

China Business Weekly

7 October 2025



FCCC/EUCBA ACTIVITIES

Exclusive Luncheon: Minister Suo Peng to represent Ambassador Cai Run
9 October, 12h00 CEST – Brussels



The **EU-China Business Association** is organizing an **exclusive luncheon** with His Excellency **Mr. Cai Run, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China and Head of the Chinese Mission to the EU**, taking place on Thursday, **9 October 2025 at 12:00 CEST at De Warande, Zinnerstraat/Rue Zinner 1, 1000 Brussels**. Unfortunately Ambassador Cai will not be able to attend as he has been requested to deliver an important speech at the European Parliament in Strasbourg on that day, which despite his efforts, cannot be rescheduled.

He deeply regrets missing our event and looks forward to the opportunity to join us next time.

Therefore, Minister SUO Peng, the newly appointed Minister for Trade and Economy at the Chinese Mission to the EU, will represent the Ambassador. We are honored that Minister SUO Peng has kindly agreed to address our members in his place.

This exclusive event remains a unique opportunity to meet the Minister in charge of Economy and Trade at the Chinese Mission to the EU and to raise topics you may wish to discuss. The Minister will deliver an address on the opportunities and challenges shaping the future of EU–China trade and investment relations.

The programme is as follows:

12h00 – 12h30 Registration Networking Cocktail

12h30 – 12h35 Introduction, by **Mr. Jochum Haakma**, Chairman, EU-China Business Association

12h35 – 12h50 Address by **H.E. Mr. Suo Peng**, Minister for Trade and Economy, Chinese Mission to the EU: **Outlook for EU-China Trade and Investment Relations**

12h50 – 13h00 Q&A Session

13h00 – 14h00 Luncheon

Webinar: “Belgian Customs and its activities in China” – 16 October, 10 AM CEST



The **Flanders-China Chamber of Commerce (FCCC)** is organizing a webinar focused on 'Belgian Customs and its activities in China', which will take place online on **16 October 2025 at 10 am CEST**.

The program is as follows:

10h00-10h05: Introduction by **Ms Gwenn Sonck, Executive Director, Flanders-China Chamber of Commerce**

10h05-10h25: Procedures and regulations of the Chinese customs and other institutions related to import or export by **Mr. Emmanuel Geronnez, Customs Attaché in Beijing**

10h25-10h45: Support given by the Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain (FASFC) to local companies when exporting to China by **Ms. Annabelle Schreiber, Agricultural Attaché, Embassy of Belgium in China**

10h45-11h00: Q&A Session

Practical Information:

Date: 16 October 2025

Time: 10 AM - CEST

Location: Online

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Webinar: “EU Circular Economy – Compliance & Opportunities” 21 October 2025, 10H00 CEST



The **Flanders-China Chamber of Commerce (FCCC)** is organizing a webinar focused on “**EU Circular Economy – Compliance & Opportunities**”, which will take place on **21 October 2025 at 10 am CEST**.

Navigating the European Union's rapidly evolving circular economy regulations is no longer just about meeting requirements, but a strategic necessity for any business that imports or is doing business in the region. The old “take, make, dispose” model is being replaced by a regenerative system, which brings a whole new set of legal obligations. To avoid risks and find new market opportunities, it's critical to understand and adapt to this new framework.

During this webinar, we'll provide a clear breakdown of the key legal instruments shaping the EU's circular economy. **The experts will share forward-looking, practical advice drawn from extensive experience with multinational corporations.** They will deconstruct the core objectives, analyze key legal instruments, and explore practical case studies to illustrate compliance challenges and successful strategies.

Furthermore, the EU offers a wide range of **grants** and **incentive schemes** to support companies in advancing **green technologies, sustainable business models, and low-carbon solutions**. In this webinar, we will therefore also present **key opportunities** available to companies in **Europe and Belgium**, including **Chinese companies investing in Europe**. The session will highlight **practical pathways** to leverage EU **sustainability-oriented programs**, such as **Horizon Europe** and the **Innovation Fund**, as well as Belgian **tax incentives** for green investment, such as the new **thematic investment deduction**. Thus, we will demonstrate how companies can **unlock financial support** while aligning with **Europe's strategic sustainability agenda**.

The program is as follows:

10h00-10h05: Introduction by **Ms. Gwenn Sonck, Executive Director, Flanders-China Chamber of Commerce**
10h05-10h15: Introduction & European Context by **Mrs. Els Van Poucke, Partner, Deloitte Legal Lawyers**
10h15-10h25: Key Legal Instruments Shaping the EU's Circular Economy by **Mrs. Dominique Vanherck, Director, Deloitte Legal Lawyers**
10h25-10h35: Practical implications for importers – Case study by **Mr. Charles D'Haene, Junior Associate, Deloitte Legal Lawyers**
10h35-10h45: EU Grants, Incentives & Belgian Tax Opportunities by **Mr. Xu Lin, Manager, Deloitte's Grants & Incentives Team**
10h45-11h00: Q&A Session

Practical Information:

Date: 21 October 2025

Time: 10 AM - CEST

Location: Online

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Webinar: European Business in China: Position Paper 2025/2026
24 October 2025, 10h00 CEST



The **EU–China Business Association** is organizing a webinar focused on “**European Business in China: Position Paper 2025/2026**”, which will take place on **24 October 2025 at 10 am CEST**.

