platform that informs and coordinates actions in this area among all EU member states. Some countries which have not been so active in this area (e.g., Spain), stated they had not been completely briefed about the progress of the project, but acknowledged they struggled to get enough resources to contribute to this field of work. Despite the regular coordination meetings each six weeks, there is still scope of increase complementarity of

⁷⁶ <http://www.cciced.net/cciceden/>

⁷⁷ "Thus, authoritarian environmentalism can be provisionally defined as a public policy model that concentrates authority in a few executive agencies manned by capable and uncorrupt elites seeking to improve environmental outcomes. Public participation is limited to a narrow cadre of scientific and technocratic elites while others are expected to participate only in state-led mobilisation for the purposes of implementation. The policy outputs that result include a rapid and comprehensive response to the issue and usually some limits on individual freedoms" (Gilley, 2012, page 288).

actions between not only what the EU is doing with Member States, but also to help EU Member States to coordinate and articulate better among each other. This is often hampered by the lack of sufficient human resources devoted to the environmental area in Embassies.

Another value-added factor is the EU's ability to act as a wide convener at the regional and multilateral level, able to bring together a whole range of stakeholders, from the public to the private sectors, to academia from several countries. The close interaction made possible by the project with EU experts that can direct China to customised information according to their needs and "hot topics", drawing information and research from a considerable big region as the EU, is no doubt worth of value. The EU also acts as a facilitator for its EU Members States, so it is working for the benefit of all its member countries.

2.7 Coherence

EQ 14. What is the coherence of this Action (Component 1) with the EU strategy in China and the EU sectoral approach in environment?

The Action (Component 1) and its activities are aligned with EU policy interests and its activities consistent with other EU external action policies. There are substantial synergies due to the existing complementarities with other sub-areas in the environmental area from other initiatives in related areas (e.g., water and forests) and climate change. In September 2020, the EU and China agreed to establish a High-level Environment and Climate Dialogue to pursue joint commitments in the fight against global warming⁷⁸. The EU-China Co-Funding Mechanism, officially launched in September 2015, is yet another joint initiative this time to support joint research and innovation projects. It will grant funding to China-based participants of Horizon 2020 research and innovation projects. Based on the successful results of the first round of calls, it was extended to the Horizon 2020 Work Programme 2018-2020. The interviewees agreed that in areas where the EU has a stronghold, such as environment, cooperation should continue. EU countries agreed that very often it is not the research or the event that has influence but the interactions that go along with it, which serve to shape perspectives. This is the switch for a change of consciousness and positioning about these issues, which ultimately drives policy.

In the view of consulted EU countries, the EU Delegation in Beijing merits credit. The EUD has been perceived to be more vocal than several countries. It has made important breakthroughs. The EUD has done an excellent job on **biodiversity** and **circular economy**, which are very broad issues. High on the agenda now is also the EU's Green Deal, whereby the EUD managed to gather several Chinese Ministries, while on the EU side also mobilising several DGs (e.g., DG Environment, DG Connect, DG Climate). It is the first time the EUD managed to bring along so many different entities on both sides of the spectrum to discuss the circular economy at such a higher level.

EU countries are also interested in participating in other EU funded actions. Some countries got closer to the EU and have been using EU grants to push climate and environment initiatives. The **German** GIZ and KfW are also very active in China. There is quite strong activity between **France** and China. Through the EU-China biodiversity facility, AFD manages a financial window though EU delegated funds that serves to facilitate dialogue and to set up on the ground project facilities.

⁷⁸ https://www.euractiv.com/section/eu-china/special_report/eu-china-cooperation-on-climate-green-engines-of-global-economic-recovery/

EQ 15. What coherence exists with other Member State actions in China in this domain?

There is a high degree of coherence with EU Member States' actions in this domain. Particularly visible during the interviews with Denmark, Sweden, and France the overlap work on some topics is mutually reinforcing and symbiotic. One of the most similar and notable of Member States' initiatives is a project overseen by the Germany's Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) and the Chinese MEE. It is called Sino-German Environmental Partnership project and is supporting bilateral environmental policy dialogue through the exchange of experience and advice on various specialist topics, including improvement of air, water, and soil quality as well as biodiversity, since 2013⁷⁹. It builds trust through political dialogue, by enabling environment policy exchange and strategic environmental dialogue on a variety of topics. It also prepares and facilitates high-level meetings and provides support to the drafting of policy recommendations on specific climate, environment and development matters by drawing on German and international expertise.

EU countries recognise the importance to coordinate and join forces, but also “to keep one voice with China”, as the relationship is “super difficult”. Countries such as **Denmark** had in the past substantial cooperation with China and simultaneously, always collaborated with the EU closely. **EU Nordic Countries** are more active on the area of prevention and reduction of microplastics in the ocean. **Sweden** became the first country to launch a project on this with China with the textile industry, which the EU as their main counterpart. **France** has a mandate on greening China and ground themselves on the EU position papers, beyond France's official position.

EQ 16. What coherence should be sought with other international donors in this domain?

It is clear that coherence should be sought across all partners dealing with China to support the country to implement the international agenda commitments, in compliance with international standards on climate change and biodiversity, by supporting its ecological and energy transition. Namely the conceptual framework for policy coherence for sustainable development ('the PCSD⁸⁰ Framework'), developed by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) with the purpose of applying an integrated and whole-of-government approach to policy making, should be applied and extended to green growth. “Green growth provides a practical and flexible approach for achieving concrete, measurable progress across its economic and environmental dimensions, while taking full account of the social consequences of greening the growth dynamic of economies”⁸¹. The OECD considers multilevel governance, through the co-ordination between different levels of government, private sector and civil society, is necessary for incorporating environmental and economic priorities in pursuit of green growth. Simultaneously, national and local strategies need to be consistent with higher level international agendas. This analysis becomes complex when all these elements are combined.

The work of the World Bank Group, one of the largest players in the multilateral arena, considers in its engagement area two of its intentions to help promote a “greener growth, by facilitating the transition to a lower carbon energy path; reducing air, soil, water, and marine plastic pollution; demonstrating sustainable agriculture practices and improving food system quality and safety; strengthening sustainable natural resource management; and promoting low-carbon transport and cities (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, International Finance Corporation, Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency, 2019). However, its approach is more operational and thus complementary to that of the EU in the sense that it is intending to “continue market reforms and promote competition in energy sector”, “promote greater use of market instruments to combat pollution

⁷⁹ The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) is implementing it, with International Climate Initiative (IKI) funds. <https://climatecooperation.cn/> and <https://environmental-partnership.org/>

⁸⁰ Policy coherence for sustainable development (PCSD).

⁸¹ <http://www.oecd.org/gov/pcsd/pcsd-framework-gg.htm>

and climate change”, and “mobilize private financing and encourage private sector participation in green growth, including pollution clean-up and restoration” (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, International Finance Corporation, Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency, 2019, page 10).

At the bilateral level, beyond Germany, Japan has had a long-term relationship with China in this domain. It has been heavily engaged in solving environmental problems throughout China. “Japan has also made a major contribution to the raising of environmental awareness among the general public in China, and has been instrumental in empowering Chinese environmental citizen's groups” (Hirono, 2007).

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) implies reaching greater convergence with Chinese actors on subjects of global importance, such as green economy, biodiversity and climate change. In this context, it seems particularly relevant to link up the operational challenges in China with partnership initiatives, with international institutions that can help mobilise capacities for innovation in sustainable development to find solutions for Chinese problems. It cannot be forgotten that China is also taking an increasingly active role in reshaping the international environmental system. There are not many multilaterals in China (mainly the World Bank (WB) and ADB). It is also necessary to keep in mind that China is also a leading international donor, positioned to play an increasing role in financing for development worldwide.

Collaboration with partners such as the WEF, and further articulation with other international discussion forums, like the “Global Future Council on China”⁸², can be useful additional resources for policy dialogue. Chinese President Xi Jinping attended the 2021 WEF’s Davos Forum and made a virtual intervention. This was considered the first major diplomatic breakthrough of 2021.

Q 17: What coherence and complementarity the Action (component 1) shows with: i) the EU Green deal?; ii) the SDGs?

China has a recognisable interest about the EU’s Green Deal, so there is an enormous ongoing potential for complementarity between the EU and its Member States actions in China. The European Green Deal became a topic for this project’s activities as early as September 2019. European informants clearly pointed out its timeliness and the interest it generated among Chinese officers who, in the view of European stakeholders, consider the European experience complementary to the Chinese, due to the stated multi-governance coordination levels (for China this would be applied to its sub-regional and national levels). The interest on the EU Green Deal was also pointed out by one Chinese interviewee, who mentioned the interest in knowing about the performance of this experience and China’s interest on recommendations to take a more comprehensive approach to these themes.

The **European Green Deal** was launched in December 2019, at the end of the second year of project implementation. The project could therefore not fully align its complementarity and coherence at its design and programming stage with this later strategy. Nonetheless, as early as September 2019, during the second policy visit to Europe (Activity 6.2), DG Environment in Brussels introduced the EU’s latest Green Deal policy. And at the virtual expert workshop on green transition, held in September 2020 (Activity 10.2), the EU Green Deal and its green growth strategy were presented again. The policy visit report states that “the delegation was very interested in taking this information back to the Chinese government to study and compare with the Chinese vision of ecological civilization.” And the 6th IR states that, “as China is developing its 14th Five-Year Plan, the EU experience in financing the green transition and in building return mechanisms, especially in the energy transition in less

⁸² <https://www.weforum.org/communities/gfc-on-china>

developed EU Member States, may provide inspiration for China”, showing an opening for coherence and complementarity on the side of Chinese authorities.

This EU Policy dialogue project was also considered as a complementary entry point for other conversations. Countries and interviews also referred to good collaborations in other related areas. China is not as interested in financing per se, as in the EU’s institutional experience (e.g., land management issues, integrated approaches, etc.). Thus, complementary work along Chinese interests is the way forward. When **China’s circular economy** work streams were announced, the EU was highly active, with workshops, and even signed the EU-China “Memorandum of Understanding on the Circular Economy Cooperation” in July 2018. When the **carbon neutrality** target up to 2060 was announced, there was a very active EU dialogue to engage China. The EUD has been continually moving forward keeping these themes high on the agenda, and EU countries are happy about it. Several other events organised by the EU were recognised as being very good and useful. With the new **FYP**, several policy initiatives were approved from different Task Forces. In 2021, due to **COP15**, there will be more conferences organised around these themes.

The project reveals a **considerable degree of coherence with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** and through its intended results and best practices adoption on the side of China, it has the potential to contribute to the following SDGs:

- SDG 15 - Life on Land: “Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss” targeting biodiversity.
- SDG 14 – Life below Water: “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development” targeting marine pollution.
- SDG 3 - Good health and well-being: ““Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages” targeting air and soil pollution.

However, the interviews did not reveal further information as to the contribution of the project activities to the SDGs.

3 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Lessons learnt

Next, lessons learnt from the project's implementation are drawn:

- The **political level dialogue with China has become quite challenging and less open** - with several restrictions to communications - with policy-making processes in China becoming increasingly opaque, making **assessing external influence of EU projects** onto the Chinese government policymaking increasingly difficult in recent years. In this context, despite increased complexity, dialogue on environment and climate remained relatively preserved from political tensions.
- **Lack of engagement from Chinese stakeholders in sufficient numbers during the evaluation** combined with the lack of awareness on the importance of independent evaluation work, caused an insufficient number of Chinese stakeholders to respond to the evaluation process. This prevented the gathering of more solid evidence of project outcomes and impacts, making the overall project's influence and impact hard to assess.
- **High-level commitment and buy-in from the Chinese government's side** is key to speed the implementation of the environmental and green agenda and the operationalization of the project, given the hardened political context and the issues brought about by COVID-19. This engagement is necessary from the outset and throughout the entire implementation phase, to obtain buy-in at the highest level of the decision-making hierarchy.
- **Adaptability to a changing environment and responsiveness** to Chinese needs were key to circumvent challenges. Having the implementing team work adaptively with partners allowed the project to move forward as much as possible despite COVID-19.
- **Good partner communication between the EU and China and the synergies** which arose between the two blocks favoured the implementation of the project. Developing a good dialogue and proximity to public authorities, namely engaging the MEE and PRCEE to take the lead, speeded processes considerably.
- Keeping an **ongoing open technical dialogue with China** is a meaningful means of communication and proximity. Joint research work and expert workshops with access to targeted Chinese officials helped keep an ongoing research-based dialogue, which was beneficial to maintain some communication channels with China open⁸³.
- By **combining work on Chinese demand-driven topics with joint priorities centred around global issues**, and with a greater margin to propose, explore and dare given the EU-led nature of this initiative, the project managed to stay an attractive partner for dialogue and make important breakthroughs, by putting topics such as biodiversity or green recovery high on the agenda, despite not being able to address more sensitive topics, such as coal.
- **The EU has the mobilisation capacity and the diplomacy ability to serve as an entry point for EU Member States activities in China.** Close engagement and coordination with partners, in particular EU Member States through the exchange of information, became even more crucial since COVID-19 and there is still scope to further capitalise on these synergies and for the EUD

⁸³ The Chinese cut bonds with Norway, the only uninterrupted dialogue was technical scientific dialogue such as carbon trading issues.

to serve as a stronger information and coordination platform in this area among all EU Member States.

- **Remote meetings** were not as effective to reach and engage Chinese stakeholders, gather consensus, and spread influence as presential meetings, which also allow for more informal exchanges (e.g., during break-out sessions) and the development of networks and closer contact. However, virtual meetings allowed in some circumstances the opening to a wider and more international type of audience outside China.
- Without proper **dissemination within and outside China and a disclosure policy** for the dissemination of its research track's knowledge products, the project's visibility, learnings and ability to contribute to the widespread discussion on these topics with key policy target audiences and broader Chinese and European public outside the scope of the project will remain beyond its potential.
- Without a **clear strategic agenda on how to make use of multi-stakeholder platforms to foster project's objectives**, the project will find itself confined in its ability to derive impact from bringing in other players from civil society, governmental ministries and the private sector.
- There is **scope to explore other engagement modalities** for greater long-term sustainability and ownership. Chinese stakeholders seem ready for closer engagement modalities where they feel more at the steering wheel - with more explicit direct responsibility - and eventually even for co-financing of activities.

