

China Business Weekly

5 May 2026



FCCC/EUCBA ACTIVITIES

Webinar: Digital Marketing for Industrial Goods: From online presence to industrial growth – 21 May 2026, 9:30 AM



The Flanders-China Chamber of Commerce is organizing a webinar on **Digital Marketing for Industrial Goods in China**, taking place on **May 21 at 9:30 AM**.

For **European industrial companies**, China remains a critical growth market. However, succeeding in **China today requires more than a strong product or global brand presence**.

China's digital ecosystem operates fundamentally different from Western markets. **Buyers rely on local platforms to discover, evaluate, and shortlist suppliers. Search behavior, content expectations, and brand credibility** are all highly localized and more demanding.

Many European industrial companies with strong offerings and local operations in China are still not optimally positioned digitally to support lead generation and commercial growth.

This session will provide **a practical overview of how industrial companies can build an effective digital presence in China and translate this into concrete business opportunities**.

Topics that will be covered:

- How Chinese B2B buyers search for and evaluate suppliers.
- Key digital platforms in China (e.g. Baidu, WeChat, industry platforms).
- Common mistakes European companies make when entering the Chinese digital landscape.
- How to align branding, content, and channels to support lead generation.
- Practical examples of what works in industrial B2B marketing in China.

The programme is as follows:

09:30 – 09:35 Introduction by **Ms Gwenn Sonck**, Executive Director, Flanders-China Chamber of Commerce

09:35 – 10:10 Presentation on Digital Marketing for Industrial Goods in China by **Mr Jonathan Kullman**, Founder & CEO of NBH

10:10 – 10:30 Q&A Session

Practical Information

Date: 21 May 2026

Time: 09:30 – 10:30 AM

Location: Online

Participation fee: Members: Free

About the Speaker: Jonathan Kullman, Founder & CEO, NBH

Jonathan Kullman has over 12 years of experience working with digital marketing and international growth, with a strong focus on China as a market.

He is the **Founder and CEO of NBH**, a digital marketing agency established in 2014, **helping European companies grow in China**. With teams in Europe and Shanghai, NBH supports industrial B2B companies with strategy, lead generation, and digital execution across China's key platforms.

[SUBSCRIBE HERE](#)

Webinar: AI & IP: Protecting Innovation for European SMEs in China 27 May 2026, 10 AM



The Flanders-China Chamber of Commerce is organizing a webinar on **AI & IP: Protecting Innovation for European SMEs in China**, taking place on 27 May 2026 at 09h30 CEST.

As **artificial intelligence** continues to reshape **innovation** and **business strategies**, European SMEs operating in or with China are facing new challenges in protecting their **intellectual property** and safeguarding the **value generated through AI**.

This webinar will provide **practical insights** into the most common IP issues encountered by European SMEs working with AI in a China-related context, with particular attention to:

- Key **IP risks** linked to AI use in China
- Practical strategies to **protect innovation** and **business value**
- **Best practices** illustrated through real-life case studies
- Common pitfalls and how to **avoid them**

As AI becomes increasingly integrated into **business functions** such as product development, partnerships, data management, and cross-border operations, companies must navigate a complex and evolving landscape of **risks and opportunities** when engaging with China.

This webinar will highlight how European SMEs can effectively protect innovation, maintain **control over key assets**, and manage **risks** when working with Chinese partners or entering the Chinese market.

This session is designed to support the **strategic decision-making** of European SMEs regarding China-related activities, offering practical guidance on how to anticipate and address **IP challenges** at an early stage.

The programme is as follows:

09:30 – 09:35 Introduction by **Ms Gwenn Sonck, Executive Director, Flanders-China Chamber of Commerce**

09:35 – 10:15 Presentation on **AI & IP: Protecting Innovation for European SMEs in China** by **Mr Jari Vepsäläinen, Chairman, Fintrade-Mercer Group**

10:15 – 10:30 Q&A Session

Practical Information

Date: **27 May 2026**

Time: **09:30 – 10:30 CEST**

Location: **Online**

About the speaker

Mr Jari Vepsäläinen is Chairman of Fintrade-Mercer Group. He is a China-trained attorney and has been actively involved as a strategic investment advisor and corporate lawyer in the People's Republic of China for more than 36 years.

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PAST EVENTS

Webinar: China AI Regulation in Practice: What European Companies Need to Know in 2026 – 27 April 2026

Webinar: China AI regulations in practice

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200 members – large companies and SME's

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Agenda

- I Part I Why China AI regulation matters now for European businesses (第1-4页)
- II Part II A simple 4-question framework and a China-EU lens (第5-6页)
- III Part III The key rules and regulatory levers in practice (Slide 7-10) (第7-10页)
- IV Part IV Where companies usually stumble: scenarios, cases and reminders (第11-13页)
- V Part V What management should do next (Slide 14) (第14页)
- VI Part VI Summary (Slide 15-16) (第15-16页)
- VII Q&A (Slide 17) (第17页)

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FANGBEN LAW FIRM

The Flanders-China Chamber of Commerce organized a webinar on **China AI Regulation in Practice: What European Companies Need to Know in 2026** on April 27, 2026.