The **Position Paper 2025/2026** highlights the key challenges faced by European companies operating in China, examines broader issues within China's economy, and provides constructive recommendations to the Chinese Government on how these challenges can be addressed.

With China now entering the preparatory phase of its **15th Five Year Plan (2026-2030)**, the Paper reviews the results of the **14th Five Year Plan (2021-2025)** and suggests focus areas for the upcoming plan. The aim is to refine guiding principles to foster a more open, transparent, and mutually beneficial **EU-China trade and investment relationship**.

To support China's overarching goal of securing sustainable, high-quality economic growth, the Paper puts forward five key recommendations, calling for action to tackle underlying structural challenges, optimize capital allocation, promote equitable trade relationships, and implement policies that allow European companies to contribute more to China's green and digital transitions.

This is an excellent opportunity to gain first-hand insights into the current business landscape in China and explore how European companies can navigate the country's evolving economic and regulatory environment.

Programme:

10h00 – 10h05: Welcome remarks by **Ms. Gwenn Sonck**, Executive Director, EU-China Business Association

10h05 – 10h40: Presentation on the “EU Business in China: Position Paper 2025/2026” by **Mr. Adam Dunnett**, Secretary General, European Union Chamber of Commerce in China

10h40 – 11h00: Q&A Session

Practical Information:

Date: 24 October 2025

Time: 10h00 CEST

Location: Online

Price: Free

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European Industry Visit to Weihai City – 10-11 November 2025



EU-China
Business Association
欧盟-中国贸易协会



弗兰德-中国商会
FCCC
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FLANDERS-CHINESE KAMER VAN KOOPHANDEL



精致城市 幸福威海
Prestige City
Happy Weihai
威海

The **EU-China Business Association** and the **Flanders-China Chamber of Commerce** are organising a two-day industry visit to **Weihai City, Shandong Province** from **10 to 11 November 2025**. The aim of the visit is to get a better understanding of the unique investment environment of Weihai City and the excellent cooperation opportunities. During the visit, you will meet with high-level government leaders, have meetings with potential Chinese partners, visit development zones and be shown around leading Weihai companies.

Why Weihai?

Several of our member companies, including **Beaulieu** and **Bekaert**, have major investments in Weihai and have benefitted from the city's highly business-friendly investment environment. The Flanders-China Chamber of Commerce

and the Weihai Foreign Investment Bureau have formed a strong bond to help build and strengthen trade and investment relations. The city is located on the eastern tip of Shandong Province, facing Korea and Japan across the sea. It has a coastline of almost 1,000 km.

The leading eight Industrial Clusters of Weihai are:

- Advanced equipment and intelligent manufacturing
- New medicine and medical devices
- New generation information technology
- Green energy
- Carbon fibre and other composite materials
- Marine life and healthy food
- Textiles and leisure sports
- Health tourism

Practical information:

Date and time: 10-11 November 2025

Location: Weihai, Shandong Province

Deadline for subscription: 7 October 2025

Participation fee: €450

This includes:

- Participation in all organized activities (including lunches and dinners)
- 2 hotel nights in Weihai
- Presentation of your company in Brochure (English/Chinese)

The number of participants will be limited. In case you are interested in joining this visit, please send an e-mail to: gwen.sonck@flanders-china.be.

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EVENTS SUPPORTED BY FCCC

So much more than shopping: Discover Maasmechelen Village during Autumn shopping weekend – 11-12 October 2025 – Maasmechelen village



Nestled in the heart of Limburg and surrounded by the best nature Terhills National Park has to offer, Maasmechelen Village is a unique open-air shopping destination where fashion, relaxation, and culinary experiences come together.

A break from the everyday

Visit Maasmechelen Village's **Autumn Shopping Weekend** on **11 and 12 October** for a refined shopping moment, complete with complimentary drinks in the cosy **Autumn Pavilion**, exclusive benefits, and up to **20% off the Village price** in selected boutiques.

The Village is the ideal escape from everyday life. Its car-free streets, lush surroundings, and thoughtful services, including free parking and a Hands-Free Shopping Service, make for a relaxed and comfortable outing.

A gift to you

On arrival, you'll receive **2 tokens per guest** for a complimentary drink to enjoy a glass of bubbles or a warm coffee in the inviting **Autumn Pavilion**.

Want to shop hands-free? Our **Hands-free Shopping Service** makes it easy to browse without carrying bags.

A celebration of timeless style

Discover new collections from over 100 brands, including elegant French favourites like Maje, Sandro, Lacoste and Longchamp, and bold Italian icons such as Armani, MaxMara, Liu Jo, Twin-Set and Furla.

Recently, new exciting (pop-up) boutiques like Selected and It's all About Christmas opened their doors, alongside trusted names like The North Face, Boss, Polo Ralph Lauren and Zadig&Voltaire.

A worry free arrival.

Enjoy **free parking** right next to the Village or take our **free Shopping Express** from Brussels with promo code **B2B2025**. [Shopping Express® • Maasmechelen Village](#)

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PAST EVENTS

Webinar: "Should I Stay or Should I Go" – European Business Challenges in China in Times of Populism – 2 October 2025



The **EU-China Business Association** and the **Flanders-China Chamber of Commerce** organized an insightful webinar on the evolving challenges and opportunities for European businesses in China, set against the backdrop of rising populism and shifting geopolitical dynamics. As global trade realigns and the triangle between **Europe, China, and the United States** becomes increasingly complex, this conversation provided much-needed clarity for business leaders navigating uncertain times.