3.2 Conclusions

The description below includes consolidated findings from the Desk Report and the Intermediary Report.

3.2.1 Relevance

The Action through Component 1 of the project promoted the overall foreign policy objectives of the EU with China. Although small in scope, the project was seen as relevant in providing important contributions in most of the areas where it operated, and in being an important milestone in the EU-China partnership on environment and climate. It also served "to keep one voice with China" within the EU. Indeed, "Engaging and cooperating with China is both an opportunity and a necessity"⁸⁴, with COVID-19 showing that the EU-China partnership in environment and climate has become even more crucial. However, governmental cooperation with China is a challenge, even on the more consensual environmental field - given the inherent rigidity of the Party-State.

Component 1 of the Action responded sufficiently well to support the EU-China political dialogue for environment by working on joint priorities. The dialogue approach hinged on research (in-depth studies, short papers), trainings, expert workshops, policy visits and a final policy seminar. Contrary to other initiatives in this area in China, the EU was more in control, in the sense that the project team had a greater margin to propose, explore and dare.

With FPI, the focus got centred around global issues, vis-à-vis a focus on China's internal issues, with the direct involvement of policy-making institutions. But the political level dialogue with China was widely recognised by non-Chinese interviewees as extremely challenging, with the space for manoeuvre getting more limited. Political dialogue is thus a viable approach, but it is difficult

⁸⁴ From the EU-China's summit main results, as of 22 June 2020, available at <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-summit/2020/06/22/>

to answer if EU priorities could have been better matched through different actions or activities given the complexity of the operating environment in China.

The project's modus operandi was flexible, adaptive and responsive to the Chinese context and its explicit needs. This was key to circumvent the problems which emerged since the COVID-19 pandemic. **However, the project's intervention themes captured mostly immediate priorities (e.g. circular economy, COP15), in areas in which the EU was allowed to "break into", with other topics remaining untouched, often because China was not keen to work on those.**

Activities and outputs of Action (Component 1) were consistent with respectively the overall and specific objectives of the Action. A Theory of Change could consistently be built from the stated results chain in the Action Fiche and the project's ToR followed through as to detailing its activities. However, there is changing terminology across documents related to green growth and environment and also as to the way high-level results are framed (Action Fiche, the project LFM and the ToR of the implementors) which make results definition and measurement less accurate and more challenging⁸⁵.

The dialogue approach hinged mostly on research (i.e., in-depth studies, short papers), trainings, experts workshops, policy visits and a final policy seminar. The research track was considered an important feature, but the dissemination of both short papers and in-depth studies was very limited, thus its potential for additional policy influence remained underexploited.

Events were considered critical as they allowed for face-to-face interactions and thus trust-building relationships.

There was practically no visibility of this project outside China within the EU space. The project remained mostly confined to the MEE and its partners, and to the participants of the project activities. Few outreach activities were planned within the Action Fiche and the project itself.

3.2.2 Effectiveness

Although the pandemic caused delay, planned outputs and activities are on a good path to be delivered. The EU's strategic approach was flexible enough to adapt to emerging problems. The major perceived change was COVID-19 and its political consequences. The implementing team adaptively worked with partners to keep the project moving forward as much as possible despite the pandemic.

The project worked on joint priorities centred around global issues and responded well to support the EU-China political dialogue for environment. Demand-driven topics were welcomed, and the EU had a greater margin to propose, explore and dare compared to other international initiatives in the same area. The project made important breakthroughs, by putting topics such as biodiversity or green recovery high on the agenda but was not able to probe into more sensitive and complex topics, such as coal.

Events (expert workshops, trainings and policy visits) were well organized, well attended, well balanced between formal and informal exchanges and to the point, but were not the most visible though. They allowed for face-to-face interactions and thus contributed to building a trust relationship with the Chinese state audience, a prerequisite for successful cooperation. The turnover of participants reduced this potential to some degree. Virtual workshop events due to COVID-19 made engagement with Chinese stakeholders harder, and informal exchanges during break-out sessions

⁸⁵ For instance: (i) "influence" (AF) vs. "contribute" (LFM) and/or "reinforce" (ToR GOPA) for the overall objective, and (ii) "convergence" (LFM) versus "regulatory convergence" (ToR GOPA).

impossible, while at the same time opening up to more space for participation from international experts based in Europe.

All topics - biodiversity, permitting system, green economy and investment, pollution and environmental governance - covered the "specific topics of particular interest" identified during the first PCC meeting. Most events were linked to knowledge products. Almost all expert workshops were linked to a short paper and the two policy visits were each linked to an in-depth study.

Short papers ended up being of different typologies and its dissemination potential was not fully exploited. Short papers did not serve its original purpose of wider dissemination, they ended up being more report briefings than scientific workshop preparation materials for participants, with no systematic dissemination to workshop participants.

Unclear dissemination and disclosure policy for sharing of knowledge products in general is a major shortcoming of the project, which consequently reduced the sharing of results and lessons with wider policy target audiences, and with a broader Chinese and European public outside the project. The dissemination of short papers and in-depth studies was mainly internal to the project, without a clear strategy and dissemination channels, especially in Europe.

Collaboration with CCICED and the joint hosting of meetings were highly relevant. However, visibility of the EU in these events was minimal.

The project is thus marked by a considerable lack of visibility on several levels: lack of project visibility in the EU's internal market, lack of visibility of EU implication in project events in both jointly CCICED organised workshops but also in other expert workshops, and overall lack of visibility of project outputs. The **communication and visibility plan**, as outlined in the project's "Inception Report and Visibility Plan" of March 2018 was never thoroughly implemented.

The project was somehow more limited in bringing in other players from civil society, other governmental ministries and the private sector to maximize effectiveness, also in line with its core target of target groups. The project's core audience - the Chinese government representatives - was two-third of the total, with only 17% of Chinese participants belonging to the civil society or to the private sector. There was a lower participation of interlocutors from other governmental ministries, NGOs and private business representatives. The three informal networking events were useful to serve as multi-stakeholder platforms but lacked clear objectives.

The trust relationship developed by the EU with MEE is a considerable acquired capital. As part of this project, other more diversified connections within MEE and beyond would allow to reach out more effectively to other departments and relevant ministries working in related areas, to increase the project's impact through enhanced inter-institutional cooperation and dialogue. The presence of PRCEE within the project implementation consortium helped to gain access inside the MEE and the Chinese government to build such trust, but EU access to Chinese ministries should not depend on PRCEE. Despite the recurrent Chinese practice to work with such intermediaries, the EU should avoid possible limitations associated with PRCEE's involvement. Thus, it is relevant for the EU to ensure that access to relevant departments does not only rely on PRCEE's connections within MEE or those of the project team. In fact, the EUD has already built its own network with other MEE departments and ministries through other projects and mechanisms, in areas such as Climate, Forestry or Circular Economy. Thus, the EUD can continue to reach out directly to relevant MEE's departments and exploit the space to act beyond the operation of this single project, to engage bilaterally with all relevant actors – governmental and non-governmental - to foster the advancement of this agenda.

As to outcomes and impacts, and overall project influence, stakeholders could not come up with straightforward evidence-based answers, as it is hard to assess given the context. The project gets merit for putting topics high on the agenda, making important breakthroughs (e.g., green economic recovery, discussions on biodiversity and the European Green Deal). MEE officials now

know more about European approaches and experience, which gave them the possibility to identify the best policy implementation options. China announced important targets for the environment, but these cannot be attributed directly to the project due to the lack of information about policy-making processes, but also due to the lack of Chinese respondents in the evaluation.

There are several **key success factors for the achievement of results** such as: flexibility and adaptation, responsiveness, credibility, high-level commitment from involved stakeholders, demand-driven topics balance between high-level participants and the level of formalities, interactivity of training during workshops, eagerness to learn from Chinese officials, joint work with CCICED, cooperative research engagements for the production of in-depth studies, PRCEE involvement which eased the administrative work and the networking, and the implementation team's quality and networking abilities.

Also to worth mentioning are multiple **constraints for the achievement of results**: COVID-19 as a substantial one, lack of project visibility, unclear dissemination and disclosure policy for the dissemination of knowledge products, project ownership from the Chinese side, opaque Chinese policy-making, institutional protagonism within the Chinese hierarchy, external perception of PRCEE's credibility, constant and close personal interaction needed to make activities happen, delays with the short papers, lack of clarity as to networking events' objectives, absence of a strategy as to involving civil society and the private sector, and underestimated budget for in-depth studies.

3.2.3 Efficiency

The pace of implementation is good and the project has run smoothly, but COVID-19 has caused some delays. The overall project budget was adjusted in 2020 due to COVID-19 and the available remaining budget for 2021 has to be carefully used (9% of total budget remaining for 14% of implementation period in 2021). Some specific activity budgets were underestimated (e.g., for in-depth studies) or overestimated (e.g. incidental expenditure for short papers and training workshops).

The modalities of project management implementation are not totally obvious and the role of PRCEE not totally clear. The change in the project's governance system with the suspension of the project's Steering Committee meetings contributed to this lack of transparency.

Efficient project management was supported by both the involvement of PRCEE - which eased the administrative work and the outreach to event participants -, and the quality of the implementation team and their networking abilities. PRCEE involvement – even if not considered powerful enough for policy influence and for coordination with other ministries - was in any case considered useful, having significantly supported project implementation. The implementation team is very skilful in reaching out and communicating to Chinese stakeholders, which had a considerable positive impact on the project.

The monitoring arrangements are not sufficiently consistent over time, and in consequence do not allow *per se* a comprehensive judgement of the performance of the project.

Although evidence of project impact is limited, not only due to the data collection limitations from the Chinese side but also because of the opacity of Chinese policymaking, it is unanimously recognized that acting to keep the dialogue and the communication with China flowing is fundamental. The project has served this purpose well and worked in the right direction through joint research work and expert workshops, which helped keep a research-based dialogue. There is a new mindset within Chinese experts touched by this stream of work, in the sense that they are more aware of how to build future policy related work.

Interviewees also unanimously recognized to the lack of evidence to support the claim that the project directly contributed to the Chinese institutional/governance or management practices on challenges of global concern. Influencing the Chinese government has become more difficult in recent years and the space of manoeuvre is decreasing.

It can be feasible to admit that most of the research work had some degree of influence, and that some of the recommendations served at least as the basis of formulation of MEE's recommendations for the 14th FYP. However, the impact of the research work stayed below its potential for direct policy influence, despite the cooperative research engagements with in-depth studies contributing to substantial learning on both sides. At the **policy level**, the project supported the establishment of an environmental permitting scheme (i.e., pollution permits system) which became the core system of compliance in China, but assessments as to the EU's effective influence varies according to the different European and Chinese perspectives.

The impact of the **biodiversity stream of work**, meant to align European and the Chinese positions was somehow more limited, without clear evidence of alignment. However, the workshop helped to keep a research-based dialogue with access to a Chinese interested audience.

In biodiversity and carbon neutrality, there is a great potential for collaboration. The aim for carbon neutrality is driving a huge push for innovation in China. It is the general view that policy dialogue could also cover industrial development. Environmental green policies must be connected to enterprise policy at the micro and macro industrial level. Several interviewees also view green finance as the main accelerator for this transition. There is scope for more future work in this domain.

The project worked mostly at the institutional level and the private sector was not directly targeted. However, the private sector is increasingly seen in China as a driving force for transformation.

3.2.4 Impact

The impact of the Action (Component 1) is hard to gauge and is still materialising. The COVID-19 pandemic has also caused some disruption throughout 2020. Despite the Chinese focus on "no interference", it is consensual that the EU needs to maintain a relationship with China, keeping dialogue and communication open with the Chinese and that the approach has served the intended purpose.

All the respondents unanimously declared dialogue as fundamental and that the project is working in the right direction, but there is scarce evidence of new institutional/governance or management practices which can be directly attributed to the project.

It can be feasible to admit that some of the dialogue and the research work managed to have some degree of influence, and that some of the recommendations served at least as the basis to formulate MEE's recommendations for the FYP, the ultimate strategic policy document in China. However, the impact of the research work is below its potential for direct policy influence, especially in the wider scientific and academic community.

There is a new mindset within Chinese experts touched by the project, that they are more aware of how to build future policy related work.

The biodiversity stream of work served to align European and the Chinese views and common understanding about the topics, but was limited as to the alignment of positions, also considering the COP has not yet taken place. Concerning the latest Chinese legislation on plastic waste, the extent to which it was influenced by the European legislation could not be proven given the limitations of the evaluation to reach out to Chinese stakeholders.

On the macro-policy level, the impact of project activities is judged as nontangible. Concerning the green recovery, China is said to adopt, as it did in 2008 after the financial crises, a soft-landing approach. At present, it seems difficult to analyse if a green stimulus has actually happened.

The **three informal networking** events, held at the end of the first three biodiversity workshops, were considered by several respondents helpful to connect the different categories of stakeholders, especially national and international NGOs with Chinese government officials. But it was considered

that in order to have an impact, these networking events should have established a mechanism for regular meetings, with a clear objective.

3.2.5 Sustainability

There is, in principle, willingness of Chinese key target groups to cooperate with the EU on the global challenge of environmental conservation. But it seems difficult to judge the willingness of Chinese key target groups to converge with the EU concerning these same global challenges. On biodiversity, China did not sign “The Leaders’ Pledge for Nature”, but this cannot not be interpreted as a non-commitment.

Institutional sustainability and the maintenance of a “champion” in the process is key to sustainability and the future progress of the work after the project finishes.

COVID-19 affected negatively the project’s sustainability due to delays in the setting up of meetings, but above all due to the project’s team lack of proximity to decision-making processes. COVID-19 can still hamper the project’s sustainability, above all due to the project’s inability to remain as close as before the pandemic to the target groups and the decision-making processes. Going forward, it is key to understand how China perceives itself and the relationships it wants to develop with other blocks and countries. The EU must also balance security and trade issues in the equation, and remain true to its democratic convictions, while tackling China’s new identity and level of ambition.