Ms. Gwenn Sonck, Executive Director, Flanders-China Chamber of Commerce, introduced the speaker, **Mr. Winston Jin**, who is based in Shanghai and joined the webinar from New York. Mr. Jin is the Senior Partner at Fangben Law Firm which has recently become a structural partner of the Flanders-China Chamber of Commerce (FCCC). Fangben Law Firm is a full-service Chinese law firm headquartered in Shanghai with over 15 branches across China, providing legal services in corporate law, foreign investment, M&A, international trade and dispute resolution and with extensive experience supporting foreign companies investing and operating in China. In 2026, Fangben was recognized by Corporate International Magazine, a UK-based international business publication, focused on legal, financial and corporate advisory sectors as International Business Law Firm of the Year in China for 2026. Mr. Winston Jin has been practicing law since 1986 and is a highly experienced international business lawyer and arbitrator. He advises European-American companies operating in China and many Belgian companies, including a number of FCCC member companies such as Picanol, Vyncke, Televic and so on. Since 2005, he has also acted as an arbitrator for major Chinese arbitration institutions, including CIETAC and the Shanghai International Economic and Trade Commission, Arbitration Commission. His expertise covers international business law, foreign direct investment, cross-border M&A, international trade, construction projects and technology licensing and IP.

China has emerged as a global leader in AI, both in deployment and in innovation. Recent analyses estimate that China accounts for around 60% to 70% of all AI-related patents applications worldwide, far ahead of any other country. In 2024 alone, Chinese investors filed roughly 300,000 AI patent applications compared to about 67,000 in the United States, which ranks second. At the same time, China is no longer discussing AI at the level of a national strategy. It is now actively implementing a practical and comprehensive regulatory framework that directly affects business operations.

Mr Winston Jin, Lawyer and Partner, Fangben Law Office, gave a presentation on **China AI Regulation in Practice: What European Companies Need to Know in 2026. Why does China AI regulation matters now?** In early in 2017, the People's Republic of China set forth AI as its national strategy. It is one of the few countries that have done so. The Chinese National Strategy 2017 clearly stated that qualitatively, China would like be the hub for AI technology and committed that the core industrial value of AI would reach up to CNY1 trillion. Belgian business people could be part of it and potentially be successful. The main powers trying to manage AI by means of lawmaking are the U.S., EU, China and the UK. Belgium, in Tier 2 globally for AI applications, has a huge hope and big potential.

China has already a very large industrial value in AI, but so far due to the legal barriers on the Chinese and EU sides, has not yet really managed to get into Belgium or the EU, but there is potential. If Chinese major players want

to penetrate into Belgium and the EU, they will need a local partner instead of doing business only themselves. AI for both the EU, Belgium, and China does not care about the boundaries anymore. The extraterritorial effects have already been imposed by GDPR years ago. The EU is the pioneer in protecting data rights and privacy. The last three to four years, China issued a lot of technical regulations. If your services would reach Chinese customers, then you may trigger filing, registration, and labeling. And when China-related data are moving overseas, you can easily trigger it. For example, if a Belgian company has a subsidiary 100% controlled in China, the Belgian HR Director is not entitled to request or instruct the HR Director in China to send all employee personal data. The HR Director in China will have to neutralize a lot of sensitive personal information before sending it to Belgium.

It is very important for Belgian business people to know who owns the legal and operational risks in relation to China, where there are life cycle liabilities and responsibilities. Although EU and Chinese lawmaking have quite a lot of things in common, they are widely different. For the same technology of AI, there is a widely different regulatory logic. **On the EU side, you focus on risk classification and rights protection, while China focusses on social stability and the contents that every platform player in China or in relation to China has.** If an AI solution is EU-compliant, this does not mean that it is also China-cleared and vice-versa. The Chinese AI regulation is governed by a lot of sophisticated technical lawmaking such as algorithm recommendation rules; deep cynicism rules; interim measures for AI services; and laboring measures. It is much more complicated than the EU measures and practices. China has no uniform AI law, but a lot of regulations, and several provinces and special cities like Shenzhen even have their own lawmaking.

A Q&A session concluded the webinar.

In-person Strategy Session: Learning to ride the dragon in 2026: How to Deal with the new dominant China – 5 May 2026 – Ghent



The Flanders-China Chamber of Commerce is organizing an in-person strategy session on “Learning to Ride the Dragon in 2026: How to Deal with the New Dominant China.” with Mr. Philippe Snel, Founder and Lawyer at DaWo Law Firm Shanghai. The event took place in Ghent on May 5, 2026.

A detailed report will follow next week.

ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED BY FCCC

Hybrid Food Fair China – 13 & 15 October, 2026 – Shanghai & Beijing

Present your products to buyers in Shanghai and Beijing and participate in the **Hybrid Food Fair organized by the Flanders Investment & Trade offices in Shanghai (13 October) and Beijing (15 October)**. You can choose to present your products yourself or have them presented by our FIT-teams.

Target sector: Food & beverage

Target market: China-EU

For whom?: Units of companies and organizations in the Flemish Region.

Where: Shanghai & Beijing, China-EU

When: 13 to 15 October 2026

Why participate? Many Chinese buyers and importers in the food sector are looking forward to finding new suppliers and discovering new products and trends in the sector. Are you interested in presenting your products in China in an accessible way? That's perfect! Flanders Investment & Trade is happy to match the needs of buyers with your export plans and is organizing a hybrid networking day in Shanghai on October 13 and in Beijing on October 16 to this end!

Our offer: Both FIT offices have strong contacts in the food sector with importers/distributors, e-commerce players, and department store chains. We will invite these buyers to a hybrid food fair where they can get acquainted with and taste the products of Flemish companies. After the hybrid food fair, we will provide you with a personalized report containing all the contact details of the interested buyer(s), after which you can contact them. If desired, FIT can support you in this.

Register before May 31. After registration, you will receive an email with practical information and a booking link to schedule an online intake interview with the Flemish Economic Representative in Beijing and/or Shanghai.