Ms. Gwenn Sonck, Executive Director of the **Flanders-China Chamber of Commerce** and the **EU-China Business Association**, introduced the topic of the webinar and the guest speaker, **Jörg Wuttke**, Partner, DGA Group (Washington, DC), Former **Vice President, BASF China** (27 years); Former **President, European Union Chamber of Commerce in China**; Advisory Board Member, **Mercator Institute for China Studies (MERICS)**. With more than 35 years of experience in China. A Q&A session concluded the webinar.

The conclusion of the webinar was to stay in China. Treat China as a performance gym for speed and innovation—while building robust, compliant, dual-track operations to withstand shocks.

FCCC members can obtain the executive summary of the webinar by sending an e-mail to info@flanders-china.be

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CONSUMER PRODUCTS

AI is transforming Chinese electronic consumer products



Air conditioners that automatically control the humidity and temperature of a room, based on artificial intelligence-powered voice interactions and machine learning ability to track consumer habits, have already become part of people's daily lives in China. Nowadays, people can play games, engage in physical exercise, make purchases online and have video chats with friends and family members via intelligent televisions. **Thanks to the rapid development of AI, an increasing number of home appliances can be controlled through voice commands and facial recognition, helping to better understand and satisfy the personalized and diversified demands of users.** Experts said rapidly evolving artificial intelligence (AI) is expected to create new consumption growth drivers and inject strong impetus into China's home appliance industry, as the cutting-edge digital technology spearheads a new wave of technological revolution and industrial transformation.

AI is not only playing an increasingly pivotal role in boosting productivity and reshaping the competitive landscape in the household appliances market, but also driving the transformation and upgrade of the traditional manufacturing sector. The Chinese government recently issued a guideline on deeply implementing the "AI Plus" initiative. According to the guideline, the country will promote the use of AI in science and technology, industrial development, consumption, people's well-being, governance capability and global cooperation.

By 2027, China will extensively and deeply integrate AI in six key sectors with the penetration rate of new-

generation intelligent terminals and AI agents surpassing 70%, and this figure will exceed 90% by 2030, the guideline said. **Leading Chinese consumer electronics and home appliance makers are racing to incorporate AI technology into manufacturing, products and services.**

AI is reshaping the industrial landscape and will be the biggest technological revolution in the next 50 years, said Zhou Yunjie, Chairman and CEO of Chinese home appliance maker **Haier Group**. "At present, the deployment of AI in enterprises is mainly concentrated in manufacturing, research and development (R&D), sales, procurement and services." Highlighting that every industry will integrate AI, and any enterprise that does not embrace AI will eventually be weeded out, Zhou noted that the integration of AI models with home service robots and terminal devices will create new growth drivers for the global consumer electronics industry. The company has invested heavily in developing large language models (LLMs) and is promoting the adoption of AI in a wide range of fields such as household appliances and industrial internet, he said. AI models tailored for the smart home domain represent key infrastructure supporting transformation of the traditional home appliances sector, he added.

Li Dongsheng, Founder and Chairman of Chinese consumer electronics manufacturer **TCL Technology Group Corp**, said, "The application of AI in the high-tech manufacturing sector will bring about greater value than its use in terminal products, as this state-of-the-art digital technology will **significantly improve the production efficiency and competitiveness of China's manufacturing enterprises.**" Li said AI is increasingly embedded into intelligent production lines, product R&D, and terminal devices, which will further bolster the development of China's high-tech manufacturing sector. "We established an AI R&D center in Poland in 2018. Prior to that, we set up an R&D center in the United States in 2011. As a manufacturing enterprise, we will focus more on the application of AI," Li said. He added that China's breakthroughs in LLMs, along with the meteoric rise of Chinese AI startup DeepSeek, have enabled it to rapidly catch up with the United States in the AI segment, while surpassing most other developed economies in terms of AI application.

This year's Government Work Report stated that under the "AI Plus" initiative, the nation will work to effectively combine digital technologies with its manufacturing and market strengths, support the extensive application of large-scale AI models, and vigorously develop new-generation intelligent terminals and smart manufacturing equipment. According to a report by China Merchants Securities, the market scale of **the smart home devices sector in China** will reach CNY952.3 billion in 2025, with the **penetration rate of AI technology exceeding 50%**. In the next 10 years, smart household appliances will experience explosive growth. "We are pushing forward the integration of AI with data and speeding up the industrial use of AI," said Liu Jiang, Chairman of **Sichuan Changhong Electronics Holding Group Co.** The

company is leveraging AI to inspect the quality of machines and components to facilitate the automation and intelligent upgrade of equipment and improve the efficiency of production lines, Liu said. Changhong has applied AI technology into areas such as manufacturing, operations and products. It has unveiled plans to establish 66 AI-powered intelligent factories worldwide, and has rolled out AI televisions equipped with LLMs that support multimodal interaction functions including voice, gesture and expressions. **Hisense Group** said its Xinghai large language model is deeply integrated with DeepSeek, and with enhanced deep thinking and reasoning abilities, its smart TVs can better understand user demands, and provide them with a more natural interaction experience, the China Daily reports.