The project’s sustainability in the long term can be hampered by two main factors. First, project ownership. Sufficient engagement would be needed from the outset to ensure cooperation with China in a sustainable way. If there is no co-funding from the Chinese side and no explicit direct responsibility attributed to them in the progress of the work, a lower engagement on the Chinese side can be expected. Without funding from the Chinese side, it seems difficult to engage with China in a sustainable way. **Second,** sustainability can be put at stake with lack of sufficient stakeholder participation from other relevant ministries, as well as from provincial level governments, due to political competition and the deeply embedded vertical governance culture within China. Institutional stability and the involvement of Chinese “champions” in the process are key to sustainability and future work in this domain.

3.2.6 EU Value Added

In the view of consulted EU countries, the EU-China dialogue on the green economy is filling a gap that is not covered by anyone, through “impactful dialogue” and by creating a proximity space for close interaction with China. The EU work also serves to speak consistently with one voice with China. Due to its mobilisation capacity and diplomacy ability, the EUD managed to also serve as an entry point for EU Member States’ activities in China. Without EU funding, these activities would not have been done or supported by any other Member States, nor would it have this level of reach and coverage.

However, there is still scope to further capitalise on value added and synergies between the EU and its Member States as part of this project, **and for the EUD to serve as a platform that regularly informs and coordinates actions in this area among all EU Member States.**

Another value-added factor is the **EU’s ability to act as a wide convener at the regional and multilateral level,** able to draw together a whole range of European stakeholders, from the public to the private sectors, and academia from several countries.

3.2.7 Coherence

The Action (component 1) and its activities are aligned with EU policy interests, and its activities coherent with other EU external action policies. Interviewees agreed that in areas where the EU has a stronghold, such as environment, cooperation should continue. This project also works in conjunction and synergises with several other EU projects (e.g. the EU-China Energy Cooperation Platform, the Strategic Partnerships for the Implementation of the Paris Agreement (SPIPA), the China Biodiversity Facility, the EU-China Cooperation on Water and Implementation of the China-EU Water Platform (CEWP)) , with the EUD minimising overlap.

There is also a high degree of coherence with EU Member States' actions in this domain (e.g., with Denmark, Sweden, Germany and France the overlap work on some topics is mutually reinforcing and symbiotic). EU countries recognise the importance of coordinating and joining forces, but also of keeping one voice with China, as the relationship is "super difficult"⁸⁶. Close coordination and joining forces, in particular with EU Member States, is key and has become even more crucial since COVID-19 and the new role China is pursuing in the international geopolitical system.

Further, **there is an enormous ongoing potential for complementarity between the EU and its Member States actions in China.** The European Green Deal was launched in December 2019, at the end of the second year of project implementation, and China has a recognisable current interest in it related to its ecological civilisation strategy. There is still scope to further capitalise on these synergies and for the EUD to serve as an information and coordination platform among all EU Member States.

There are also **substantial thematic synergies** due to the existing complementarities with other sub-areas in the environmental field⁸⁷ (e.g., the recent establishment of the EU-China High-level Environment and Climate Dialogue)

It is advantageous for all partners dealing with China to be coherent, and to support the implementation of international agenda commitments by supporting China's ecological and energy transition, in compliance with international standards on climate change and biodiversity. These synergies were explored with CCICED. Collaboration with other partners, such as the WEF, and further articulation with other international discussion forums, like the "Global Future Council on China" are key for policy dialogue. It is also necessary to keep in mind that China is also a leading international donor, positioned to play an increasing role in financing for development worldwide.

The project reveals a considerable degree of coherence with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and has the potential to contribute to some of its indicators. However, the interviews did not reveal further information as to the contribution of the project activities to the SDGs.

⁸⁶ Statements taken from interviews.

⁸⁷ In September 2020, the EU and China agreed to establish a High-level Environment and Climate Dialogue to pursue joint commitments in the fight against global warming.

3.3 Recommendations

Recommendations were categorized into four groups:

- Recommendations for project conception/approach and planning
- Recommendations for project steering and project management
- Recommendations for operational implementation of the activities
- Recommendations concerning coherence and EU-added value.

3.3.1 Recommendations to the European Union

Below are recommendations specific for the EU.

3.3.1.1 Project approach and planning

The evaluation considered relevant a continued engagement of the EU with China for a transformative action in the environmental sector. The project can improve its worth in two different ways: firstly, as a networking platform to serve EU interest; secondly, as a dissemination platform.

Recommendation 1. The project should enhance its role as a networking platform to serve EU interest possibly in three different fronts, described below.

- **Serving as a wider network hub, namely striving to provide more space for public engagement.**

The project should further extend its already widely acknowledged role in organizing high-level Sino-European expert workshops. It is recommendable to organize **multiple dialogues** with different groups of stakeholders, i.e. **closed expert workshops**, as already practiced, with Chinese government officials to guarantee the necessary access to high level decision makers in a “confidential” environment, and **multi-stakeholder dialogues** – brainstorming forums and debates, expert workshops etc. - inviting also environmental governance important stakeholders in civil society and private sector (tailoring to the type of event and purpose) to take part but possible to also share knowledge and experience. This needs to be put into the context considering the other FPI actions, where this type of format is also used (e.g., facility, Strategic Partnerships for the Implementation of the Paris Agreement).

The closed workshops should put more emphasis on top-level dialogue and invite vice-minister-level and, if possible, even minister-level Chinese officials. Important government stakeholders to further integrate are public Chinese banks to work on green financing and SOEs who are important stakeholders for government policy implementation. Both, closed-expert workshops and multi-stakeholder events can also be organized outside of Beijing, in a provincial capital, when a high number of regional level stakeholders are involved to foster greater informality in the discussions and closeness to the lower levels of power (see 2nd paragraph below on decentralisation).

- **Striving to better link up multi-governance levels within the MEE and across other ministries.**

The trust-relationship developed with the MEE is of huge worth and should be further exploited. An opening-up to other ministries, given the formalities and implementing arrangements seems to be at the present moment an unfeasible way of cooperation in China. However, PRCEE is not very influential within MEE and lacks the necessary power for coordination with other ministries. It is therefore of value to maintain PRCEE as an implementing partner, in particular for day-to-day management and more content-related questions, but at the same time try to engage with the Department of International Cooperation in order to reach to other relevant ministries, and thus break the known institutional silos. This would also demonstrate a higher buy-in from the Chinese side.

➤ **Adoption of a pragmatic implementation approach to support the development of solutions for China, based on EU interest.**

China welcomes support in the development of concrete solutions and is focused on implementation. Adopting a pragmatic implementation approach, which supports the development of solutions, based on EU interest, is highly recommendable. For this, several actions could be considered:

- Produce focused case studies to show which ideas work and which do not. Short papers linked to workshops could be based on case studies and disseminated to participants before the workshops. Case studies could also integrate cases from China, for example in biodiversity, where China also has interesting experiences.
- Multi-stakeholder events could develop mechanisms for the joint development of solutions. For example, participants could agree which aspect of the discussed topic would need further investigation. The project could then support further joint research, bringing together the different types of stakeholders who participated in the event.
- Follow-up workshops, with the same participants, to allow deeper insights and the development of comprehensive solutions.

Recommendation 2. Foster the project's role as a dissemination platform to create a common narrative around these topics in China. Two main ideas are proposed below.

➤ **Enhance the project's external communication and visibility for project areas that can be made public.**

There is great scope for the project to enhance its visibility and foster its external communication, both for European and Chinese stakeholders, and to create a common narrative and to impulse both intercommunal and transnational strategies.

Visibility and communication comprise two parts: i) project's outputs and results, and ii) the project and the leading role of the EU in the project.

Firstly, to place greater emphasis on the project's role as a policy dialogue platform hinged on research, **outputs and results** should be disseminated more widely to the outside world. This requires:

- A detailed workplan for EU branding and dissemination of project's products (with timings and audience) to be established from the outset, with a clear definition of the public and of its intended reach. This should then be monitored along project implementation.
- Timely dissemination to the targeted audience, ideally both Chinese and international public. A more intensive utilisation of internet tools and social media can be pursued.
- Visibility requires specific work, and a part time visibility officer might be necessary.

Secondly, to increase the **visibility of the project** and **the EU lead**, the following points should be considered:

- An effective branding and communication of EU's lead during project events should be assured.
- At present, the project homepage is hosted at the ClientEarth homepage, but it might be more strategic to either initiate a specific project homepage to create a real project identity, independent from the implementors' identity, or to host the existing basic project homepage on the homepage of the Delegation of the European Union to China, in the project sub-folder to make it more visible as an EU initiative and collect all the outputs on this homepage. This latter solution would also benefit to the project's visibility in EU's internal market.
- Project (event) communications on WeChat should clearly underline the EU lead in the project.

➤ **Diversify project event formats to reach a wider public.**

Events and expert workshop meetings in China can influence many people. The COVID-19 pandemic allowed the widening of event formats to reach wider audiences. Some events can be broadcasted through social media (e.g., Tiktok Livestream) and more technical-based trainings and workshops can be organised as hybrid webinars in order to reach a wider public, even that from the regional and local level.

Policy visits in Europe could also be organised as complete virtual visits, thus allowing more Chinese government officials to participate.

Recommendation 3. Harmonise terminology across all documents from the outset for clarity purposes and performance monitoring.

It is advisable to precisely define and align the terminology (e.g., technical words referring to the scope of green economy and the statements about how results are formulated) across the Action Fiche, the ToR for the contractor and the Project Logical Framework to ensure harmonisation of lexicon, and to provide a sense of a unique direction and purpose for results.

3.3.1.2 Recommendations for project steering and project management

Recommendation 4. Integrate evaluations within the project cycle management timing

It is recommendable to integrate evaluations during the project cycle management and to plan them sufficiently ahead of time so that they be timely in the provision of evidence-based guidance on the way forward. Evaluations are a standard and obligatory mechanism to track and measure results which allow, depending on the moment of the evaluation – either mid-term or final evaluation – to understand the performance of project activities and outputs or go further into its impact and sustainability. Based on these evidence-based findings, recommendations for better project steering can be made.

Recommendation 5. There is room and apparent willingness from the Chinese side for the EU to also consider conducting policy dialogue through other shared initiatives - beyond the EU-led Partnership Instrument – namely through shared financing collaboration areas and co-financed scientific projects, in which the Chinese would feel more involved and at the steering wheel.

If policy dialogue financing originates only from the EU side, the EU will be more in control, but a lack of the necessary buy-in from the Chinese is due to occur, which can compromise the sustainability of the intervention. A co-financing mechanism can engage China in a different way and can yield higher commitment levels towards action⁸⁸.

Recommendation 6. Restore the annual Project Coordination Committee meetings and, independently from the operation of this single project, the EUD should continue to engage bilaterally with relevant departments of MEE to maintain good relationship.

Steering committees involving Chinese and European representatives are important policy dialogue spaces to reflect on broader policy and joint priorities and thus provide higher level guidance for the implementation team. These meetings can increase buy-in and ownership on the Chinese side. It is advisable to restore annual PCC meetings and also invite the contractor and sub-contractor for project feedback. This project management modality should be made clear with the Chinese side from the beginning, underlining its need for higher level guidance, from the early stage of programming all through project implementation.

⁸⁸ The Chinese side has very recently decided to install a Chinese-European “Research Center for EU-China Environment Policy” under PRCEE of MEE. The implementation team interprets this as a significant sign showing the willingness of the Chinese side to enforce the policy dialogue with the EU.

3.3.1.1 Recommendations concerning coherence and EU-added value

Recommendation 7. Implement a closer articulation and coordination mechanisms with EU Member States and their activities in this domain.

Since COVID-19, close engagement and coordination with partners has become even more crucial, in particular with EU Member States. Due to its mobilization capacity and diplomacy ability, the EU also serves as an entry point for EU Member States' activities in China, but synergies between the EU and its Member States could be better explored, and initiatives better coordinated. For this, more information sharing and regular coordination meetings are advisable, also to provide a platform for EU Member States to coordinate amongst themselves.

3.3.2 Recommendations to both the EU and the Project's Steering Committee

3.3.2.1 Recommendations for project steering and project management

Recommendation 8. Explore other potential collaboration areas deeply related to the EU interest and endeavour to achieve higher-level goals, through more regular convening and joint coordination between the China team in DG ENV and EUD. The project would also benefit from a more systematic engagement from EU headquarters.

Complementary work along Chinese interests is the way forward in cooperating successfully with China. Phase 1 of the project had a balance between Chinese demands and the European interest but was very driven by Chinese demand. At the same time, contrary to the CCICED, the EU is more in control, in the sense that the project team had a greater margin to propose, explore and dare. Although it is becoming increasingly difficult under the present political context to impose an agenda, the project should clearly focus on EU interests, while at the same time being complementary with Chinese interests.

Chinese government officials showed great interest in the European Green Deal, and there is an enormous potential for complementarity with the Chinese ecological civilisation strategy. To be on the driver's seat, the project should find "cracks" in the Chinese implementation agenda, using for example the European Green Deal as entry point and then bring in other topics the EU is interested in, such as energy transition out of coal to less pollutant and renewable energies; or the implementation of CBD COP15 as another entry point. According to the interviews, potential collaboration areas could be:

- **Implementation of CBD COP15:**
 - **Protected areas and ecological restoration:** Habitats Directive and Natura 2000, Marine protected areas etc. to show how biodiversity is addressed in planning and in implementation in Europe.
 - **Integrating biodiversity in cities:** Restoration, concept of "rewilding" could be of interest in China.
 - The **private sector, SOE's included, and biodiversity:** mainstreaming biodiversity in the private sector etc.
- **European Green Deal and Green Economy / Green transition:**
 - **Green transition in a coal region:** Experiences in European countries, positive and negative experiences in addressing air and water pollution stemming from coal production; Link of European policies to national level context and activities on local level.
 - **Concept of Natural Capital Accounting and coal:** coal is a bad investment.
 - **Green/blue financing:** Nature-based solutions in the ocean, green financing and the bank sector etc.
- **Circular Economy:**
 - Zero-Waste cities
 - Plastic recycling

3.3.1 Recommendations to both the European Union and the implementation team

3.3.1.1 Recommendations for project steering and project management

Recommendation 9. Establish a consistent and integrated monitoring system.