Please note: your participation can only be confirmed after this intake interview.

You will provide FIT-Shanghai and FIT-Beijing with product samples for the tasting during the hybrid food fair. To ensure your products are received on time, we recommend sending your samples before September 10. More information on this will follow after your participation has been approved. Based on your profile, our teams in China will look for potential buyers.

Presentation of your company and products by our colleagues in Shanghai and Beijing to Chinese buyers during the: Hybrid Food Fair Shanghai October 13; Hybrid Food Fair Beijing October 15.

Your products will be presented in a professional manner. After the tasting, we will provide you with a personalized report containing all the contact details of the interested buyer(s), after which you can contact them. If desired, FIT can support you in this. If you wish, and after consultation with our offices in Shanghai and Beijing, you can attend in person to present your products (max. 1 representative / company). We will provide you with more information about the program, digital catalog, samples, and marketing materials after your participation has been approved.

You can check which tariffs and taxes are levied on your products via [Access2Markets](#). Please check whether your products are subject to specific restrictions for importing into the Chinese market before registering for this promotion.

For logistical reasons, participation with frozen products is not possible, unless these products are already present in China.

Prices:

Hybrid Food Fair Shanghai October 13

First participant: €400.00

Additional participants: €200.00

Hybrid Food Fair Beijing October 15

First participant: €400.00

Additional participants: €200.00

In addition to this participation fee, you are responsible for the costs of shipping your samples.

Any questions?

Contact Frederic Deprez: E: frederic.deprez@fitagency.be T: +32 2 504 87 48

6th Innovation Fair Sino-Euro Business Development Conference – October 26-30 – Jiangsu province



Welcome to Innovation Fair – Supporting Innovators in China since 2018

Building on the success of previous editions, the 6th Innovation Fair is scheduled to take place from 26–30 October 2026. The fair promotes international business development, uncovers sourcing opportunities, and provides direct access to the Chinese market, while also offering opportunities to represent and distribute products and services of Chinese businesses in Europe. Showcase your products, pitch your ideas, and connect with the right partners through curated, industry-focused matchmaking. Join us to connect, collaborate, and create new possibilities for your business.

Target participants/industry: Advanced manufacturing; artificial intelligence; environment & new energy; life science & medtech; digital service & software; education & training; mobility; and import & export.

Benefits & cost of participation:

Benefits

- Travel 1x Eco Class Ticket (roundtrip)
- Airport Pickup and Drop-off
- Transportation, Hotel, and Meals Throughout the Event
- Exhibitor Booth 9 m2 (incl. backdrop & basic facilities)
- Networking Opportunity
- Local Company Discovery Tour

Registration Fees

- Standard Rate: €1,480 (valid by 30 June)
- Late Registration: €1,680 (valid by 31 August)
- Group Rate: €3,600 (for 3 people)

Optional Add-Ons

- Pre-event Matchmaking Services: starting from €1,000
- Post-event Follow-Up Support: starting from €1,000
- Larger / Joint Booths: upon request
- Tailored Proposals: upon request

How to participate:

1. Registering following the QR code.
2. Complete your company descriptions and your target Chinese counterparts.
3. Payment instructions will be sent via email after we confirm your registration.

Website: <http://innovationfair.mikecrm.com/aMNrQ1J>



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FOREIGN TRADE

Chinese exports moving up the value chain



For decades, the global image of Chinese trade was synonymous with massive container ships loaded with footwear, bags and furniture. However, a profound structural shift is under way. Having conquered the world of physical goods, China is now rapidly ascending the industrial chain as an emerging exporter of manufacturing technology. In 2025, the country's exports of telecoms, computer and information services reached CNY808 billion, marking a robust 13% year-on-year increase. It far outpaced export growth in traditional goods, such as footwear, which fell 9% to USD46 billion in the same period, or handbags and suitcases, which saw a collective export decline of 13% to USD30 billion, according to official data. "China's new trade front with the world is the export of services such as information and communication technology, construction management, engineering services, data analytics and research and development," wrote Bank of America Chief Market Strategist Joseph Quinlan in an article published recently in the Financial Times.

Guangzhou, Guangdong province-based **iRootech** is among the growing number of Chinese companies that export its industrial computer vision and artificial intelligence technology. It secured its first foreign client, German concrete machinery maker Putzmeister, in 2017, and has since worked with thousands of companies overseas, said Global Business Manager Xiao Tingting. It developed a maintenance platform that can remotely manage concrete equipment and predict future

malfunctions using artificial intelligence (AI). As a result, it helped the German firm, which does business in more than 30 countries, reduce travel costs related to after-sales service by 25%. "We not only help our clients use industrial AI to manage their equipment more intelligently, we also help them identify an entirely new revenue source," Xiao said, referring to a 10% revenue increase that was achieved when Putzmeister gave customers the option of paying for the remote monitoring service.

Founded in 2016 and backed by China's heavy equipment leader Sany Group, iRootech moved its headquarters to Guangzhou from Changsha, the capital of the Hunan province, two years later. "Our development has benefited from the systematic support of Guangdong province's manufacturing foundation," iRootech said. Guangdong has long been China's manufacturing hub, where revenues from major industrial enterprises have topped all other Chinese provinces for years. iRootech saw "a significant increase" in overseas orders in 2023, which accounted for more than half of the company's total contract value, Xiao told Xinhua News Agency in 2024. Without offering an updated breakdown on its international orders, Xiao told the South China Morning Post that the firm's footprint now covered more than 100 markets mainly in the Asia-Pacific, Europe, North America and the Middle East.