RETAIL

Chinese brands are gaining in popularity abroad



The global frenzy for the Labubu doll has shone a light on how Chinese brands are crossing borders and growing in popularity worldwide. Domestic toy company Pop Mart's plush toys took off in 2024 after celebrities like Blackpink's Lisa and superstar Rihanna showcased their collections on social media. People now compete fiercely to buy the popular dolls, which have seen a significant increase in resale value. Labubu's monster sales have helped **Pop Mart**, built on the concept of high-quality blind box toys, **grow into a billion-dollar business.** It now operates over 400 stores and 2,000 vending machines worldwide.

Meanwhile, **other Chinese brands have either already proved to be an international success or are in the process of doing so.** Online stores **Shein** and **Temu** are **both well-known** for offering a vast selection of low-cost products shipped directly from China. While Shein has not publicly reported its global earnings, Reuters said the company was valued at USD66 billion last year. Temu is owned by Pinduoduo, a major e-commerce platform. The company's market capitalization had reached approximately USD184 billion as of September 19.

While the rise of e-commerce has caused a decline in many traditional retail stores, **lifestyle retailer Miniso** has defied the trend. **Miniso was founded in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, in 2016, with the philosophy of**

"quality, affordability and fashion". As of 2024, the company had more than 7,500 stores worldwide. It offers a range of products including toys, beauty products, small electronics, stationery, snacks, and household goods. There are over 200 Miniso stores across 40 U.S. states, with membership growing by 250% in 2024 to 2 million people, according to the company. Miniso's global flagship store in New York's Times Square generated nearly USD80,000 in revenue on its opening day on May 19, 2023, setting a single-day sales record among its stores globally. The company is rapidly expanding, launching flagship stores in iconic locations such as Oxford Street in London, the Champs-Élysées in Paris, Seoul's Gangnam District and Tokyo's Harajuku. In July, it opened a 500-square-meter store in Melbourne, Australia. The NYSE-listed company reported that its revenue last year reached USD2.3 billion, a 22.8% increase from the previous year.

"Brands like Pop Mart have successfully created a 'collectible culture' around their products, using the blind box to tap into psychological drivers like scarcity and the thrill of discovery," Cornell University Finance Professor Will Cong told China Daily. "They bypass traditional retail barriers by launching on e-commerce and social platforms like Tik-Tok, building communities and generating viral, user-generated content that provides authentic marketing." Cong added that "this digital fluency, combined with hyper-agile supply chains that enable rapid product iteration – a 'fast fashion' DNA seen in brands like Miniso and Urban Revivo – allows them to respond to trends in near real time, keeping their offerings perpetually fresh and relevant."

The concept of bubble tea is being taken to the next level – with Chinese beverage companies including Heytea, Chagee, Coco Fresh Tea and Juice, Molly Tea, and Auntea Jenny now operating tens of thousands of stores worldwide. Heytea can be seen not only in New York's Chinatown. It has outlets in other major areas in the city such as Times Square, Soho, the East Village, and Herald Square, which attract a diverse range of consumers from all backgrounds. Founded in Guangdong in 2012 by

Nie Yunchen, Heytea lays claim to creating the first “cheese tea”, which has a top layer of foamy cream cheese added. Besides offering tea latte, Heytea created a range of beverages that mix fruit with green tea or dairy. The company has over 4,000 stores worldwide. Its Vice President of Overseas Strategy and Franchising, Gu Yujia, told the Los Angeles Times he believes the U.S. market will be even bigger than China’s, due to the rising appreciation of Asian culture.

Yang Jiawen, Professor of International Business and International Affairs at George Washington University, said Chinese brands are still at an early stage of recognition in the U.S. market. Product quality, effective advertising, competitive prices, and services that emphasize health and safety will be important for the development of markets in the U.S. and globally, Yang added. These brands have had huge success in China, and now they are trying to expand their market in the U.S.

Luckin Coffee is the biggest coffee shop chain in China with its 22,000 stores far surpassing the 6,500 of its U.S. competitor Starbucks. The company reported that its net revenue last year exceeded USD4.7 billion, a 38.4% year-on-year increase, with much of it due to its rapid expansion. It opened 6,092 new stores, including 6,071 on the Chinese mainland, 21 in Singapore, and five in Hong Kong. In June, Luckin Coffee ventured into the U.S. and launched its first store in New York. **Cotti Coffee**, founded by two former Luckin Coffee executives in 2022, is also experiencing rapid growth with over 14,000 stores. Popular clothing brand **Urban Revivo**, founded in Guangzhou in 2016, is often referred to as the Chinese version of Zara, the Spanish fashion giant. Urban Revivo has annual sales of around USD961 million with 400 stores in China and 19 across the world, mostly in Southeast Asia, the China Daily reports.