The project monitoring arrangements should be consistent over time and informative to allow a clear view on the use of inputs and the expected outputs, and above all how activities can translate into higher level goals. It should allow to adequately reflect project progress and make the project easily and efficiently steerable for the EUD. A consistent and integrated monitoring system should thus be established at the beginning of project implementation which allows the implementation team to adequately and timely measure the expected effects, both at the project objective level and at the output level. This should be based on the following premises:

- Ensure consistency between the PIMS reporting, the LFM and the project ToRs.
- Provide disaggregated information in the PIMS reporting and in the Project IR to allow a detailed measurement of each activity, in particular for core activity indicators.
- The ToRs should specify that knowledge products have to be produced by a Chinese-international joint expert team and in the project's reporting documents disaggregated data, by provenance of expert, should be provided for core activity indicator A2. It should also contain a narrative description on the affiliation of the involved experts.
- Keep the project's core indicators as stable as possible from inception through the project implementation phase. Changes made during the implementation should be explained and monitored systematically
- Introduce baselines, targets and milestones to ensure a more sequential and precise planning. These should be timed and disaggregated by stakeholder type and types of activities. For instance, include in the LFM the target on the number of short papers to be produced, according to the ToRs, as it was the case for in-depth studies, and adding in the assumptions - in case they are linked to a workshop - that they are available to workshop participants before the workshop. For a milestone example, *one joint Chinese-international expert in-depth study in project year 2 and one in project year three are undertaken. Or, two expert workshops each year for Chinese top-level officials are conducted of which one of the two (each year) includes provincial level government officials; or one multistakeholder expert workshops each year is conducted etc.*

Recommendation 10. Assure constant and close interaction with Chinese stakeholders to increase impact, increasing the connection of the project to the policy dialogue at the Ministerial level, reinforcing resources at the EUD in line with the ambitions for policy influence.

There was a high turnover of participants in thematic workshops (those organised under the same topic). This cannot only be attributed to the high turnover inside Chinese government institutions. In a forthcoming phase, the project should strive to follow-up on the same topics with the same people, on a regular basis. Even if these are smaller events, they should ensure the same people participate to allow for the development of fruitful discussions and increase impact. Trainings should also be followed-up by a workshop to see, for example, concerning the permitting system, if compliance has become easier at the local level.

Recommendation 11. Firm up and explicit the criteria and process for the selection of Chinese experts.

Recommendation 12. Take the opportunity to foster cross-cutting work to break silos across both China and EU stakeholders.

Environment is a cross-cutting issue but so is climate change, requiring work across different ministries and institutions, both within the EU and China. MEE has integrated climate change, thus combining responsibility over these two cross-cutting issues. The project must remain focused on MEE as partner but doing more cross-cutting work, namely in events, would allow to invite other

Chinese government stakeholders outside MEE and break existing silos. The project can foster more opportunities for cross-cutting work across different Chinese ministries and therefore garner more synergies around a topic which is cross-cutting. This will also possibly be conducive to more cross-cutting collaboration within the relevant DGs in the EU, especially between DG ENV and DG CLIM.

3.3.2 Recommendations for the implementation team

3.3.2.1 Recommendations for project steering and project management

Recommendation 13. Establish clear typologies for short papers and distinguish the research track of the project from the administrative and advisory work streams.

Activities should distinguish short paper elaboration from the preparation of meeting minutes, which are different products, and from internal advisory notes to policy makers. Chinese ministries have their own think tanks, like PRCEE of MEE to write reports and do policy advice for them. Short papers should consist of internal preparatory papers for workshops which can then be converted into more complete products at the end of the event for dissemination purposes. They should provide evidence of expert exchanges and can be based on case studies.

Recommendation 14. Continue to foster joint collaboration within the research track with clear criteria on the choice of contributors.

The project should continue to enhance joint research collaboration in the research track, also for short papers, but selected partner institutions and experts should abide to clear selection criteria. Chinese and European experts should be selected in a transparent way, based on clear criteria. Chinese experts from a wider pool of institutions, outside of PRCEE, should also be allowed to participate for the highest possible quality of contributions and variety of perspective. The jointly conducted in-depth studies allowed for an increase of mutual understanding and for building knowledge, on both sides. As in the case of CCICED studies, joint collaboration in research is considered a very promising way to influence higher level policy makers.

Annex I: Brief description of the Evaluation criteria

The overall analysis of the project uses the five DAC and two cross-cutting criteria.

- **Relevance:** Relevance measures the appropriateness of project objectives to the problems, needs and priorities it was supposed to address, and to the physical and policy environment within which it operates. It may be considered as a test of the linkage between selected results (outcomes) and desired impact (i.e.: has the intervention contributed to achieve a level playing field between the EU and China on environmental requirements based on a regulatory convergence for environmental regulations with EU standards? To what degree is the project relevant for China to achieve its high environmental development goals? What relevance for the direct and indirect beneficiaries? The consultant proposes to carry out the following activities concerning the relevance and quality of the projects:
 - Evaluate the project's relevance regarding the objectives and expected outcomes,
 - Evaluate the appropriateness levels of the design (logical framework matrix), the completeness and realism of the risks and assumptions;Implies studying all the documentation and monitoring reports from the Action and conducting interviews.
- **Efficiency:** The efficiency addresses of how well the available resources/means have been converted into activities and achieved the intended results, linking the selected activities with the desired output. The assessment of efficiency will focus on:
 - The Action's achievement of its results in terms of quantity, quality and timeliness, according to the contractual documents.
 - The quality of cooperation with Chinese institutions and effectiveness of coordination mechanisms. This will include the quality of information management and reporting, and the extent to which key stakeholders have been kept adequately informed of project activities.
 - The extent to which the Action results were negatively affected by project delays and cost increases.
- **Effectiveness:** The effectiveness concerns how far the specific objectives of the Action were attained. The analysis of Effectiveness will focus on:
 - Whether the Action under development produced expected benefits, and assess whether the benefits produced are sufficient to justify the interventions. This includes evaluating the level and effectiveness of dialogue and stakeholder participation.
 - Balance between the results obtained so far and those expected. The main constraints and difficulties will be pointed out.
 - Effects on intended stakeholder groups.
- **Impact:** Report on longer term effects of the Action.
- **Sustainability:** The sustainability criterion relates to whether the positive outcomes of the projects and the benefits are likely to continue after the end of the existing EU support. The sustainability of project benefits depends mainly on adequate commitment of and means available to local authorities; in countries with poor human rights records, sustainability often depends on ability of civil society organisations to operate freely and to continue supporting follow up support to ensure future replicability. The evaluation team will evaluate the potential sustainability of the programme results concerning:
 - Economic feasibility and financial sustainability.
 - Capacity building of those who will continue the project benefits (training, implementation and monitoring).
 - Existence of and quality of an exit strategy.
 - Evaluation of the possibility for replication of the positive results in other similar projects.
- **Coherence (mutual reinforcement):** The Action will be analysed as to its coherence with the priorities agreed through EU-China policy dialogue and other relevant strategic. It will also analyse if there is coherence with other Member States actions in China and other relevant interventions.
- **EU value added:** The EU added value is estimated through 1) the difference between the EU intervention's additional benefits compared to what would have resulted from the country and

Member States interventions only. It will assess the relationship with Member States' interventions and the extent to which the Action (objectives, targeted beneficiaries, timing, etc.) was complementary, coordinated, created synergies and avoid duplication.

Annex II: Evaluation scope, stakeholder mapping and intervention logic

Independent evaluations focus on interventions' overall relevance and coherence and should provide accountability and promote learning. "Most importantly, they seek to generate knowledge to help decision-makers to improve development policy, programming and practice"⁸⁹.

This evaluation covers the project performance during the entire implementation period from the **start of 2018 until December 2020**, focusing on the EU's overall strategic direction, the relevance of the choices made (and why) and their coherence, along with the identification of outputs, outcomes and impacts to which EU earlier engagements have contributed to. The evaluation departs from the objectives stated in the Action Fiche Phase 1 "EU-China cooperation on environment, green economy and wildlife protection" as an overarching framework to focus its attention on its "**Component A: to promote green growth by facilitating regulatory convergence between environmental policies/laws in EU and China**".

As per ToR, the **overall objective of the project** "is to reinforce EU-China cooperation on environment, supporting the EPD⁹⁰ and helping to achieve higher environmental protection standards, more convergence between the EU and China on environmental governance and greater integration of environment into other areas of government decision making".

The evaluation uses the five **standard OECD/DAC⁹¹ evaluation criteria** - relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact orientation - and the two specific EU evaluation criteria - EU added value and coherence. **Cross-cutting issues** (gender sensitivity; environmental sustainability; green economy; the principle of Leave No-One Behind and the rights-based approach) are of fundamental importance for EU-China policy dialogue and cooperation and will constitute a permanent analysis lens permeating all evaluation questions.

Target groups for the intervention include: decision makers and policy makers (including Chinese senior Provincial Officials); policy implementors and enforcers (e.g., at the EU level such as EU policy makers, Members of the European Parliament and Member States officials); state Council members, including CCICED, judges and prosecutors across China; think tanks; academics; and civil society organisations. Evaluation users are the European Union and European institutions, Member States and international organisations and society at large.

The taxonomy for stakeholder selection for consultations was purposive, in accordance to a set of pre-defined criteria: (i) their scope and relevance of their participation to the objectives of the evaluation, (ii) pertinence to the specific areas under analysis given their involvement in the project, (iii) potential for learning and best practices. Annex V offers a complete list of the interviewees consulted.

As to the **intervention logic**, the **project aims to reinforce the EU-China cooperation on environment**, supporting the EPD and helping to achieve higher environmental protection standards, more convergence between the EU and China on environmental governance and greater integration of environment into other areas of government decision making (Overall Objective). It is articulated in three main outcomes (specific objectives):

- To support the EU-China environmental policy dialogue by supporting activities that improve shared understanding, knowledge on how to achieve better environmental protection and green development and establish good working contacts between EU and Chinese experts.

⁸⁹ Bossuyt, J., Shaxson, L. and Datta, A. (2014). Assessing the uptake of strategic evaluations in EU development cooperation, Study on the uptake of learning from EuropeAid's strategic evaluations into development policy and practice. Final Report, page vi.

⁹⁰ Environmental Policy Dialogue or EPD.

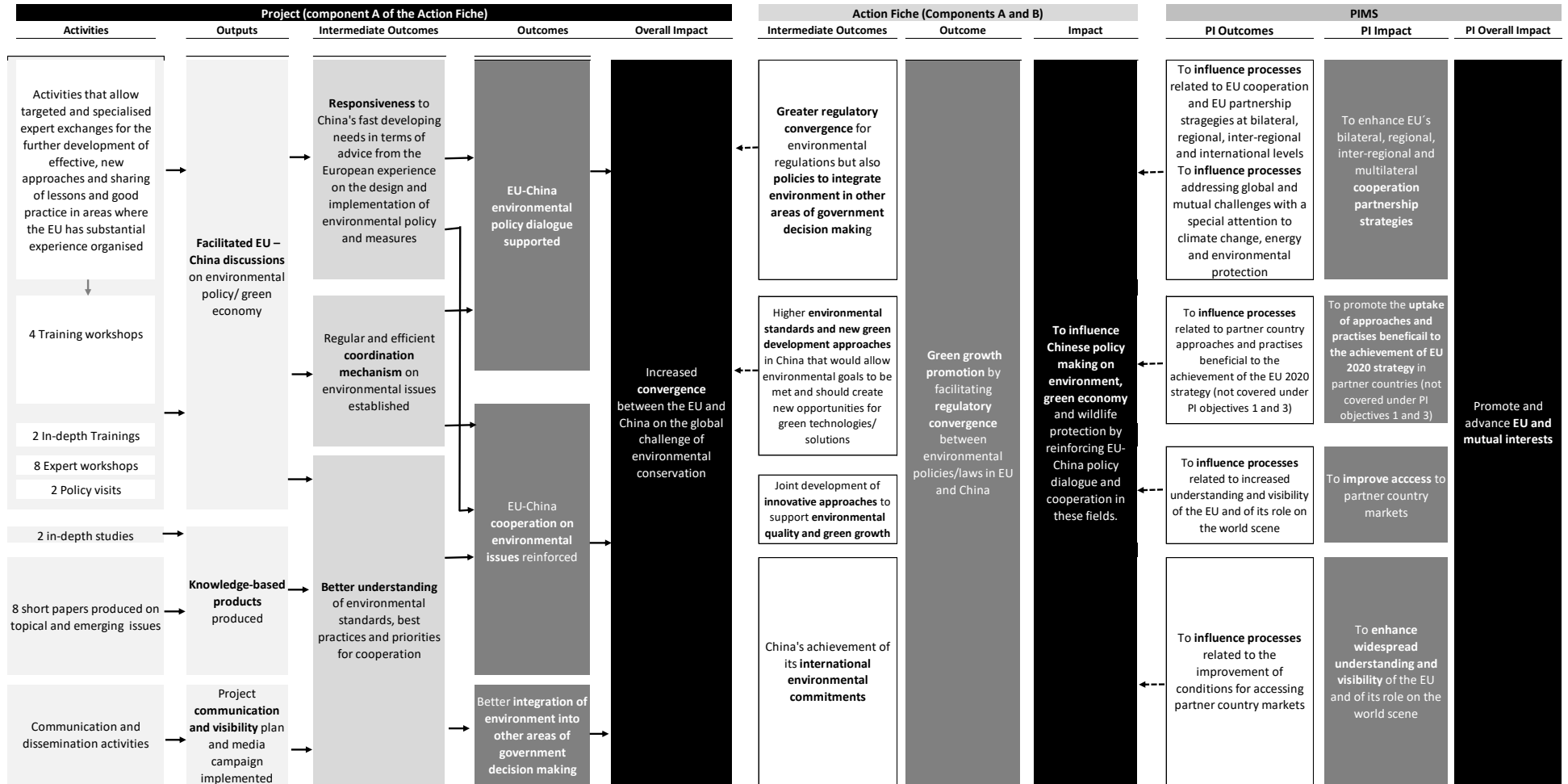
⁹¹ Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD.