There have been similar cases. **German pump and valve producer KSB has a subsidiary in China, which develops AI-powered manufacturing technology**, that is now being "reverse exported" to Germany, according to Chinese media Yicai. The Chinese subsidiary has developed a machine failure testing system, which has completed EU standard certification. The company planned to bring the product to the German market in the second half of this year, said He Jun, Regional Executive Officer of KSB Group Asia North, according to Yicai. Chinese AI vision developer Hefei Taihe Intelligent applies deep learning to the sorting of nuts. Showcasing its technology at the Spring session of the Canton Fair, China's landmark bi-annual trade fair, the company received "a lot of inquiries from visitors from major nut-producing regions, such as India and Africa", said Public Relations Director Hu Xingxing.

At the Canton Fair, over one third of the exhibiting companies had transitioned from merely "exporting

products” to “exporting products plus services”, according to estimates by Chinese newspaper 21st Century Business Herald. In terms of exporting digitally delivered services, China ranked sixth last year, up from 11th a

decade earlier, overtaking countries like Japan, France and Switzerland, according to the World Trade Organization (WTO), as reported by the South China Morning Post.

MANUFACTURING

The West must recalibrate as China’s manufacturing rise is here to stay



David Dodwell

+ FOLLOW

David Dodwell is CEO of the trade policy and international relations consultancy Strategic Access. His work focuses on developments and challenges facing the Asia-Pacific over the past four decades.

The change in China’s manufacturing is structural and the West must recalibrate as protectionism will only weaken long-term growth, argues David Dodwell, CEO of Strategic Access, in an opinion piece in the South China Morning Post. If the “China shock” of the early 2000s was about China catching up, then **China Shock 2.0 is about the country redefining the boundaries of what is economically possible across manufacturing sectors**, according to Columbia University professor Adam Tooze. Amid complaints about the trade and industrial policies accelerating China’s rise in many sectors – including aviation, space, artificial intelligence (AI), telecoms, microprocessors, robotics, nuclear and fusion power, quantum computing, materials sciences, biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, solar power and batteries – Tooze offers a simple warning: **“The rise of China is a long-term trend to which the West must adjust.”**

“The New Global Imbalances”, a report by the Center for Economic Policy Research (CEPR), is similarly blunt: “Failure to acknowledge the structural nature of these changes, and excessive emphasis on protection, will undermine long-term growth for all.” Tooze makes clear that the shock has its roots as much in the United States as in China. He distills **four “truly radical forces” that define the 2.0 moment**: U.S. President Donald Trump’s “trade policy rampage”, the “new and extraordinary incontinence” of U.S. fiscal policy; the AI boom; and the “gear-shift” in Chinese economic policy. Given that the China-shock narrative has been simmering for almost three decades, both Tooze and the CEPR ask three questions.

Why care? Why now? And what is to be done?

Many who say they care have built their anxieties on weak, and sometimes flagrantly false, foundations. Foremost is the **“pesky foreigner” prejudice** found in every continent: that plucky, innovative and efficient local companies face unscrupulous, corrupt foreign competitors. These companies cut corners and use low-quality materials

to undercut local companies’ high-quality products. They collude with their governments to block access to their own markets. As Chinese companies export increasingly high-quality goods at “impossibly” low prices, the pesky foreigner thesis says their competitiveness can only come from corrupt practices. Many companies complain that China commits a wide range of unfair practices, ranging from tariffs and intellectual property theft to industrial espionage, subsidies and overproduction, enabling large-scale dumping. There are undoubtedly Chinese companies that commit such sins, but the evidence that they are any worse than companies in Europe or the U.S. is open to question. Some see subsidies as one of China’s graver sins, but subsidies are a bit like cholesterol – they can be good or bad. And the evidence of recent decades has been that China’s subsidy policies have been more effective and successful than most. Distinctively, China’s subsidies are persistent, long term and strategic rather than temporary interventions, focused on specific key sectors. The success and failings of subsidy strategies have created as many problems for China’s companies as for embattled U.S. and European manufacturers. Local firms sit at the heart of an overproduction crisis that has generated “involution” across the country – the ruthless competition and cost-cutting linked to thousands of zombie companies and profitless growth for many survivors.

Why now? This has much to do with what Tooze calls **“the manifest disintegration of coherent political decision-making in Washington”**. This has not only created chaos and competitive pressures for companies worldwide; it has also diverted much of China’s trade away from the U.S., generating additional pressure on European companies. The property recession in China, coupled with low household consumption, has forced many Chinese companies to target openings in the richer and more profitable Western markets. These various forces have, on one hand, radically altered the balance of global economic power and, on the other, created what many believe to be an existential challenge for Europe’s manufacturing economy.

So, what’s to be done? First, engaging the U.S. to find a globally satisfactory solution is pointless. Second, Beijing is already moving to tackle the involution problem. As CEPR’s economists summarize: “The ‘involution’/overcapacity’ situation is unsustainable. Exit of unprofitable firms is inevitable. Consolidation or exit will likely be not only tolerated but promoted.” Third, a policy response in Europe is taking shape. The recently drafted Industrial Accelerator Act intends to pressure Chinese companies to share

technology, train workers and buy components locally. Initial engagement is likely to come from Spain, Germany, Hungary and Serbia, which appear more open to Chinese investors.