FOREIGN TRADE

Ezhou in Hubei province turning into an international e-commerce trade port



Ezhou is not a coastal trading port. It has no bustling harbor or long tradition of container terminals. Yet in the middle of Hubei province, a different kind of gateway is rising. At its heart is the Ezhou Huahu International Airport, Asia’s first cargo-dedicated hub, which has quickly become the anchor for the inland city’s full embrace of cross-border e-commerce. Beyond the runway, another kind of takeoff is underway. Inside sleek new office towers, live-streaming anchors check their consoles for broadcasts, young product scouts track social media feeds for the next viral items and small-scale entrepreneurs draft export strategies on laptops. This is the China (Ezhou) Cross-border E-commerce Industrial Park. Launched this spring, the park has already attracted 258 companies, with 62 setting up offices on site, with trade volume topping USD310 million in its first three months of operations. At the center of this story is Bi Wei, a 29-year-old entrepreneur and one of China’s rising young business leaders born after 1995. She heads the park’s operations, leading a team with an average age of just 25, leading a platform that integrates data analytics, supply chains and international logistics.

Like many of her peers, Bi Wei first encountered e-commerce through imported cosmetics. “We would huddle around our phones, checking discounts on apps,” she recalled. Later, during trips abroad, she browsed shops not to buy, but to study what foreign consumers were buying. By 2018, when she graduated, Chinese shoppers were already accustomed to buying overseas products online. What caught Bi’s attention, though, was the reverse flow as small factories in China quietly began listing products on Amazon, then shipping them abroad. “A company could put an item online today, and it would sell tomorrow. I thought this is the future,” she said. She watched as a wave of young entrepreneurs, some barely older than her, built export businesses worth millions. By 2022, Bi returned to Hubei to take on a bigger role. The following year she became Executive Secretary General of the Hubei E-commerce Association, and then accepted the challenge of running the new cross-border e-commerce park.

“Cross-border is about spotting where the demand will be, not where it is or was,” Bi said. “We rely on data from social chatter, platform trend charts, and even the wording buyers use in reviews. Once we see a sales spike coming, we act. If we wait, someone else will seize it.” The instinctive grasp of online culture and platform dynamics, Bi and her peers believe, is what separates the young generation from traditional exporters. Instead of waiting for trade fairs or overseas distributor networks, they track memes and hashtags. However, none of this would matter without **Huahu airport**, designed specifically for cargo and run by logistics giant SF Express, just a 10-minute drive from the park. **“This is our secret weapon,” Bi said.** “We can promise next-day delivery to global markets. On top of that, warehouse rents and labor costs are cheaper here than in coastal hubs. For small and medium enterprises, this lowers the threshold to go global.”

The airport has launched 106 cargo routes, including

45 international routes, with its cargo and mail throughput exceeding 1.06 million metric tons since January 1. According to Hu Jing, General Manager of Ezhou Aviation Cargo Co, the airport's dedicated e-commerce clearance channels shave hours off Customs time and three express security lanes dedicated to e-commerce cargo improve the efficiency of cargo checks.

But the park is not merely a logistics extension. Bi's team believes closing the information gap is key. Many SMEs don't know what sells abroad, or how to tailor their products for different markets. The park uses analytics to identify demand, then works backward. They encourage export firms to create country-specific versions of products like strollers customized for local safety standards or electronics for local design tastes. **"It's not about**

pushing goods we happen to have," Bi explained. "It's about asking what they actually want and then working backward to source or customize."

For industry expert Huang Lingyu, who leads the park's livestream operations team, the next leap lies in artificial intelligence (AI). "Cross-border breakthroughs could come in logistics tracking and customer service. AI will help predict shipping risks before they happen, and multilingual smart customer service will allow SMEs to talk to global buyers almost instantly," Huang said. The Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) said China's imports and exports of digitally deliverable services reached CNY1.5 trillion in the first half, while cross-border e-commerce trade hit CNY1.3 trillion, both record highs, the China Daily reports.

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CHINA NEWS ROUND-UP

China emerging as powerhouse for innovative drug development

China is rapidly emerging as a powerhouse for innovative drug development, a significant shift in the global pharmaceutical landscape from a demand market and a site for clinical trials to a source of groundbreaking scientific research and innovation. The number of therapies developed in China has doubled in recent years, and approximately one-third of the global licensing deals last year involved Chinese biopharmaceutical enterprises. This shows China's growing role in the global drug research and development (R&D) ecosystem, said Sharon Barr, Executive Vice President of Biopharmaceuticals R&D at AstraZeneca, in an interview during the 2025 AstraZeneca R&D China Science Day in Shanghai on September 22.

"Since 2023, the company has signed 15 licensing deals with 14 Chinese biotech firms, marking a historic high for us," said Barr. "This is how we start at the beginning of our pipeline to create transformative new medicines. We look at promising opportunities, which also fit into our portfolio, and that will help us achieve the bold ambition of introducing 20 breakthrough innovative medicines globally by 2030. We are thrilled to integrate into China's world-class, dynamic life sciences ecosystem," Barr said, adding that the company's investment of USD2.5 billion announced early this year, included establishing AstraZeneca's sixth global strategic R&D center in Beijing, forming a dual-engine with the existing strategic R&D center in Shanghai.

For example, the company signed an agreement with Eccogene in 2023 to jointly work on an oral GLP-1 receptor agonist developed by the Shanghai-based small-sized

technology enterprise, and ultimately bring the medicine to the broader patient population around the world. The drug candidate is currently in global phase-2 clinical trials, with phase-1 trials underway in China.

