

# China Business Weekly

16 June 2026



## FCCC/EUCBA ACTIVITIES

**Webinar: “China: Charting a Course through Turbulent Times”**  
**25 June 2026, 10:00 AM**



The **Flanders-China Chamber of Commerce** is organizing an exclusive webinar on “**China: Charting a Course through Turbulent Times**”. The webinar will take place on **25 June at 10 AM CEST**.

The turbulence of the current geopolitical and geo-economic landscape presents both risks and opportunities for China’s economic outlook. In recent years, resilient exports have helped smooth China’s economic growth amid a persistent real estate correction and sluggish demand at home.

Going forward, China’s exports could benefit from a surge in demand for energy security. However, China also faces increasingly tense trade relationships, mounting risks of supply chain disruptions, rising producer prices, and still weak internal demand. This webinar will discuss these economic challenges and how China is expected to navigate them going forward.

**The programme is as follows:**

**10:00 – 10:05** Introduction by **Ms Gwenn Sonck, Executive Director, Flanders-China Chamber of Commerce**

**10:05 – 10:50** Presentation on **China’s economic outlook and current challenges** by **Ms Allison Mandra, Senior Economist, KBC Bank**

**10:50 – 11:00** Q&A Session

### Practical Information

**Date:** 25 June 2026

**Time:** 10:00 – 11:00 AM

**Location:** Online

**Participation fee:**

**Members:** Free

**Non-Members:** Free

**About the Speaker:**

**Allison Mandra** is a **Senior Economist at KBC Group** with expertise in macroeconomic policy, financial market analysis and global economic developments. Her research focuses on the Chinese, U.S. and euro area economies, as well as sustainability and emerging market risks.

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**Exclusive Luncheon with Mr Bernd Biervert-Luth, Chief of Cabinet of EU Trade Commissioner Maroš Šefčovič. Speech topic: “EU-China Trade Relations”**  
**7 July 2026, 12h00-14h00 – De Warande, Brussels**



The **EU-China Business Association (EUCBA)** is organizing an exclusive luncheon with **Mr Bernd Biervert-Luth, Chief of Cabinet of EU Trade Commissioner Maroš Šefčovič**. The luncheon will take place on **7 July from 12h00 to 14h00 CEST** at **De Warande, Zinnerstraat 1, 1000 Brussels**. Mr Biervert-Luth will deliver a speech on EU-China trade relations.

At a time when global trade dynamics are evolving rapidly, this exclusive luncheon will provide a timely opportunity to gain insights into the **EU’s trade agenda with China** and to exchange views on key topics related to **trade and investment between the EU and China**.

**The programme is as follows:**

**12h00 – 12h30** Registration and networking cocktail

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

**12h35 – 12h50** Speech by **Mr Bernd Biervert-Luth, Chief of Cabinet of EU Trade Commissioner Maroš Šefčovič**

**12h50 – 13h10** Q&A Session

**13h10 – 13h45** Networking luncheon and exchange with participants

**14h00** End of luncheon

The luncheon is certain to be well attended, so we strongly recommend you **book now via the button below** to guarantee your place.

**Practical information:**

**Date:** 7 July, 2026

**Time:** 12h00 - 14h00 CEST

**Location:** De Warande, Zinnerstraat 1, 1000 Brussels

**Price:** €185 excl. 21% VAT

**Deadline for subscription:** 23 June, 2026

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**Invitation: The 12<sup>th</sup> Europe Forum 2026: Competition or Complementarity? Strategic Opportunities in EU-China AI Development – June 24, 2026 – Brussels & Shanghai**



The EU-China Business Association is pleased to announce that “The 12<sup>th</sup> Europe Forum 2026 · Brussels” will take place on **Wednesday, 24 June 2026**, with offline sessions in **Brussels** and a simultaneous branch venue in **Shanghai**.

The Forum is co-organised by the **China Europe International Business School (CEIBS)**, the **EU-China Business Association**, the **China Chamber of Commerce to the EU**, the **CEIBS AI and Management Innovation Research Center**, the **Shanghai Artificial Intelligence Research Institute**, and **ChinaEU**.

Under the theme “**Competition or Complementarity? Strategic Opportunities in EU–China AI Development**”, the Forum will explore how Europe and China can work together in the rapidly evolving field of artificial intelligence.