Globally, **economists at Harvard's Kennedy School suggest four responses**: act in unison with other countries; invest strategically in key new fields; choose the battles Western economies can win and those the West

cannot afford to lose; and protect jobs. Perhaps in addition, Western companies should remind themselves that the China shock is focused almost entirely on manufacturing, so building on strengths in services should be a priority. And finally, they should remind themselves of the impossible naivety of imagining that reintegrating a fast-rising Chinese economy of 1.4 billion people into the global economy would be simple, David Dodwell concludes in the South China Morning Post.

HIGH-TECH

Suppliers pivot from smartphones to humanoid robots



China's smartphone and electronics supply chain is adapting its expertise to support the country's fledgling but fast-growing humanoid robotics industry, as component suppliers seek new growth beyond a slowing mobile market. The sector received a glimpse of that crossover after Honor's humanoid robot D1, a dark-horse entrant from the smartphone maker, won Beijing's recent robot half-marathon, beating established Chinese robotics names such as Unitree. Honor entered the humanoid robotics sector only last year. Its robot, Lightning, beat the human world record by more than six minutes. After the race, Honor engineer Yao Bin told Chinese media outlet ThePaper.cn that one reason for the win was **the transfer of smartphone cooling technology to robots**, which kept the motor cool after running 21 km.

Major smartphone suppliers including Lingyi iTech, Lens Technology and AAC Technologies supplied structural components for Honor's D1. Smartphone and electronics component suppliers are targeting **a robotics market that is moving towards mass production and large-scale deployment**. The humanoid robotics market was projected to exceed 100,000 units by 2027, up sixfold from 16,000 units in 2025, with logistics, manufacturing and automotive applications expected to account for 72% of installations, according to Counterpoint Research. That expansion comes as the smartphone market slowed amid a memory chip shortage. **Global smartphone shipments are forecast to fall 12.9% in 2026**, to 1.12 billion units, the

industry's largest decline on record, according to IDC.

"Everyone is looking for a new growth curve," said Ivan Lam, Senior Analyst at Counterpoint Research. "And since there is plenty of room for the reuse of the technology and production capacity, why wouldn't they use it?" Lam said there was significant technological overlap between smartphones and robots, including precision assembly for camera modules, micro-electromechanical systems sensors, high-density batteries and haptic tuning for tactile motors. "These have already been scaled to maturity within the smartphone supply chain," Lam said. "They fit closely with the requirements for robotic joint sensing and end-effectors, with very similar standards for precision manufacturing."

Other major smartphone suppliers have also begun securing hefty orders from robotics clients. **Everwin Precision**, a Shenzhen-based component supplier to the consumer electronics and electric vehicle industries, delivered 690,000 units of precision parts to humanoid robot clients in 2025, generating CNY100 million in sales, according to its annual report. The segment accounted for less than 1% of Everwin's total revenue in 2025, when nearly two-thirds of sales came from consumer electronics. Even so, the company expects humanoid robotics to become its next growth driver.

Lingyi iTech, a key Apple supplier, had reportedly secured an order from AgiBot, one of China's leading humanoid robotics companies, to supply structural components for more than 10,000 robots. Lingyi had announced a major push into humanoid robotics, aiming to become one of the top three suppliers of embodied-intelligence hardware. The company had supplied "several thousand" units of hardware and assembly services to major humanoid robotics firms, according to its 2025 annual report. Last September, Lingyi and AgiBot formed a joint venture focused on humanoid robot development and assembly, with the Apple supplier holding an 80% stake. Lingyi also opened a robotics factory in Beijing, aiming to increase capacity from 10,000 units this year to 20,000 in 2027 and 500,000 by 2030. Honor is not alone in trying to apply smartphone know-how to robotics. Xiaomi has also made an aggressive move into the sector, deploying self-developed humanoid robots for car production.

“Essentially, this is more of an extension of existing capacity and expertise, rather than a ‘pivot’,” Lam said. But the transition had practical challenges, starting with error tolerance, he added. **“Robotics demands far higher precision and reliability than smartphones,”** which directly impacts the difficulty of moving from research and development to mass production,” Lam said. At a recent robotics trade fair in Shenzhen, the shift was already visible. At the booth of **Seavo Technology**, a motherboard supplier, manager Zhang Qifu fielded a steady stream of

visitors asking how the company’s mainboards could support reasoning and motion control in robot development. The 33-year-old company, which serves sectors ranging from healthcare to retail, has quickly retooled for embodied intelligence and now has more than 200 robotics clients. “Robotics is currently a very small part of our business, but now everyone is rushing to take a slice of it,” Zhang said at the Fair of AI and Robotics Plus in late April, the South China Morning Post reports.

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CHINA NEWS ROUND-UP

Three Chinese AI firms make it into Time Magazine’s first AI A-list

Three Chinese companies – Alibaba Group Holding, ByteDance and Zhipu AI – have been named among Time Magazine’s “10 Most Influential AI Companies of 2026”, marking the first time the publication has introduced an artificial intelligence-specific sub-list under its broader Time100 Most Influential Companies ranking. Of the remaining seven companies on the list, six are based in the U.S., while France’s Mistral AI is the only European representative. The launch of a dedicated AI ranking underscores how AI has moved beyond hype to become a defining force in the global economy, with far-reaching implications for technological development, productivity and infrastructure investment.

U.S. players including OpenAI, Alphabet, Amazon, Meta Platforms and Anthropic continue to dominate in scale, funding and deployment, with billions of dollars flowing into model development and computing infrastructure. Against that backdrop, the three Chinese firms have expanded rapidly through distinct strategies – Alibaba and Zhipu AI have emphasized open-source models to drive adoption, while ByteDance has focused on scaling consumer-facing applications. Time said Alibaba had emerged as a major global force in AI through its open-source push, with its Qwen family of models surpassing 1 billion downloads and gaining adoption among international companies including Airbnb.