China's appeal extends beyond its large patient population and extensive data resources. The country boasts leading academic institutions and a robust research network, said the company. He Jing, Vice President and Director of R&D China at AstraZeneca, said that the company collaborates closely with Chinese research institutions and universities, including the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Shanghai Institute of Materia Medica and Peking University, to advance foundational scientific explorations. AstraZeneca's China R&D pipeline has been fully aligned with its global projects, with over 160 ongoing clinical trials involving nearly 500 hospitals nationwide and 23% featuring early-stage projects. The company's China R&D department currently leads nearly 20 global clinical trials in partnership with top Chinese experts and hospitals, the China Daily reports.

Tsinghua University tops several global computer science rankings

China's Tsinghua University has emerged as the world's top institution in computer science across multiple major global rankings, marking a symbolic shift in a field once dominated by American universities. For the first time, Tsinghua now leads lists ranging from the widely recognized U.S. News Best Global Universities to CSRankings, a system seen as rigorously academic and historically U.S.-centric within the research community. In the latest CSRankings results – which weigh institutions by

faculty publications in top-tier conferences across AI, computer systems, theory and interdisciplinary research – Tsinghua has overtaken long-time leader Carnegie Mellon University to claim the top spot. Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Zhejiang University and Peking University followed in third, fourth and fifth place. The top 10 is now evenly split between Asian and U.S. universities, underscoring Asia's growing strength in the field.

The U.S. is hailed as the birthplace of modern computer science, from the first electronic computers to the creation of the internet. Universities such as MIT, Stanford, Carnegie Mellon and UC Berkeley set the standards for the field and trained generations of scientists and engineers who built Silicon Valley and the global tech industry. Developed and maintained by Emery Berger, Computer Science Professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, CSRankings is entirely metrics-based and transparent, created as an alternative to reputation-driven lists such as the U.S. News & World Report rankings. Tsinghua also dominates the U.S. News Best Global Universities for Computer Science, a time-honored ranking widely consulted by the public, policymakers and students looking to study abroad. In the latest list, six of the top 10 institutions are from China, with Stanford the highest-placed U.S. university at eighth. In addition, Tsinghua leads the SCImago Institutions Rankings for computer science, which are based solely on publications and patents indexed in Scopus, the world's largest academic database. Chinese institutions occupy all of the top 10 spots, with Stanford ranked 11th.

Tsinghua's rise reflects years of government investment and close ties to China's booming tech sector. By prioritizing publications in top journals and conferences and luring back talent from overseas, the university has pushed its faculty to the front of fields like artificial intelligence (AI) and computer systems. Yet U.S. universities remain dominant in core areas such as algorithms, computational complexity, and cryptography, according to CSRankings – a reminder that America's traditional strengths in computer science have not disappeared. Meanwhile, neither Tsinghua nor other Chinese universities have reached the top of major rankings such as Times Higher Education (THE) and QS, which place heavy weight on global reputation surveys. In the latest THE computer science list, the highest-ranked Chinese institutions are Peking and Tsinghua, at 12th and 13th, the South China Morning Post reports.

China's Moore Threads Technology is challenging Nvidia

Moore Threads Technology, a Chinese graphics processing unit (GPU) start-up founded by a veteran of Nvidia's China operations, **has become one of the most closely watched semiconductor players in the country**, as domestic AI chip designers race to displace the U.S. chip giant. The Beijing-based company received approval from the Shanghai Stock Exchange (SSE) for an initial public offering (IPO). It took just 88 days from filing the application in June to receive approval, making it one of the fastest cases to get the green light to list on the Nasdaq-style Star Market. The hastened timetable was the

latest sign of how China is doubling down on efforts to achieve self-sufficiency in the chips that provide the computing power needed for the development of AI models, as the U.S.-China tech war intensifies and casts a shadow over Nvidia's future sales in the country. **“Moore Threads' rapid IPO process shows that the domestic GPU industry is entering a critical period,”** said Zhang Xinyuan, Analyst from Beijing-based think tank Kefangde. The listing, in which Moore Threads expected to raise CNY8 billion, would significantly accelerate the large-scale commercialization of the company's GPUs, Zhang added.

Behind the Moore Threads' story is James Zhang, its founder and CEO, who previously spent 14 years working for Nvidia. He was Vice President at Nvidia and General Manager of its China operations before leaving in 2020 to start his own company. Zhang, a computer science graduate from Nanjing University of Science and Technology, joined Nvidia in 2005 and was credited with helping it expand in the mainland market over the years. Before Nvidia, he worked for U.S. tech companies including HP and Dell. Zhang's pedigree also gave Moore Threads immediate credibility. Many of the start-up's early recruits came from Nvidia and its U.S. rival Advanced Micro Devices (AMD). The company also attracted investors including GGV, Sequoia China, ByteDance and Tencent Holdings. Those relationships helped the company quickly scale up, pulling in hundreds of millions in venture funding and a multibillion dollar valuation prior to the implementation of tighter U.S. tech curbs.

Similar to peers like Huawei Technologies and Cambricon Technologies, Moore Threads was also targeted by U.S. sanctions. In October 2023, it was added to Washington's Entity List, along with fellow Chinese AI chip start-up Biren Technology. Two years later, the company proved that it could achieve rapid revenue growth using a domestic supply chain as it rode the wave of surging demand for AI computing. In 2024, Moore Threads reported revenue of CNY438.5 million, with an annual compound growth rate of over 200% over the past three years.