- To organise a range of activities that allow targeted and specialised expert exchanges for the further development of effective, new approaches and sharing of lessons and good practice in areas where the EU has substantial experience to offer China or where developments in China are of most relevance to the EU or to meeting their international commitments.
- In doing so, to be responsive to China's fast developing needs in terms of advice from the European experience on the design and implementation of environmental policy and measures, by preparing activities in close communication with Chinese experts so as to make them as relevant and useful in terms of responding to challenges that will arise in the coming years.

The Logical Framework Matrix presented in the Figure below summarises this intervention logic⁹².

⁹² The work on the intervention logic has been completed by analysing the intervention logics from the Partnership Instrument Framework, to the Action Fiche phase I to the project ToRs, also considering the monitoring arrangements existing with the project over time. The analysis is based on a careful assessment of terminologies and how the objectives evolved over time, thus combining the main elements of analysis for this evaluation.

Overview of the complete Logical Framework from the project to the Partnership Instrument Monitoring System (PIMS)



Source: Evaluation team.

Annex III: Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation Criteria		New Q	Judgement criteria	Methods	Indicators
Relevance	1	<p>To what extent have the EU strategy in China, the EU sectoral approach in environment and this specific Action (component 1) promoted the overall foreign policy objectives of the EU with China and were implemented according to China’s priorities and the evolving needs and opportunities of its institutions?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o To what extent are the programme priorities in line with the sectoral policies and the programming/ strategy documents adopted by the EU and China in the environment sector? o Could the EU priorities have been better matched through different Actions or activities? 	<p>x</p> <p>x</p>	<p>EU support has been aligned with China’s strategic and environmental priorities and the evolving needs and opportunities of its institutions</p>	<p>DR, SSI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Extent to which interviewees recognise EU foreign policy objectives were promoted - Degree of influence of the EU on the chinese environmental priorities - Evidence of change in chinese environmental priorities concerning alignment with the sectoral policies and the programming strategies of the EU - Extent to which activities can be connected to contributing to a change in chinese environmental priorities
	2	<p>To what extent and how this specific Action (component 1) responded to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o support to the EU-China political dialogue for environment? o the visibility given to the achievements of the EU in its internal market in terms of environment policies and institutional/ governance mechanisms, in particular when dealing with challenges of global concern? 		<p>EU support through this Action has been relevant for addressing environmental and green economy issues and existing constraints</p>	<p>DR, SSI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Extent to which the EU was able to support to the EU-China political dialogue for environment according to the perceptions of interviewees -Level of political dialogue engagement for environment according to the perceptions of interviewees - Level of satisfaction concerning the political dialogue engagement for environment according to the perceptions of interviewees -Extent to which the achievements of the EU in its internal market in terms of environment policies and institutional/ governance mechanisms are recognised by chinese officials
	3	<p>Are the activities and outputs of the Action (component 1) consistent with respectively the overall and specific objectives of the Action?</p>		<p>The Action’s activities and outputs have taken into consideration the overall and specific objectives of the EU and China Environmental policy dialogue</p>	<p>DR, SSI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Level of articulation and connection between intended objectives of the EU and China environmental policy dialogue and the activities performed and their subsequent outcomes -Level of connectedness and synergy between activities and outputs

Evaluation Criteria		New Q	Judgement criteria	Methods	Indicators	
Effectiveness	4	<p>To what extent has the Action (component 1) progressed towards the achievement of its expected results, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o expected outcomes and impacts, especially considering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § policy engagement with the EU § Bi-lateral environment dialogue between China and the EU § addressing in China and working together with the Chinese authorities on challenges of global concern? § Environmental and green economy policies and regulatory measures o outputs? 	<p>x</p> <p>x</p> <p>x</p> <p>x</p>	<p>This Action has supported the delivery of a better political and policy engagement and bilateral dialogue with the EU, and environmental and green economy policies and regulatory measures and the promotion of environmental and green economy business practices</p> <p>etter enabling environment through improved policy, legal and/or institutional frameworks</p>	<p>DR, SSI</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Level of policy engagement as perceived by interviewees - Quality of political dialogue as perceived by interviewees - Extent to which chinese policy-makers were drawn to discussing the topics proposed by the EU - Extent to which chinese policy-makers were drawn to accept the positions proposed by the EU - Number of initiatives dropped - Number of initiated thematic dialogues which did not yield a concrete action -Number of environmental and green economy policies and regulatory measures originated directly from the project's activities •Total number of events organised and supported •Number of people participating in events •Number of EU companies participating in the events •Number of visits, exchanges, •Number of technical meetings •Number of group events •Number of training activities •Person-days of expertise or technical assistance provided •Number of public/media/communication campaigns organised and implemented •Number of outreach and advocacy activities •Number of press releases/policy briefs/opinion pieces etc. produced
	5	<p>To what extent this Action (component 1) managed to factor in the evolution of the political context in China (e.g. such as the reorganisation of the MEE)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o To what extent have the EU's strategic approach, along with its institutional and operational framework been flexible enough to anticipate and deal with emerging problems in this particular Action (component 1), find solutions and integrate lessons learnt? o Has the Action (component 1) been able to engage with the appropriate interlocutors? o To what extent did the Action (component 1) brought in other players and were leveraged for maximizing effectiveness? 	<p>x</p> <p>x</p>	<p>The Action was responsive and took into account China's evolving context</p>	<p>DR, SSI</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Extent to which the political context in China was integrated in the project -Level of adaptability to deal with emerging problems and change activities and intervention approach - Extent to which intended and relevant stakeholders(and interlocutors) were involved in the activities - Extent to which other relevant players were brought into the activities, leveraging effectiveness
	6	<p>Which were the key success factors and constraints that influenced the achievement of results?</p>	<p>x</p>	<p>The Action was responsive and took into account China's evolving context</p>	<p>DR, SSI</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - List of key success factors - List of key constraints for the achievement of results

Abbreviations

Evaluation Criteria		New Q	Judgement criteria	Methods	Indicators
Efficiency	7	Is the implementation of the activities cost effective? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Was the pace of implementation of the project satisfactory according to the budget and timeframe available? o Are the modalities in place for an efficient project management and implementation, (e.g. contractor set-up, location of the programme team, as well as any sub-contractors involved)? o Were the Action (component 1) and the activities properly budgeted? o Were procedures transparent, efficient and easy to apply? 	x	EU's resources were conducive to a timely and cost-effective implementation of activities and efficient monitoring arrangements	DR, SSI <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pace of project implementation according to internal reports, M&E frameworks and interviews - Types of modalities of project management implementation - Appropriateness of budget to intended activities - Level of transparency of procedures - Level of efficiency of procedures
	8	Are the monitoring arrangements both for the Action (component 1) and its activities satisfactory?		idem.	DR, SSI <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extent to which suitable monitoring arrangements were in place - Extent to which monitoring arrangements were satisfactory
Impact	9	To what extent has this Action (component 1) contributed to make progress towards positive long-term outcomes and impacts on the environment and green economy policies, along with targeted beneficiaries? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Is the impact of the Action (component 1) satisfactory, especially considering the EU-China political dialogue? o Did the Action (component 1) help to increase the environmental level playing field between the EU and China? o Has the Action (component 1) been able to promote EU and/or international standards and regulations related to environment? 	x	EU's institutional set-up and political dialogue was conducive to an efficient implementation of the activities and the materialisation of long-term outcomes and impacts on the environment and green economy policies	DR, SSI <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Level of satisfaction concerning the quality and relevance of policy dialogue according to interviewees - Extent to which the project was perceived as increasing the environmental level playing field between the EU and China - Extent to which the project was able to promote EU and/or international standards and regulations related to environment
	10	Were new institutional/governance or management practices on challenges of global concern applied by China during the implementation of the Action (component 1)? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Did the Action (component 1) have a direct influence on those, and has it contributed to an improvement of the environmental governance and policy development in China? 		EU support has contributed to a better enabling environment through improved policy, legal and/or institutional frameworks, namely by fostering improvements in environmental governance and policy development in China	DR, SSI <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of new institutional/governance or management practices on challenges of global concern adopted by China - Extent to which new institutional/governance or management practices on challenges of global concern were effectively implemented by China - Extent to which the project had a direct influence on the improvement of the environmental governance and policy development in China
	11	Has this or could this have been translated into economic opportunities for the EU industry, by promoting the existence of European expertise and solutions on particular subjects of the EU- China environment dialogue?		Promotion of EU standards and regulations has translated into economic opportunities for the EU industry	DR, SSI <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extent to which the project opened up new economic opportunities for EU companies

Evaluation Criteria		New Q	Judgement criteria	Methods	Indicators	
Sustainability	12	To what extent have achieved benefits continued or will be likely to continue once the Action (component 1) is completed? o What are the major factors influencing the potential sustainability of the Action (Component 1)? o How can these factors inform the sustainability of the Action (Component 1), especially considering the EU- China political dialogue and challenges of global concern?		EU strategic support will have a long-lasting effect on the quality and governance of environmental policies and foster a greener economy in China	DR, SSI	- List of factors inform the sustainability of the Action - Extent to which each factors influenced the EU- China political dialogue and challenges of global concern
	13	What is the additional value and complementarities resulting from the EU cooperation, compared to what could reasonably have been expected from China acting bilaterally with EU Member States organisations directly? o Did the Action and its activities bring about benefits that could not have been provided by other EU Member States' actors? Which ones? o To what extent did the Action (component 1) and its activities complemented or added value to other EU and Member States initiatives in the field of environment and green economy?	x x	EU strategic support has been used for interventions which would not have been better, or equally well, addressed at the national or regional level EU support has been used strategically and operationally to complement and synergise with other mechanisms to deliver assistance at the national, regional and international levels	DR, SSI	- Extent to which each additional value and complementarities existed and were explored - Extent to which the Action (component 1) and its activities complemented or added value to other EU and Member States initiatives in the field of environment and green economy
Coherence	14	What is the coherence of this Action (component 1) with the EU strategy in China and the EU sectoral approach in environment? o Is the Action (component 1) and its activities clearly aligned with EU interests, and if so, in which ways? o Is the Action (component 1) and its activities consistent with other EU external action policies, and if so, which ones? o Are there any particular overlaps or synergies with other EU funded actions?	x x x	EU support has been used strategically and in coherence with other EU external action policies to complement other EU external action policies, and Member States and donor's mechanisms to deliver at the design and programming stage in accordance to the SDGs	DR, SSI	- Level of coherence with the EU's strategy in China - Level of coherence with the EU's sectoral approach in environment -List of overlaps with other EU funded actions -List of synergies with other EU funded actions
	15	What coherence exists with other Member State actions in China in this domain?		EU support has been used strategically and in coherence with other EU external action policies to complement other EU external action policies, and Member States and donor's mechanisms to deliver	DR, SSI	- Level of coherence with other Member State actions in China
	16	What coherence should be sought with other international donors in this domain?		at the design and programming stage in accordance to the SDGs	DR, SSI	- List of coherence issues and potential approaches with other international donors
	17	What coherence and complementarity the Action (component 1) shows with: o the EU Green deal? o the SDGs?			DR, SSI	- Level of coherence with EU Green deal - Level of complementarity with EU Green deal - Level of coherence with the SDGs

Note: DR is Desk Review; SSI is semi-structured interview.

Annex IV – Project achieved outputs and activity results

EQ 4 - Table “Achieved project output and activity results”

Name of indicator	Indicator	Original targets	Targets as of addendum	Total original target	Total target as of addendum	Value realised in 2018	Value realised in 2019	Value realised in 2020	Total realised by 31.12.2020
Number of participants in an event	OP1	60	60	60	60	40	33	23	96
Percentage of participants in an event who report having benefited from an event	OP2	70	70	70	70	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Number of Knowledge products developed (In-depths studies and Short papers)	OP6	10	12	10	12	2	4	3	9
Number of communication products developed	OP7	3	-	3	-	5		n.a.	5
Number of events organised or supported: Trainings and workshops	A1	14	14	17	21	5	6	2	17
Number of events organised or supported: Policy visits		2	2			1	1	-	
Number of events organised or supported: Policy seminar (Project closure seminar, in 2021)		1	1			-	-	-	
Number of events organised or supported: Virtual Workshops (2020/2021)		0	4			-	-	2	
Person days of expertise or technical assistance provided	A2			902*	n.a.	189	383	n.a.	n.a.

*Not included: Number of Person days of expertise or technical assistance provided of Activity 10.

Sources: Project LFM, PIMS reporting 2019, Request for Addendum 15.07.20, Interim reports.