“In less than three years, Chinese tech giant Alibaba has become a dominant force in open-source AI,” the magazine said. Zhipu AI, meanwhile, has also gained attention for its open-source strategy. The Beijing-based company became the first Chinese large language model developer to go public, debuting on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange in January after raising USD558 million in an initial public offering (IPO). By February, it unveiled its GLM-5 model under an open-source license. The model had outperformed rivals such as Google’s Gemini 3 Pro on

some benchmarks and was approaching the capabilities of Anthropic’s Claude Opus 4.5 and OpenAI’s GPT-5.2 in coding and agent tasks, according to Time. “Zhipu’s models already power more than 4 million enterprise users and developers from 218 countries and regions,” Time Magazine said. ByteDance has focused on consumer-scale adoption, pushing AI into the mainstream through its Doubao assistant, which reached 100 million daily active users during the Lunar New Year holiday – an early example of mass adoption at that scale.

The list highlights a growing divergence in approach: Chinese firms have leaned towards open-source models to drive adoption and reduce costs, while U.S. companies have largely prioritized closed, vertically integrated ecosystems spanning models, cloud infrastructure and applications, the South China Morning Post reports.

President Xi calls to strengthen basic research

President Xi Jinping has called for greater efforts and more solid measures to strengthen basic research, enhance China’s capacity for original innovation, and further solidify the foundation for building the nation’s strength in science and technology. Global technological competition is increasingly focusing on fundamental cutting-edge fields, he said, adding that the importance of developing original and groundbreaking innovations is becoming more prominent. China has been paying greater attention to boosting basic research in recent years, in order to realize the nation’s scientific and technological self-reliance and strength amid intensifying global competition. The new whole-nation innovation model has paid dividends, enabling the country to funnel vast resources into key sectors such as artificial intelligence (AI), quantum technologies and semiconductors.

While addressing a symposium in Shanghai, President Xi

underlined the need for coordinated planning and top-level design to optimize the systematic layout of basic research, and to further identify the main directions and key areas of basic research. It is important to strengthen the leading role of national research institutions and high-level research universities as well as encourage and regulate the development of new types of research. Xi highlighted the importance of **promoting the deep integration of industry and academia, led by enterprises**, thereby linking the innovation chain – from basic research to application development – until research achievements are fully transformed into industrial applications.

President Xi said that the nation will allocate a greater proportion of its science and technology expenditures toward basic research. This year's Government Work Report indicates a strategic shift in funding for basic research. China's total R&D investment exceeded CNY3.92 trillion in 2025, accounting for 2.8% of its GDP. **Basic research funding last year hit nearly CNY280 billion, accounting for 7.08% of total R&D spending**, making it the first time the funding surpassed the 7% threshold. Government officials noted that investing in basic research is vital for addressing both current and future challenges, particularly in fields such as renewable energy, AI, biotechnology and materials science.

Analysts said this strategic shift underscores a commitment to building a robust research ecosystem that supports not only academic research, but also promotes collaboration between universities, research institutions and the private sector, the China Daily reports.

China submits formal complaint over the EU's Industrial Accelerator Act

China has formally submitted a complaint to the European Commission (EC) over the European Union's proposed Industrial Accelerator Act, warning that the legislation would create "serious investment barriers and institutional discrimination" against Chinese companies, and vowing countermeasures. The proposed act represents a serious departure from World Trade Organization (WTO) rules, a discriminatory blow to foreign investors, and a self-defeating strategy that will ultimately harm Europe's own interests. The act imposes numerous restrictive requirements on foreign investment in four emerging strategic sectors – batteries, electric vehicles, photovoltaics and critical raw materials – while introducing "EU origin" exclusivity clauses in public procurement and support policies, a spokesperson with the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) said. The Ministry expressed China's formal position and grave concerns over the draft law.

China has called on the EU to remove discriminatory requirements against foreign investors, local content mandates, compulsory transfers of intellectual property and technology, and restrictions on public procurement, the spokesperson added. China will closely follow the legislative process and stands ready to engage in dialogue and communication with the EU. However, the spokesperson cautioned that if the EU ignores China's suggestions and insists on pushing the legislation through, thereby harming the interests of Chinese companies,

China will have to take countermeasures.

Zhou Mi, Senior Researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said **the core problem with the act is** not its ambition to streamline approvals – measures that could benefit all manufacturers equally – but **its explicit targeting of foreign investors**. Zhou said the provisions in the act apply exclusively to third-country investors that account for more than 40% of global production capacity in the aforementioned sectors, a threshold that transparently targets China, which leads the world in electric vehicle batteries, solar panels and critical materials processing. "By creating a two-tier system where EU products are systematically favored, the act undermines the rules-based multilateral trading system that Europe itself once championed," Zhou said.

Gao Lingyun, Researcher at the Institute of World Economics and Politics, said that another damaging aspect of the act is its disruption of global supply chains. In the EV battery sector, for example, European automakers rely on cost-effective, high-performance batteries from China based on market principles. Forcing public procurement and support schemes to favor "EU Origin" batteries will artificially constrain supply, raise costs for European automakers and ultimately burden European consumers with higher prices, Gao added. Major trading partners including the U.S., Japan and the UK have also voiced objections to the act's protectionist tilt. Even within the EU, the act has faced strong opposition from free-trade-oriented member states such as Sweden and Ireland, as well as from industry groups, the China Daily reports.