The company has so far launched four generations of GPU architecture: Sudi, Chunxiao, Quyuan and Pinghu. The latest generation, launched in 2024, was able to support training and inference of AI models with trillions of parameters and could be used for pre-training of cutting-edge large language models (LLMs) like those from DeepSeek. However, the company has yet to make a profit owing to its R&D expenses and inventory buildouts. It posted a net loss of CNY1.5 billion in 2024, compared with CNY1.7 billion a year earlier, the South China Morning Post reports.

4th Global Digital Trade Expo secures CNY162 billion in investment

The 4th Global Digital Trade Expo (GDTE) in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province reported **102 key outcomes, and investment agreements totaling CNY161 billion, an increase of 64% year-on-year**. The results underscored its role as a pivotal platform for digital trade innovation and global cooperation. Organized around five core digital trade sectors, the expo integrated exhibitions, conferences, and competitions to “attract business through events,”

yielding remarkable results, Hu Zhenfang, Vice Director of the Zhejiang Provincial Department of Commerce, said. For the first time, a “Digital Trade Investment Day” matched 132 nationwide sci-tech projects with 117 investment institutions, leading to preliminary cooperation agreements for 38 project-capital pairs. The Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC), for example, extended CNY19.6 billion in credit to sci-tech firms at the Expo.

From a procurement perspective, Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) partner countries and BRICS partners accounted for over 50% of total orders. Overall procurement reached CNY30.9 billion, doubling from the previous edition, with AI, cultural exports, and cross-border e-commerce accounting for 82% of orders, and international deals making up 71.5%, said Chen Weijing, Deputy Director of the Hangzhou Commerce Bureau. “The guest of honor, Indonesia, led with CNY5 billion of purchases, the highest from any single nation. Indonesian purchasers also chartered a plane for participants attending the Expo,” said Chen. The “open to global” feature of the Expo was showcased through many first-time events, Hu noted. For example, the Expo hosted the inaugural “BRICS Special Economic Zones Dialogue” and for the first time an event was held on the theme of digital city construction. **The Global Digital Trade Development Report 2025, published for the first time by the United Nations,** revealed 2024 global digital trade at USD7.23 trillion.

“A total of 33 international organizations attended, a 50% increase from last year. Over 400 multinational executives and 1,200 experts engaged in dialogues. International exhibitors accounted for over 20%, while the number of overseas buyers increased by 64% year-on-year,” Hou Bin, Deputy Director of the E-commerce Department at the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM), said. Next year, the 5th edition of the GDTE will welcome Hungary as the guest of honor. Platforms such as the GDTE helped enterprises, especially SMEs, quickly connect with potential partners, such as e-commerce platforms, logistics companies and digital technology firms, that enable them to participate in digital trade, Zheng Liangxi, Vice President of the Strategic Development Department of Ant Group, told the Global Times at the GDTE.

The China Daily adds that under the theme “Witness the Innovative Future at the Global Digital Trade Expo”, the five-day GDTE was divided into seven specialized industry exhibition areas: AI, digital entertainment, Silk Road e-commerce, smart mobility, digital healthcare, smart spaces, and smart logistics. A total of 1,812 exhibitors from 154 countries and regions participated in the exhibition, presenting future scenarios where digital technology empowers industrial development. The number of foreign exhibitors reached 381, accounting for more than 20% of the total. The number of foreign buyers reached 11,000, up 64% year-on-year.

German heating equipment manufacturer Vaillant is “in China, for the world”

By launching a brand new Asia-Pacific research and development (R&D) and manufacturing site in Wuxi, Jiangsu province, German heating equipment manufacturer Vaillant is demonstrating its commitment

to “in China, for the world”. The newly launched base is the only R&D and manufacturing site of Vaillant outside Europe, mainly producing wall-mounted boilers and water heaters. The site has become a strategic node for Vaillant’s global supply chain, as products manufactured there are not only prepared for the local market, but for over 10 countries such as Italy, France and Germany. “The manufacturing base is far from only a factory, but instead a comprehensive platform encompassing R&D, testing and manufacturing. This is Vaillant’s core innovation hub in the Asia-Pacific region,” said Cheng Liangya, Asia Director at Vaillant Group. “The new manufacturing base shows the efficient transformation of R&D into high-quality products, delivered to clients from China and the rest of the world,” Cheng said.

In 2007, Vaillant’s first factory in China was put into operation in Wuxi, marking a critical step in localized manufacturing. With the rapid expansion of China’s heating market, the company has been constantly investing in the Chinese market, and the new R&D and manufacturing site is another milestone. Vaillant’s largest industrial base in Asia, the Wuxi site takes up over 64,000 square meters, and is equipped with a professional test center of 5,700 sq m. Cheng said: “Using German techniques and the Chinese supply chain, we are capable of supplying both the Chinese and European markets. For example, our heaters manufactured in Wuxi are exported to Italy, Germany, France and Belgium. This is a win-win for our ‘in China, for the world’ pattern.” Jeroen Sterel, Director for the Asia-Pacific Region at Vaillant Group, said, **“Integrating German precision craftsmanship with Chinese innovation speed,** we are constantly pushed to evolve, marching on based on market changes.”