EQ 4 and EQ 8 - Table “Detailed indicator analysis, updated”

Overall objective: To contribute to greater convergence between the EU and China on global challenge of environmental conservation									Sources of verification: Desk based review - •Annual state of the environment report by the Ministry of Environmental Protection; •Periodic reporting by MEP; •Publicly published policy and law documents by NPC, •State Council, •SPC, •and other government bodies
Name of indicator	Unit of indicator	Target (project LFM)	Target (3 AWP)	Actual Value 2018	Actual Value 2019	Actual Value 2020	Actual total by 31.12.20	Evaluators' rating*	Evaluator Notes
IMP2: Number of collective approaches and/or practises to challenges of global and/or mutual concern which have been developed/ adapted/implemented	number	2020 - 1	2020 - 3	0	0	n.a.	n.a.	E	- The timeline for the target was 2020, so the end of the project (which was extended). Therefore "E" as rating.
Specific Objective 1 (project LFM): To contribute to support the EU-China environmental policy dialogue and reinforce EU-China cooperation on environmental issues. Specific Objective 1 (AWP 1 to 3): Facilitated EU – China discussions on environmental policy/ green economy									Sources of verification: Desk based review – •Records of official meetings, •Monitoring of policy developments, etc.
Name of indicator	Unit of indicator	Target (project LFM)	Target (3 AWP)	Actual Value 2018	Actual Value 2019	Actual Value 2020	Actual total by 31.12.20	Evaluators' rating	Evaluator Notes
OC3: Number of processes related to partner country approaches to challenges of global concern which have been facilitated.	number	2020 - 3	2020 - 5	0	1	n.a.	n.a.	B	- Information for 2020 is not yet available in project monitoring documents.
Output 1: (project LFM) Good policy dialogue between EU and Chinese stakeholders (administration & experts) established Output 1: (AWP 1 to 3) A project specific regular and efficient coordination mechanism on environmental issues is established									Sources of verification: •Desk based review - PCC meetings minutes; •AWPs; •Interim Reports; •Events reports; •Study reports; •Monitoring reports (ROM).
Name of indicator	Unit of indicator	Target (project LFM)	Target (3 AWP)	Actual Value 2018	Actual Value 2019	Actual Value 2020	Actual total by 31.12.20	Evaluators' rating	Evaluator Notes
OP1: Number of participants in an event	number	2018 – 20 2019 – 20 2020 – 20	2018 – 20 2019 – 20 2020 – 20	40 (238)	33 (233)	31 (122)	104	A	- Events including: Training WS, In-depth-training, Expert WS, Policy visits. Values are average numbers, based on own calculations. Aggregated numbers in brackets are also based on own calculation. - Without participants in 3 Multis-stakeholder events on biodiversity - in 2020: Two Activity 10 - New Virtual WS included.
OP-customised-non-matched 1: number of participating departments/institutions in events	number	2018-2 2019-4 2020-6	not included	8		n.a.	n.a.	A/B	- only added value for 2018/2019 given in PIMS reporting 2019. With narrative.
OP-customised-non-matched 2: number of topics which stakeholders agree to progress	number	2018-1 2019-1 2020-1	not included	2		n.a.	n.a.	A/B	- Comment in LFM-document: "Topics of mutual interest Important: this indicator is quantitative and qualitative. The qualitative narrative will qualify the extent to which the topics are relevant to the EU and/or China, extent to which it is possible to progress them and take up/follow up Data source: internal namely team experts' assessment of the content of the dialogue". - The number is given in PIMS reporting 2019. With the narrative.

Abbreviations

Output 2 (project LFM): Better understanding of environmental standards, best practices and priorities for cooperation --> Indicators OP2, OP6, OP7 Output 2 (AWP 1 to 3): Papers and policy documents produced --> Indicator OP6 Output 3 (AWP 1 to 3): Trainings workshops, seminars and exchanges are implemented --> Indicator OP2 Output 4 (AWP 1 to 3): Project Communication and visibility plan --> Indicator OP7									Sources of verification: OP2: Desk based review - pre/post event surveys OP6: •Interim Reports; •Events reports; •Study reports OP7: Desk based review - electronic or social media tools/ platforms set up for communication
Name of indicator	Unit of indicator	Target (project LFM)	Target (3 AWP)	Actual Value 2018	Actual Value 2019	Actual Value 2020	Actual total by 31.12.20	Evaluators' rating	Evaluator Notes
OP6: Number of knowledge-based products developed	number	2018 – 2 2019 - 4 2020- 2	2018 – 8 2019 - 14 2020- 4	2	4	3	9	B	- Knowledge-based products including: In-depths studies, Short papers. - Target has been amended in July 2020: from 2 in-depth studies to 3, from 8 short papers to 9. In total: from 10 to 12. The total in the original project LFM has not been calculated correctly and was not updated in the amended version. - What do the targets in the AWP include? Where are the numbers derived from? (In AWP3 are mentioned/planned: 10 Short papers in total and 14 Expert WS.)
OP2: Percentage of participants in an event who report having benefited from an event	%	2018 – 70, 2019 – 70	2018 – 70, 2019 – 70	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	C	- only A 3.2 activity - 2 trainings - was evaluated by participants (90% of satisfaction), all the other events were not evaluated. - Why no target for 2020? There are events planned in 2020... Otherwise: specify that only trainings should be evaluated by participants, not Expert Workshops.
OP7: Number of communication products developed	number	2018 - 1 2019 - 1 2020 - 1	2018 – 1 plan, 1 - website	5		n.a.	n.a.		- number given in PIMS reporting 2019, with narrative as demanded in PIMS guidance manual. Dissemination channel not provided, but this is not demanded in PIMS guidance. - Project website is rudimentary, hosted on the implementors webpage.
Activity 1: Research on two in-depth studies									Sources of verification: Desk based research – email exchanges, approved intermediary reports, etc.
Name of indicator	Unit of indicator	Target (project LFM and as of LFM update in red)	Target (3 AWP)	Actual Value 2018	Actual Value 2019	Actual Value 2020	Actual total by 31.12.20	Evaluators' rating	Evaluator Notes
A2: Person days of expertise or technical assistance provided	person days	2018 - 80 2019 - 160 2020 - 160	2019 – KE + NKE + EE = 194 days	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.		Only cumulative numbers for A2 core activity indicator are available, for 2018 and 2019, not disaggregated by activity, as foreseen in the project LFM. See Annexe IV, Table 1: Achieved project output and activity results.

Activity 2: Research for Short papers produced on environmental issues									Sources of verification: Desk based research – email exchanges, approved intermediary reports, etc.
Name of indicator	Unit of indicator	Target (project LFM and as of LFM update in red)	Target (3 AWP's)	Actual Value 2018	Actual Value 2019	Actual Value 2020	Actual total by 31.12.20	Evaluators' rating	Evaluator Notes
A2: Person days of expertise or technical assistance provided	person days	2018 - 62 2019 - 120 2020 - 120	2019 – 120 expert days	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.		Only cumulative numbers for A2 core activity indicator are available, for 2018 and 2019, not disaggregated by activity, as foreseen in the project LFM. See Annexe IV, Table 1: Achieved project output and activity results.
Activity 3: Training workshops organising and implementing									Sources of verification: Desk based review – attendance sheets, topic papers, payments
Name of indicator	Unit of indicator	Target (project LFM and as of LFM update in red)	Target (3 AWP's)	Actual Value 2018	Actual Value 2019	Actual Value 2020	Actual total by 31.12.20	Evaluators' rating	Evaluator Notes
A1: Number of events organised or supported	number	2018 – 2 2019 - 2	2018 – 2 2019 - 2	2	2	-	4	A	- if one considers Activity A 3.1 as two events and activity A 3.2 as two events. (Each WS training activity conducted twice, at different locations).
A2: Person days of expertise or technical assistance provided	person days	2018 - 20 2019 - 20 2020 - 0	not included	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.		Only cumulative numbers for A2 core activity indicator are available, for 2018 and 2019, not disaggregated by activity, as foreseen in the project LFM. See Annexe IV, Table 1: Achieved project output and activity results.
Activity 4: In-depth trainings									Sources of verification: Desk based review – attendance sheets, topic papers, payments
Name of indicator	Unit of indicator	Target (project LFM and as of LFM update in red)	Target (3 AWP's)	Actual Value 2018	Actual Value 2019	Actual Value 31.12.20	Actual total by 31.12.20	Evaluators' rating	Evaluator Notes
A1: Number of events organised or supported	number	2018 – 0 2019 – 1 2020 - 1	2018 – 0 2019 – 1 2020 - 1	0	1	0	1	A	- Target has been amended in July 2020 : only one event in 2019, event 2020 was deleted.
A2: Person days of expertise or technical assistance provided	person days	2018 - 0 2019 - 35 2020 - 0	not included	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.		Only cumulative numbers for A2 core activity indicator are available, for 2018 and 2019, not disaggregated by activity, as foreseen in the project LFM. See Annexe IV, Table 1: Achieved project output and activity results.

Activity 5: Organising Expert workshops									Sources of verification: Desk based review – attendance sheets, topic papers, payments
Name of indicator	Unit of indicator	Target (project LFM and as of LFM update in red)	Target (3 AWP)s	Actual Value 2018	Actual Value 2019	Actual Value 2020	Actual total by 31.12.20	Evaluators' rating	Evaluator Notes
A1: Number of events organised or supported	number	2018 – 3 2019 – 4 2020 - 1	2018 – 3 2019 – 4 2020 - 1	3	3	2	8	B	- Target has been amended in July 2020 : From 8 to 9 expert WS until end of project in 06/2021
A2: Person days of expertise or technical assistance provided	person days	2018 - 5 2019 - 40 2020 - 50	<i>not included</i>	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.		Only cumulative numbers for A2 core activity indicator are available, for 2018 and 2019, not disaggregated by activity, as foreseen in the project LFM. See Annexe IV, Table 1: Achieved project output and activity results.
Activity 6: Organising Policy visits									Sources of verification: Desk based review – attendance sheets, topic papers, payments, plane tickets, etc
Name of indicator	Unit of indicator	Target (project LFM and as of LFM update in red)	Target (3 AWP)s	Actual Value 2018	Actual Value 2019	Actual Value 2020	Actual total by 31.12.20	Evaluators' rating	Evaluator Notes
A1: Number of events organised or supported	number	2018 – 1 2019 – 1	2018 – 1 2019 – 1	1	1	-	2	A	
A2: Person days of expertise or technical assistance provided	person days	2018 - 5 2019 - 5 2020 - 0	<i>not included</i>	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.		Only cumulative numbers for A2 core activity indicator are available, for 2018 and 2019, not disaggregated by activity, as foreseen in the project LFM. See Annexe IV, Table 1: Achieved project output and activity results.
Activity 7: Organising of EU – China Environmental policy cooperation seminar									Sources of verification: Desk based review – attendance sheets, topic papers, payments
Name of indicator	Unit of indicator	Target (project LFM and as of LFM update in red)	Target (3 AWP)s	Actual Value 2018	Actual Value 2019	Actual Value 2020	Actual total by 31.12.20	Evaluators' rating	Evaluator Notes
A1: Number of events organised or supported	number	2020 - 1	2020 - 1	-	-	-	-	E	- Event is Project closure conference, so in mid-2021 after prolongation.
A2: Person days of expertise or technical assistance provided	person days	2020 - 20	<i>not included</i>	-	-	-	-	E	

Abbreviations

Activity 10: (New since July 2020 after contrat addendum) New virtual workshops									Sources of verification: Desk based review – attendance sheets, topic papers, payments
Name of indicator	Unit of indicator	Target contract addendum	Target (3 AWP)	Actual Value 2018	Actual Value 2019	Actual Value 2020	Actual total by 31.12.20	Evaluators' rating	Evaluator Notes
A1: Number of events organised or supported	number	2020/21 - 4	-	-	-	2	2	B	- Target has been added in July 2020 : 4 virtual expert WS until end of project in 06/2021
A2: Person days of expertise or technical assistance provided	person days	n.a.	-	-	-	n.a.	n.a.		Only cumulative numbers for A2 core activity indicator are available, for 2018 and 2019, not disaggregated by activity, as foreseen in the project LFM. However, no target indicated for this addendum activity. See Annexe IV, Table 1: Achieved project output and activity results.
Activity added in AWP logframe: Key experts answer requests from EU and Chinese officials									Sources of verification: Desk based review – email exchanges, meetings and telephone conversations
Name of indicator	Unit of indicator	Target (project LFM)	Target (3 AWP)	Actual Value 2018	Actual Value 2019	Actual Value 2020	Actual total by 31.12.20	Evaluators' rating	Evaluator Notes
A2: Number of requests addressed	number	not included	2018 – 7 2019 – 10 2020 - 5						- the sources of verification are not available for evaluators.
Activity added in AWP logframe: Media campaign implementing									Sources of verification: Desk based review - electronic or social media tools/ platforms set up for communication
Name of indicator	Unit of indicator	Target (project LFM)	Target (3 AWP)	Actual Value 2018	Actual Value 2019	Actual Value 2020	Actual total by 31.12.20	Evaluators' rating	Evaluator Notes
A3: Number of communication campaigns designed and implemented	number	not included	2020 - 1	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.		- Project WeChat account: first communications in December 2018. See Table in Annexe VI.

Sources: Project logframe and logframes given in AWP1 (2018), AWP2 (2019) nad AWP3 (2020), Interim reports, PIMS reporting 2019.

*Rating key: A = achieved; B = partially achieved; C = not achieved; D = achievement not possible; E = rating currently not planned.

EQ 4 - Table “Organized and supported events (1.1.2018 - 31.12.2020)”

Event activities	No. of Sub-activities (Original Contract & AO)	No. of Sub-activities (Contract, AO and Addendum No.1)	Completed No. of Sub-activities	No. of activity as in EUD docs	Name of event, location	Date of event	Topic	Linkks with other activities
Activity 3 - Training Workshops	4	4	2 (4)*	A 3.1	Training Workshops - Training on Pollutant Discharge Management, Beijing, Hangzhou	10-14 December 2018	Permitting system	n.a.
				A 3.2	Training on Pollutant Discharge Management, Beijing, Guangzhou	11-15 November 2019	Permitting system	A 1.1 A 6.1
Activity 4 - In-depth Training	2	1	1	A 4.1	In-depth Training on River Basin Management and Legislation in the EU and Germany	30 November - 12 December 2019	River basin management	-
Activity 5 - Expert Workshops	8	9	8	A 5.1	Workshop on Global Environmental Governance, Brussels	20 June 2018	Environmental governance	A 2.1
				A 5.2	Workshop on Biodiversity, Beijing	9-10 October 2018	Biodiversity	A 2.2
				A 5.3	Workshop on Marine Environment and Plastic Pollution, Beijing	November 2, 2018	Marine (plastic) pollution	A 2.3
				A 5.4	Second Workshop on Biodiversity, Beijing	13-14 May 2019	Biodiversity	A 2.4
				A 5.5	Third Workshop on Biodiversity, Beijing	31 October – 1 November 2019	Biodiversity	A 2.5
				A 5.6	EU-China Workshop on Regional Environmental Management: Sharing experience on regional air pollution and river basin management, Beijing	6 November 2019	Pollution in a regional context and IRBM	-
				A 5.7	EU-China Virtual Workshop on Biodiversity Access and Benefit Sharing	28-29 May 2020	Biodiversity	A 2.7
				A 5.8	EU-China Virtual Workshop on EU Green Deal and Green Recovery	29 June, 2020	Green economy	-
Activity 6 - Policy Visits	2	2	2	A 6.1	Policy Visit to the EU with focus on permit system, Belgium and Germany	13-20 September 2018	Permitting system	A 1.1 A 3.2
				A 6.2	Policy visit on integrated environmental policy for green economy in Belgium and UK	22-28 September 2019	Green economy	A 1.2
Activity 7 - Policy Coop. Seminar	1	1	-					
Activity 10 - New Virtual Workshops	-	4	2	A 10.1	Fourth EU-China Biodiversity Workshop	14-15 July 2020	Biodiversity	-
				A 10.2	EU-China workshop on green investment and energy transition	29 Sept. 2020	Green financing and investment	-
Total	17	21	17					

*: Activities 3.1 and 3.2 count for 2 events each in the monitoring reports.