Atlas Copco opens new Power Technique Wuxi Campus

Atlas Copco Greater China has inaugurated its new Power Technique Wuxi Campus in Jiangsu province. Beginning with exports to China in the 1920s, the group has been present in the Chinese market for decades, with its trading company launched in Hong Kong in the 1980s and the first production site established in Wuxi in 1994. Staying committed to the dynamic market, the company moved locations eight times in Wuxi, each time expanding its presence. Currently, the group has 22 factories and 9,000 employees across China, with its local business units covering sales, service and manufacturing. Focusing on four main business areas, namely air compressors, vacuum solutions, industrial automated tools and on-site power solutions, the company develops equipment that supplies energy in the form of air or gas compression in a wide range of industries such as food and beverage, marine, electronics and many others.

Alain Lefranc, Vice President Atlas Copco Greater China, noted that the upgraded campus marks a leap forward and an exciting milestone for the group in China, and is testament to its ongoing commitment to innovation, growth and partnership in this dynamic market. It stands as a high-tech hub for innovation and production, featuring expanded and automated logistics, more production capacity, state-of-the-art laboratories and advanced testing facilities. "This campus enables us to serve more market functions and customer needs. It covers extensive

complexity and will serve both the Chinese and global markets,” said Lefranc.

He explained that the upgraded testing facility could expose the company's products to many different climate situations in China such as freezing and high temperatures, different air pressure at high altitudes, humidity and more. “This ensures that any product we develop for China can also fulfill the working environment in the rest of the world, and we must do this locally, as our development team needs immediate feedback from testing,” he added, describing the campus as a “bridge” that connects local R&D activities with the group's global innovation network.

The global landscape is rapidly changing, bringing growing concerns over energy security and the urgent need to reduce dependence on traditional energy sources. Lefranc shared that Atlas Copco Power Technique solutions, many of which will be developed or manufactured at the new campus, are designed to help Chinese industrial customers improve their energy efficiency and accelerate the transition toward cleaner, more reliable energy alternatives. As a long-term player in China, Lefranc is impressed by the speed, curiosity, experimental spirit, appetite for taking risks, and service excellence in this market. The group is getting ready for its next growth phase driven by the new key plan, where he expects more “sophisticated” customer demands. “We must anticipate what comes next and be ready because **China moves fast. We have no time to be late**,” Lefranc said, as reported by the China Daily.

AI token use shows explosive growth in China

China's appetite for artificial intelligence data is exploding at a scale that is beginning to reshape the economy, with daily token usage soaring from just over 1 trillion at the start of 2025 to 100 trillion by year-end, showing exponential growth. The figure rose further to 140 trillion by March this year, according to Liu Liehong, Director of the National Data Administration (NDA), underscoring the accelerating value of data as a production factor and the rapid emergence of new forms of the “intelligent economy”. The figures, disclosed at the opening of the 9th Digital China Summit in Fuzhou, Fujian province, reflect not only rising demand for AI services but also the emergence of what officials describe as the token economy, where computing activity becomes measurable, tradable and increasingly central to economic output.

China generated 52.26 zettabytes of data in 2025, up 27.28% from a year earlier, with AI and system software accounting for 26.92 zettabytes – overtaking internet-of-things (IoT) sensing data for the first time. The shift highlights a structural pivot from passive data collection to AI-driven data creation. “Data is no longer just fuel for training models. It has become a core production factor driving iteration and real-world deployment,” Liu said, pointing to applications across healthcare, finance, manufacturing and urban governance. A notable inflection point has emerged in how data is used. Of the 199.48 exabytes deployed for AI training and inference in 2025, inference data – generated when models are actively used

– exceeded training data for the first time, reaching 101.34 exabytes. The trend suggests **China's AI industry is moving beyond model building toward large-scale commercialization**. Industry experts said the rapid scaling of token usage could have far-reaching implications, from pricing models for AI services to global competition over data resources.

As AI systems shift from generating content to executing decisions – and from digital environments into the physical world – the volume, variety and velocity of data are expected to accelerate further, cementing data as a central pillar of economic growth in the AI era. Behind the numbers, a new layer of industrial infrastructure is also taking shape.

Fujian-based Joyful Embodied is building what it describes as a large-scale robotic data collection facility, designed to operate around the clock capturing high-precision industrial data. Using arrays of cameras and sensors, robots replicate and record complex physical tasks, converting them into structured datasets for training embodied AI systems. Chen Yishi, President of Joyful Embodied, said its automated pipelines, combining perception, computation and execution, can achieve data collection efficiency of up to 95%, significantly above industry norms. The goal is to standardize data generation and improve the usability and transferability of datasets across applications, the China Daily reports.

Ant International's payment network to become core of AI commerce

DeepSeek's Ant International, the overseas spin-off of Chinese fintech Ant Group, has connected more than 150 million merchants with over 2 billion consumer accounts around the world, as it positions its payments network as core infrastructure for the emerging AI commerce economy. The figures, disclosed at the company's MoMents 2026 forum in Kuala Lumpur, underscore the scale Ant is seeking to leverage amid the rising adoption of artificial intelligence agents.

Ant International said its network supported more than 300 payment methods across 220 markets and processes over 20 million transactions a day on average, and it was seeking to broaden its market reach in Asia, Latin America and Europe, the Middle East and Africa. “New models of financial interoperability and AI commerce give us powerful tools to help global companies as well as mom-and-pop shops to increase resilience and expand revenue streams,” Ant International CEO Peng Yang said in a news release.