Wang Peng, Associate Research Fellow at the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences, said an increasing number of multinational corporations choose to build R&D and manufacturing centers locally as this enables them to quickly tap into market dynamics and adequately meet consumer demand. Sterel said: “Our investment into the Chinese market is long-term, serious and unswerving, as is demonstrated by the newly-launched manufacturing base in Wuxi. Vaillant has been in the Chinese market for 30 years. Economic cycles have ups and downs, however, no matter what challenges lie ahead, we have strong confidence that we can live through the cycle,” the China Daily reports.

China becoming a big player in AI research

The belief that China is a country only good at adopting technologies at scale has been a “misperception”, according to Mehran Gul, the author of ‘The New Geography of Innovation’, a recently published book that maps the rise of new tech powers around the world. “The geography of innovation is shifting”, the book, which came out in July, concluded. Covering tech start-ups across China, the UK, Singapore and Canada, among other countries, Mehran Gul said China today “is the only competitor” against the U.S. “Others are trying, but they’re not good enough to be dangerous”, writes Gul, winner of the Financial Times/McKinsey Bracken Bower Prize, who previously covered tech topics

for the World Economic Forum (WEF) and the United Nations. “The rise of DeepSeek and China’s open-source AI models, such as Alibaba’s Qwen, have proved that China’s AI research is strong”, Gul said in an interview.

In September, DeepSeek’s landmark peer-reviewed article on its R1 reasoning model was published by the British journal *Nature*, marking a significant leap for China’s AI community. Meanwhile, Alibaba Group Holding’s Qwen family is powering the world’s top 10 open-source large language models (LLMs), according to AI developer platform Hugging Face. Gul said start-ups in developed countries “tend to rely overwhelmingly on Chinese models”. For example, a partner at venture capital firm Andreessen Horowitz, also known as a16z, reported that 80% of his portfolio companies used foundation models from China, Gul said. “The open source lead can in the future translate into a platform lock-in where companies both in the U.S. and other countries are much more used to working with Chinese models”, he said. “In that one important respect, China does have a lead already that can widen over time.”

Talent is one of the most critical advantages China has, Gul said. **In 2022, 47% of the world’s top AI researchers were from China**, but only 12% worked in the country, second to the U.S., which attracted 57%. But this represented significant progress because in 2019 China was not in the top five in terms of retaining the best AI talent worldwide. “The bigger question is how China would attract non-Chinese talent,” Gul said. “This is where the U.S. really stands apart from China. The U.S. doesn’t rely solely on American talent, but it’s getting people from all over the world, including its primary adversaries.” However, in late September, U.S. President Donald Trump signed an executive order to impose a USD100,000 application fee for H-1B visas, which allowed American companies to sponsor foreign workers with specialized skills, such as scientists, engineers and computer programmers, the South China Morning Post reports. Meanwhile, China introduced a K-visa category to attract promising young talents.

China needs to become the world's largest importing and consuming nation

China needs to chart a new course to become the world’s largest importer, argues Wang Xiangwei, former Editor-in-Chief of the South China Morning Post. In 2009, China surpassed Germany to become the world’s largest exporter of goods, a position it has maintained for the past 16 years. This export dominance has been instrumental in propelling China’s economy forward, enabling it to

overtake Japan in 2010 as the second-largest economy in nominal GDP, trailing only the United States. By 2013, China had also eclipsed the U.S. as the world’s largest trading nation in goods, measured by the combined value of imports and exports. These milestones underscore its remarkable transformation from an inward-focused economy to a global powerhouse. Now, as China’s leadership prepares to meet from October 20 to 23 to deliberate on the 15th Five Year Plan, it is imperative to chart a new course: overtaking the U.S. to become the world’s largest importer within the next five to 10 years, according to Wang.

This shift would not only mark a pivotal evolution in China’s economic strategy, it would also carry profound geopolitical and economic implications for the nation, its key trading partners and the rest of the world. The Five Year Plan has evolved far beyond its original rigid production targets and ideological framework. Today, it serves as a comprehensive blueprint encompassing economic development, environmental protection, education and social welfare programs. The upcoming plan is particularly critical as China aims to achieve its goal of becoming a “modern socialist country”. Central to this ambition is accelerating the transition to a consumption-driven economy, addressing structural imbalances which emerged due to prioritizing investment and exports over domestic demand.

During the past four decades of “reform and opening up”, China’s growth has relied heavily on fixed-asset investments in infrastructure and real estate and on exports. These engines have fueled unprecedented expansion, but their sustainability has waned in recent years. A stark illustration of this imbalance is China’s steel sector, where production exceeded 1 billion tons in 2024, with exports reaching around 110 million tons. Such overproduction exemplifies the cutthroat “involution-style” competition plaguing many industries – excessive price wars driven by oversupply and weak domestic demand, resulting in razor-thin margins or losses.

Meanwhile, **China’s imports grew modestly by 2.3% to about USD2.6 trillion in 2024, compared to U.S. imports of goods and services, which rose 6.6% to a record USD4.1 trillion**. At first glance, bridging this gap to surpass the U.S. as the top importer might seem daunting, but it aligns perfectly with China’s pressing need to rebalance its economy. Opening up areas such as education, healthcare, sports and elderly care to foreign investment and services could invigorate these industries. The geopolitical significance of China becoming the largest importer cannot be overstated. Boosting imports would signal China’s commitment to balanced global trade, Wang concludes.

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