Sources: 1. EU-China CEGE updated Budget V, 2. Event reports.

EQ 4 - Table “Produced knowledge products (1.1.2018 - 31.12.2020)”

Knowledge product	No. of activity as in EUD docs	Title of knowledge product	Date of publication (or date of document creation*)	No. of pages	links with other activities
In-depth study	A 1.1	China’s Regulatory Framework on Pollutant Discharge Permits - An overview on the formulation and implementation of Pollutant Discharge Permits in China and the sharing of EU experience of permitting	December 2020*	90	A 6.1 A 3.2
	A 1.2	Activity 1.2 In-depth study on integrated environmental policies for green economy - Draft report	December 2020	109	A 6.2
	A 1.3	<i>Terms of Reference - Activity 1.3. Study Report on plastics pollution and EU-China Cooperation on Plastics (Draft report in preparation)</i>	September 2020	8	n.a.
Short papers	A.2.1	Short Paper ‘Global Governance and Ecological Civilization’	October 2018*	19	A 5.1
	A 2.2	First Biodiversity Workshop - Summary Report. Sharing perspectives on CBD implementation and options for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, Beijing	March 2019*	28	A 5.2
	A 2.3	Proactive Response to Plastic Waste and Marine Plastic Pollution – Experience and Lessons from the EU	March 2019	21	A 5.3
	A 2.4	Second Biodiversity Workshop - Summary report. Perspectives on biodiversity commitments, the 2030 Mission, the other elements of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, and the Belt and Road Initiative, 13-14 May 2019, Beijing	October 2019*	16	A 5.4
	A 2.5	Third Biodiversity Workshop - Summary report - EU-China dialogue on the road to COP15: 2030 Mission; Smart targets; Implementation, assessment, reporting, and review; ABCMs and ecological redlines Beijing	December 2019*	8	A 5.5
	A 2.6	Environmental Status and State of Play of Environmental and Related Policies in China	June 2020	46	-
	A 2.7	EU – China Workshop on ABS and DSI. Report: Access and Benefit Sharing and Digital Sequence Information	July 2020*	8	A 5.7

Sources: Knowledge product reports, Interim Reports.

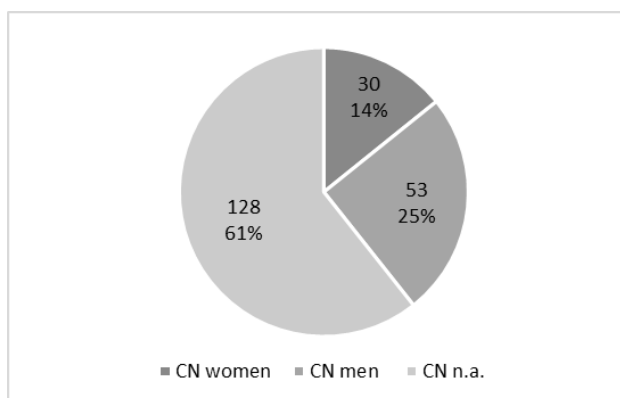
EQ 5 - Table “Number of participants in events”

Event activities	No. of activity as in EUD docs	No. of participants in Sub-event	No. of participants in total*	Year of event	Topic
Activity 3 - Training Workshops	A 3.1	1. In Beijing: 41 2. In Hangzhou: 54	95	2018	Permitting system
	A 3.2	1. Beijing WS: 49 2. Guangzhou-WS: 37	86	2019	Permitting system
Activity 4 - In-depth Training	A 4.1	10	10	2019	River basin management
Activity 5 - Expert Workshops	A 5.1	33	33	2018	Environmental governance
	A 5.2*	1. Closed session: 36 2. Networking session: 55	68	2018	Biodiversity
	A 5.3	68	68	2018	Marine (plastic) pollution
	A 5.4*	1. Closed session: 47 2. Networking session: 75	89	2019	Biodiversity
	A 5.5*	1. Closed session: 41 2. Open session: 41 + 19 new participants = 59 3. Networking event: 41	85	2019	Biodiversity
	A 5.6	43	43	2019	Pollution in a regional context
	A 5.7	27	27	2020	Biodiversity
	A 5.8	18	18	2020	Green economy
Activity 6 - Policy Visits	A 6.1	6	6	2018	Permitting system
	A 6.2	6	6	2019	Green economy
Activity 7 - Policy Cooperation Seminar		<i>to be held at the end of the project</i>	-	-	
Activity 10 - New Virtual Workshops	A 10.1	53	53	2020	Biodiversity
	A 10.2*	24	24	2020	Green financing and investment
		Total	711		

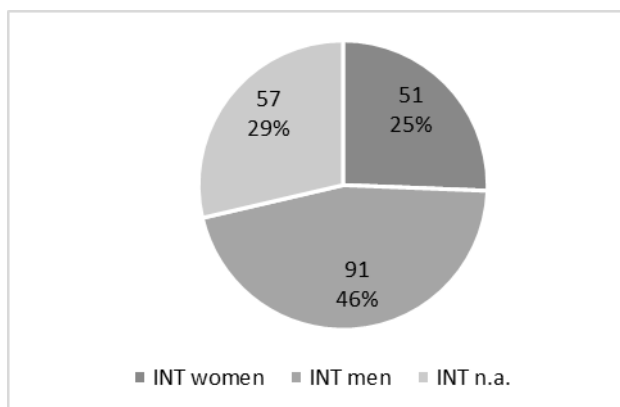
*: Some of the participants participated in both, closed sessions and networking events. The total number of participants therefore indicates the total number of different individuals who participated in both events.

Sources: Event reports and event participant lists.

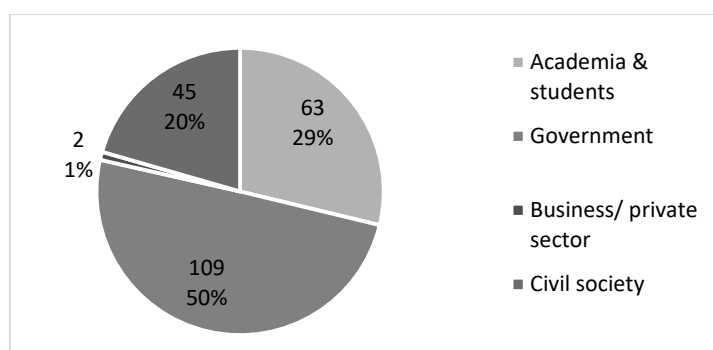
EQ 4 - Figure “Gender of Chinese organizations’ participants in A5 workshop events” (2018 - 2020)



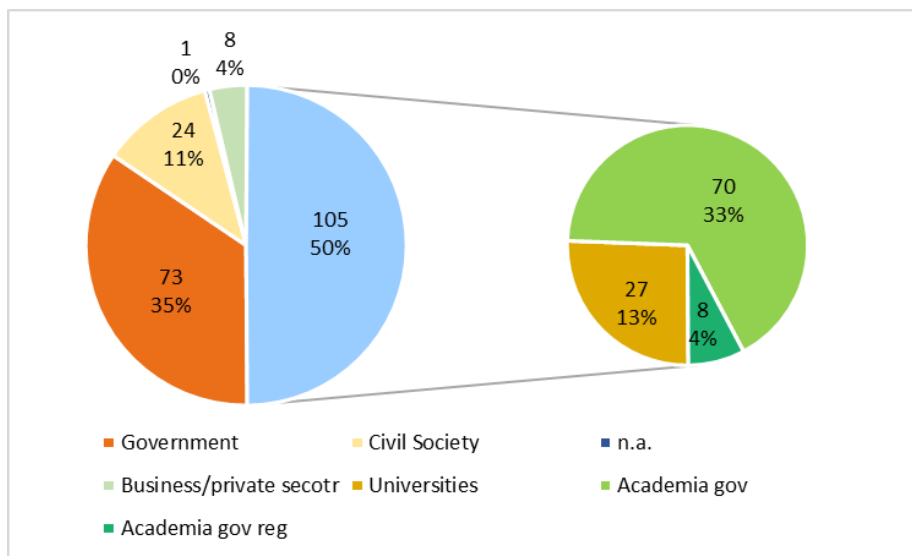
EQ 4 - Figure “Gender of International organizations’ participants in events (2018 - 2020)”



EQ 4 - Figure “Affiliation of 2019 event participants, based on PIMS reporting 2019”

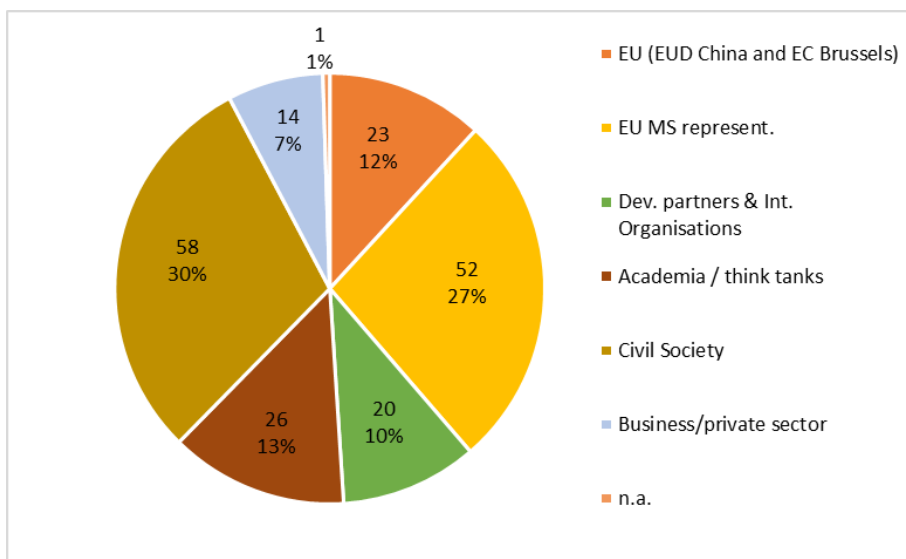


EQ 4 - Figure“Affiliation of Workshop participants (Activities 5 and 10) of Chinese organizations (2018 - 2020)”



Source: Participant lists, including Networking events. Own calculation.

EQ 4 - Figure“Affiliation of Workshop participants (Activities 5 and 10) of International organizations (2018 – 2020)”



Source: Participant lists, including Networking events. Own calculation.

EQ 4 - Table "Person-days used for Non-key experts and External experts"

Activity	Non-Key Senior Experts		Non-Key Junior Experts		EE	Comments
	Budget	Used*	Budget	Used*	days	
A1: In-depth study						
A1.1: In-depth study 1	47	47	12	12	46	
A1.2: In-depth study 2	30	30	20	20	70	
A2 Short papers						
A2.1: Short papers 1 (env gov)	10	10				
A2.2: Short papers 2 (BD)					10	
A2.3: Short papers 3 (marine plastics)			7	7	6	
A2.4: Short paper 4 (BD2)					13	
A2.5: Short paper BD3			12	12		
A2.6: State of play					46	
A2.7: Short paper BD4			12	12		
A3: Training workshops						
A3.1 : Training workshop Y1	22	16	6	6	0	10-11 December in Hangzhou, 13-14 December in Beijing
A3.2 : Training workshop Y2	10	10	20	20		11/11-15, 2019
A4: In-depth trainings in Europe						
A4.1: In-depth trainings in EU (riverbasin)			20	20	14	11-25-12/8, 2019
A4.2: In-depth training in EU						Cancelled
A5: Expert workshop						
A5.1: workshop 1 - Env Gov	0		0			
A5.2: workshop 2 - biodiversity 1					7	confirmed in FR1
A5.3: workshop 3 - Marine plastics					0	
A5.4: workshop 4 - BD2					0	
A5.5: workshop 5 - BD3						
A5.6: workshop 6 - Regional Environment	8	8	3	3	4	
A5.7 workshop 7- BD ABS	10	10				
A5.8 workshop 8- Green recovery	8	8				
A6: Policy visits to Europe						
A6.1: Policy visits to Europe Y1 - permit	5	5			6	Completed in September 2018
A6.2: Policy visit to EU - Green economy	0		5	5		Completed in September 2019
A7: Large seminar	0		0			In year 4
A10: Virtual workshops						
A10.1: Biodiversity workshop 4	0		0			Website maintained, wechat account
A10.2: Green transition workshop	0		0			
A10.3: Biodiversity ABS		10				
Total	150	154	100	117	222	On schedule

*) Cumulative number of days used to date

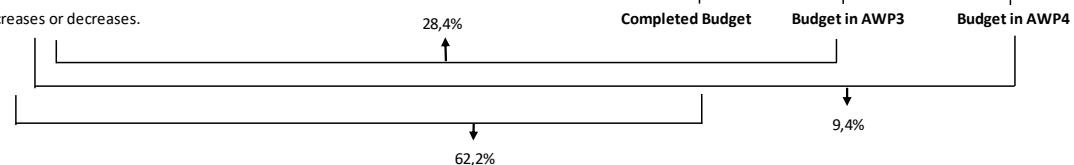
Source: Internal NKA tracking update (provided by leading implementing company)

EQ 7 - Table "Analysis of Project budget"