At the event, the company unveiled its open-sourced Agentic Mobile Protocol, which is designed to enable AI agents to connect securely with digital wallets, banking apps and other mobile interfaces. The framework aims **to move beyond traditional card-based systems towards a mobile- and AI-native payments layer**. Ant Group rolled out a business-facing AI payment processing product through Alipay, allowing merchants – including small operators and “one-person companies” – to receive payments automatically when AI agents purchase their services. The tool is designed to support pay-per-use models and reduce the need for merchants to build their

own payments infrastructure. In September, Alipay launched its consumer-facing AI Pay product, enabling transactions through AI-driven interfaces such as Alibaba Cloud's Qwen app, Luckin Coffee's virtual assistant and smart glasses from brands like Rokid. The company said the service surpassed 100 million users in February and processed more than 120 million transactions in one week that month.

The initiatives reflect a broader push to capture the transaction layer of AI commerce, as competition intensifies among technology and payments players, including OpenAI, Stripe and Google, as well as card networks Visa and Mastercard, the South China Morning Post reports.

China's home-grown software advances, as HarmonyOS installed on 55 million phones

China's home-grown software and operating systems like Huawei Technologies' HarmonyOS are gaining traction. More than 55 million smartphones ran on the HarmonyOS mobile platform as of the end of March, according to Ke Jixin, Vice Minister of Industry and Information Technology. "Domestic software like operating systems and databases has been improving steadily," Ke said at a press conference. "We have seen a transformative shift in the experience of using domestic software compared to a few years ago, as they become smoother and easier to use." HarmonyOS has seen rapid adoption in the past few years on the back of Huawei's comeback in the smartphone market. It surpassed Apple iOS in China in late 2024, and in early 2025 was only behind Android as the second-largest operating system in the market, according to Counterpoint. However, it faced renewed competition in the fourth quarter of 2025 amid the strong local reception of the iPhone 17. HarmonyOS, holding a 16% market share in China, was pushed to third place by iOS with 22%, while Android maintained its lead with 61% of the market in the period.

HarmonyOS, Huawei's proprietary, closed-source operating system, is built on the open-source OpenHarmony project. Huawei launched HarmonyOS as an Android alternative for the Chinese market in August 2019, just months after the U.S. government added the company to a trade blacklist that blocked it from buying U.S.-origin technologies without Washington's approval. HarmonyOS has been hailed as an example of China's efforts in domestic software independence. At the press conference, Ke also noted that AI models such as Qwen by Alibaba Group Holding and HY by Tencent Holdings held leading positions in global open-source communities, and the latest DeepSeek V4 model had brought the benefits of artificial intelligence to a wider audience. Looking forward, Ke said the Ministry would accelerate the integration of AI with software to serve various industries and further bolster the development of the open-source ecosystem, the South China Morning Post reports.

Chinese LLM firms using domestic chips, speeding up AI growth

Chinese large-language model (LLM) companies are adapting domestic computing power chips, a move that analysts said will accelerate the development of the artificial intelligence (AI) industry ecosystem. Chinese tech company Xiaomi released and open-sourced its MiMo-V2.5-Pro, while Chinese Graphic Processing Unit (GPU) maker MetaX announced that it had completed Day Zero ultra-fast adaptation of the model, allowing it to run smoothly on its Xiyun C-series GPU platform. "This adaptation marks a significant step forward in the collaborative development of domestic computing power and Chinese LLMs, jointly promoting the openness and prosperity of the global AI ecosystem," MetaX noted. Chinese chip company Enflame said that it had also synchronously completed Day Zero ultra-fast adaptation for MiMo-V2.5-Pro, becoming one of the first domestic computing power vendors to achieve compatibility. Enflame noted that the adaptation further strengthens the foundational infrastructure for domestic AI computing power. Leveraging independently developed integrated software and hardware capabilities, it enables more efficient deployment of Chinese LLMs, provides strong support for the large-scale application of domestic AI, and jointly promotes the open integration and prosperous development of the global AI ecosystem.

The rapid ecosystem response highlights the accelerating momentum in China's domestic AI stack. On April 24, DeepSeek released its highly anticipated V4 series and achieved deep adaptation with Huawei's Ascend ecosystem, with Huawei announcing full support across its Ascend supernode product line for high-performance inference. This is not an isolated case. In recent months, many leading Chinese LLMs have taken proactive steps to deeply integrate with domestic computing hardware, forming a clear trend of close model-chip collaboration. For example, Step 3.5 Flash from StepFun was promptly adapted by multiple top chip vendors including Huawei Ascend, MetaX and Biren Tech. Similarly, models such as Zhipu GLM-5, Alibaba's Qwen series, and Baidu's ERNIE have also achieved broad compatibility with domestic platforms.

"This demonstrates that the training of China's top-tier LLMs can now be fully conducted on domestic computing platforms. Whether in mitigating risks related to computing power supply or achieving cost-effective deployment of LLMs, it holds significant strategic value," Xiang Ligang, Director General of the Zhongguancun Modern Information Consumer Application Industry Technology Alliance, told the Global Times. Xiang noted that it fully showed that pairing domestic LLMs with domestic chips is no longer merely an industry aspiration or vision. It has become a practical reality with full readiness for commercial deployment and large-scale application, the Global Times reports.

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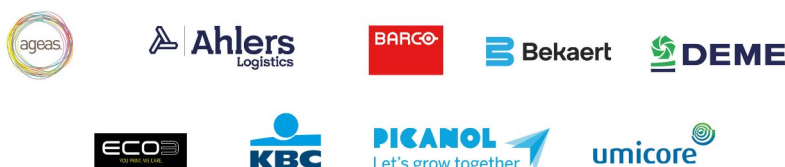
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