Activities	Total Budget in Original Contract & Administrative Order (AO)			Total Budget of Contract, AO and Addendum No.1								AWP1 - AWP2 2018 - 2019	AWP3 2020	AWP4 until 30.06.2021
	No. of Sub-activities	Activity Budget	Incidental Expenditure	No. of Sub-activities	Activity Budget	Incidental Expenditure	Budget per sub-activity until addendum 1	Incidentals per sub-activity until addendum 1	Budget per sub-activity as of addendum 1	Incidentals per sub-activity as of addendum 1	Completed No. of Sub-activities in AWP1 - AWP2	Completed No. of Sub-activities in AWP3	Budget No. of Sub-activities in AWP4	
Activity 1 - In-depth Study	2	€ 164 002,00	€ 35 000,00	3,0	€ 262 003,00	€ 91 800,00	€ 82 001,00	€ 17 500,00	€ 90 001,00	€ 39 000,00	1	1	1	
Activity 2 - Short Papers	8	€ 82 681,00	€ 65 000,00	9,0	€ 125 463,15	€ 30 850,00	€ 10 335,13	€ 8 125,00	€ 18 446,88	€ 5 250,00	5	2	2	
Activity 3 - Training Workshops	4	€ 256 107,00	€ 30 000,00	4,0	€ 256 107,00	€ 0,00	€ 64 026,75	€ 7 500,00	€ 64 026,75	€ 0,00	4	0	0	
Activity 4 - In-depth Training	2	€ 301 195,00	€ 15 000,00	1,0	€ 150 597,50	€ 11 883,71	€ 150 597,50	€ -3 116,29			1	0	0	
Activity 5 - Expert Workshops	8	€ 204 334,00	€ 135 000,00	9,0	€ 229 875,75	€ 6 994,35	€ 25 541,75	€ 16 875,00	€ 25 541,75	€ 777,15	6	2	1	
Activity 6 - Policy Visits	2	€ 196 243,00		2,0	€ 196 243,00	€ 1 549,37	€ 98 121,50	€ 0,00	€ 98 121,50	€ 774,68	2	0	0	
Activity 7 - EU-China Environmental Policy Cooperation Seminar	1	€ 113 267,00	€ 5 000,00	1,0	€ 118 267,00	€ 0,00	€ 113 267,00	€ 5 000,00	€ 118 267,00	€ 0,00	-		1	
Activity 8 - Project Coordination Meetings	3	€ 109 105,00		3,5	€ 127 289,17		€ 36 368,33		€ 36 368,34		2	1	0,5	
Activity 9 - Communication	3	€ 138 066,00		3,5	€ 161 077,00		€ 46 022,00		€ 46 022,00		2	1	0,5	
Activity 10 - New Virtual Workshops				4,0	€ 80 000,00				€ 20 000,00		-	2	2	
Sub-total	33	€1 565 000,00	€ 285 000,00	40,0	€1 706 922,57	€ 143 077,43					23	9	8	
Total		€1 850 000,00			€1 850 000,00						1 149 816,22 €	526 263,36 €	173 920,42 €	

Sources: Table based on project document "Budget V updated (2020)". Data for columns of AWP3 and AWP4 are provided in Interim Reports.

In green: increase in original budget; in light blue: decrease in original budget; in yellow bubbles: very high increases or decreases.



Annex V: Stakeholders consulted

Between brackets (“[...]”) is the number of the project activity in which the stakeholder participated, according to the project documents.

EUROPEAN UNION

Delegation of the European Union to China

[REDACTED], Counselor Climate Action and Environment (in China since September 2019), DEU to China [A 5.5, A 5.7, A 5.8, A 10.1, A 10.2]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Programme manager FPI, DEU to China [A 5.4, A 5.5]
[REDACTED]

European Union, Brussels

[REDACTED] Senior Expert - Team leader - International Relations, DG ENV, Unit F2 – Bilateral and Regional Environmental Cooperation [no participation in project activities]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED], International Relations Officer, DG Environment, DG CLIMA B3 - European and International Carbon Markets [no participation in project activities]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED], Policy Officer - International carbon market development and maritime issues, DG CLIMA B3 - European and International Carbon Markets (until August 2019: predecessor of Sébastien Paquot at DEU to China) [A 3.1, A 5.2, A 5.3, A 5.4]
[REDACTED]

European Union Member States organisations

[REDACTED] Director for energy transition, GIZ (Germany) [A 10.2 Virtual workshop, Co-author of A 2.6]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Director of Ecological and Natural Transition Department, AFD (France) [A 5.4]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Regional Director AFD (China) [no participation in project activities]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Special Envoy to the High-level Panel on Building a Sustainable Ocean Economy, CCICED Vice Chair, Former Minister, Ministry of Climate and Environment of the Kingdom of Norway, [A 5.1 and A 5.3]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Culture and Science Attaché, Embassy of Spain in China [A 5.5 networking event]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED], Head of the Political Section, Embassy of Spain in China [no participation in project activities]

[REDACTED] Counsellor at the Danish Embassy in China until end 2020, Embassy of Denmark [A 5.8]
[REDACTED]

██████████ Counsellor Science and Innovation, Embassy of Sweden in China [A 5.2 networking event]
██████████

CHINESE GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTIONS

██████████ Deputy Director, and Secretary of CCICED for COP15, FECO, MEE [A 5.1]
██
██

IMPLEMENTORS

██████████, Project Team, KE2: Project Support Officer (Backstopping), GOPA mbH Worldwide Consultants (Leading Company) [A 3.2, A 5.2, A 5.4, A 5.5, A 10.2, Co-author A 1.1]
██

██████████ Project Team, KE1: Project team leader, Clie Earth (Subcontractor) [A 3.2, A 5.1, A 5.2, A 5.4, A 5.5, A 5.6, A 10.2, Co-author A 1.1]
██

██████████ (Mr), Deputy Director, Env policy integration Departm., PRCEE of MEE [A 6.2, co-author A 1.2]
██

██████████ Deputy Director, Permit regulation, PRCEE of MEE [A 3.1, A 3.2, A 5.6, A 6.1, co-author A1.1]
██

OTHER INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS INVOLVED IN PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

██████████ Emeritus Professor of Environmental Technologies Innovation, University of the West of England, Bristol [A 3.1, A 3.2, Co-author A 1.1]
██

CHINESE RESEARCH THINK TANKS

██████████ Associate Professor, Institute of Botany, Chinese Academy of Sciences [A 5.2, 5.4, co-author of A 2.2 and A 2.4]
██

EUROPEAN THINK TANKS

██████████ Head of Nature Initiatives & Tropical Forest Alliance, World Economic Forum Beijing Representative Office, China (until recently: Head of IUCN China) [A 5.2, 5.4]
██

██████████, International Chief Advisor to the China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development (CCICED); and Senior Fellow, International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) [no participation in project activities]
██

DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

██████████ Head of Global Relations, ENV, OECD [A 5.3]
 ██████████

██████████, Co-chair CBD Open Ended Working Group for post2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, Environment and Climate Change Canada [A 5.2, A 5.5, A 10.1]
 ██████████

INTERNATIONAL NGOS

██████████ China Program Director, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) US [no participation in project activities]
 ██████████

██████████, Head of Biodiversity Programme, IUCN Asia office [A 5.2, A 5.4]
 ██████████

██████████, Vice President, Environmental Defense Fund [A 5.3]
 ██████████

NATIONAL NGOS

██████████ Secretary General, China Plastics Reuse and Recycling Association [co-author of A 2.3]
 ██████████

██████████ Deputy Secretary General, CBCGDF (China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development Foundation) [A 5.3, A 5.5 networking event]
 ██████████

RESEARCH AND ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS

██████████, Senior Researcher, CCICED International Special Advisor, CICERO Center for International Climate and Environmental Research Oslo [A 5.1, 5.3]
 ██████████

PRIVATE SECTOR

██████████ CEO, ENGIE China, European Union Chamber of Commerce in China, Vice President [A 5.8]
 ██████████

Number of interviewees as of project activity participation

Project activity		Number of interviewees
event	knowledge product	
	A 1.1	4
	A 1.2	1
	A 2.2	1
	A 2.3	1
	A 2.4	1
	A 2.6	1
A 3.1		3
A 3.2		4
A 5.1		4
A 5.2		8
A 5.3		6
A 5.4		8
A 5.5		7
A 5.6		2
A 5.7		1
A 5.8		3
A 6.1		1
A 6.2		1
A 10.1		2
A 10.2		4

Source: own calculation.

Note: Several interviewees have participated in more than one project activity (See: Annex - Stakeholders consulted)

Statistics on planned and conducted interviews

	Number	%
Contacted, emails went out	69	100
...of which international stakeholders*	39	
...of which Chinese stakeholders*	30	
Bounced back	1	1
Accepted:	31	45
... of which international stakeholders	25	
... of which Chinese stakeholders	6	
Refused	37	54
... of which answered negatively:	3	
... of which did not answer at all:	34	

*: "International stakeholders" comprises Chinese nationals working for an international organisation. "Chinese stakeholders" comprises persons working for Chinese governmental and non-governmental organisations and think tanks.

Annex VI: Project communications on social and public media channels, a selection

Communication channel	Language	Title of the communication	Date of publication	Online link
WeChat	CN	中欧环境合作 推动中国排污许可制度建设 [Communication on A 3.1 Training WS "Training Workshops - Training on Pollutant Discharge Management, Beijing, Hangzhou]" ¹	2018-12-17	https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/FcRV8Me7bJLh4SzHsJlJvA
	CN	为自然留出空间: 多利益相关方交流研讨会在京召开 [Communication on a multi-stakeholder exchange WS on biodiversity jointly organised by FECO of MEE and ClientEarth]" ²	2019-03-21	https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/8uXAKRn3lvd8zHY9tFSTrA
	CN	为自然留出空间: 生物多样性的2摄氏度"交流研讨会召开 [Communication on A 5.4 Expert WS "Second Workshop on Biodiversity, Beijing"]	2019-05-19	https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/OOwU3gACUf2Si4gAOXEFIQ
	CN	新闻 中欧生物多样性研讨会与多利益攸关方交流会在京召开 [Communication on A 5.5 Expert WS "Third Workshop on Biodiversity, Beijing"] ³	2019-11-05	https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/2p6-i45fYp66WlVKo85UZw
	CN	中欧环境合作, 推进中国排污许可制度建设 [Communication on A 3.1 Training WS "Training on Pollutant Discharge Management, Beijing, Guangzhou]" ¹	2019-11-19	https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/KjVOiZf6kSYGgvQMfx5fyw
	CN	中欧生物遗传资源获取与惠益分享 (ABS) 及数字序列信息 (DSI) 研讨会在线召开 [Communication on A 5.7 Expert WS "EU-China Virtual Workshop on Biodiversity Access and Benefit Sharing"]	2020-06-01	https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/Vh689EeyFUWWMYMNbQXbBMw
	CN	中欧“欧盟绿色新政与绿色振兴”研讨会成功召开 [Communication on A 5.8 Expert WS "EU-China Virtual Workshop on EU Green Deal and Green Recovery]" ⁴	2020-07-03	https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/V3UyN236lwcL6ZnZKeWNFQ
Public media releases	CN	应对疫情经济刺激政策如何既推动经济, 又缓解环境压力 [in English: How economic stimulus policies can boost the economy and ease environmental pressures in response to the epidemic]. By Dimitri de Boer and Andrew Hou. In: The paper (澎湃新闻)(Chinese Online-journal)	2020-05-19	https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_7458376
	EN	Opportunity to be seized. By DIMITRI DE BOER/WANG YI. In: China Daily	2020-08-11	https://global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202008/11/WS5f31e155a31083481725f6ee.html
	EN, CN	The EU can ‘catalyse’ Chinese thinking on key environmental issues. By Ma Tianjie. Interview with Dimitri de Boer. In: China Dialogue.	2020-08-17	https://chinadialogue.net/en/di-mate/eu-china-cooperation-catalyse-chinese-thinking-environmental-issues/

Sources: Information provided by the project implementation staff, KE1 and KE2, and one interview respondent.

1. The communication states that the event was organised by ClientEarth and PRCEE, and the project supported it.

2. This communication was also mentioned by the implementation team although it was not organised by the project.

3. The communication states that the event was organised by ClientEarth and the Office of the Executive Committee for the Preparation of 15th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the project supported it.

4. The communication states that the event was organised by PRCEE and supported by ClientEarth and the project.

Annex VII: References

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Short Papers:

(*Author n.i.*), Short Paper - 'Global Governance and Ecological Civilization'. (A 2.1 *Short paper*)

Rankovic, Aleksandar & Shen Xiaoli (n.i.): First Biodiversity Workshop. Summary Report. Sharing perspectives on CBD implementation and options for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. 9-10 October 2018, Beijing. (A 2.2 *Short paper*)

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Rankovic, Aleksandar & Shen Xiaoli (2019): Second Biodiversity Workshop. Summary report. Perspectives on biodiversity commitments, the 2030 Mission, the other elements of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, and the Belt and Road Initiative. 13-14 May 2019, Beijing. (A 2.4 *Short paper*)

Rankovic, Aleksandar & Zou Yueyu (n.i.): Third Biodiversity Workshop. Summary report. EU-China dialogue on the road to COP15: 2030 Mission; Smart targets; Implementation, assessment, reporting, and review; ABCMs and ecological redlines. 31 October – 1 November 2019, Beijing. (A 2.5 *Short paper*)

Li Liping, Li Yuanyuan, Jiang Huanhuan, and Anders Hove (2020): Environmental Status and State of Play of Environmental and Related Policies in China. (A 2.6 *Short paper*)

Lyal, Christopher & Zhao Fuwei (n.i.): EU – China Workshop on ABS and DSI. Report. Access and Benefit Sharing and Digital Sequence Information. 28-29 May 2020, virtually. (A 2.7 *Short paper*)

Event Reports⁹³:

EU – China Cooperation on Environment and Green Economy (n.i.): Event Report. Activity 3 Training Workshops. Activity 3.1 Training on Pollutant Discharge Management. 10-14 December 2018, Beijing, Hangzhou.

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⁹³ Two reports only had a Chinese or no participant list included. They were shared with the evaluators.

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EU – China Cooperation on Environment and Green Economy (n.i.): Event Report. Activity 5 Expert Workshops. Activity 5.4 - Second Workshop on Biodiversity. 13-14 May 2019, Beijing.

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