As AI continues to reshape industries, economies and global governance, Europe and China each bring distinct strengths. China offers large-scale application scenarios, engineering capabilities and industrial scale, while Europe contributes strong governance frameworks, regulatory expertise and a focus on trustworthy AI.

The Forum will bring together political leaders, business representatives, technology experts, academics and thought leaders from Europe and China for a high-level dialogue on AI trends, industrial transformation and future cooperation.

**The program is as follows:**

**Host: Prof. Frank Bournois, Co-President (European), Professor of Governance and Leadership, Michelin Chair in Governance and Leadership, CEIBS**

**08:30 – 09:00** Check-in & Networking

**09:00 – 09:10** Welcome Addresses by **Prof. Wang Hong**, President Professor of Management, CEIBS and **Gwenn Sonck**, Executive Director, EU-China Business Association

**09:10 – 09:20** Opening Address by H.E. **Cai Run**, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China, Head of the Chinese Mission to the EU

**09:20 – 09:40** **Keynote Speech 1:** The Global Order in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: Cooperation, Trust, and Shared Responsibility by **Prof. Charles Michel**, Former President of the European Council; Former Prime Minister of Belgium; Distinguished Professor CEIBS

**09:40 – 10:00** **Keynote Speech 2:** Balancing Regulation and Innovation: Pathways for AI Enterprises by **Andrea Renda**, Head of the CEPS Unit on GRID; Visiting Professor of Competition Policy and the Digital Economy, College of Europe in Bruges

**10:00 – 10:30** **High-Level Dialogue:** AI Pathways and Opportunities for China-Europe Cooperation

**Moderator:** **Ivan Hodac**, Founder and Chairman, Aspen Institute

**Panelists:**

**Dita Charanzová**, Former Vice-President, European Parliament; Senior Advisor in AI Policy & Digital Governance, DGA Group

**Song Haitao**, President of Shanghai Artificial Intelligence Research Institute, Secretary General of Global Alliance of Industrial AI Centers of Excellence

**10:30 – 11:30** **Panel Discussion** AI & the Reshaping of Industries

**Moderator:** **Xu Bo**, International Affairs Advisor, CEIBS

**Panelists:**

**Prof. Fang Yue**, EVE Energy Chair in Economics and Decision Sciences, CEIBS; Director, CEIBS Research Centre for AI and Management Innovation

**Luigi Gambardella**, President of ChinaEU, Former Chairman of the European Telecommunications Network Operators' Association (ETNO)

**Alexander Tschentscher**, Head of Supply Chain Excellence & Head of Strategy – Supply Chain & Logistics, Siemens AG

**Li Binjie**, SVP, Unitree Robotics

**Jef Vandenberg**, SCALAR Head of Operations & Cloud Platform Engineering, ZF

**11:30 – 12:00** Future Leaders Dialogue: AI Natives' Outlook on the Future

**Moderator:** **Prof. Dominique Turpin**, President Emeritus, Professor of Marketing, CEIBS

**Panelists:**

**Prof. Eric Cornuel**, President of EFMD Global; Vice-Chairman of the CEIBS Board of Directors

**Fang Dongkui**, Secretary General of the China Chamber of Commerce to the EU (CCCEU)

**12:10 – 13:10** Networking Reception

\* Speakers are subject to change

**Practical information:**

**Date & Time:** Wednesday, 24 June 2026, 09:00-13:10 (CEST); 15:00-18:10 (Beijing time)

**Language:** English and Chinese (with simultaneous interpretation)

**Venue:**

**Shanghai:** 699 Hongfeng Road, Pudong, Shanghai, P.R.C.

**Brussels:** Rue de la Loi 155 Résidence Palace, International Press Center, 1040 Brussels, Belgium

If you wish to attend, please confirm your participation via the registration button below.

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## FCCC NEWS

### Lawyer Winston Jin, Senior Partner of Shanghai Fangben Law Firm, Structural Partner of the Flanders-China Chamber of Commerce, wins another major award in cross-border M&A

On May 26, 2026, Minglv Tang officially released the **2026 Minglv Tang General Counsel Recommended China Lawyers List**. **Mr. Winston Jin Chunqing, Senior Partner of Shanghai Fangben Law Firm**, Structural Partner of the Flanders-China Chamber of Commerce, was honored for the third time on the “Minglv Tang General Counsel Recommended China Lawyers List” in recognition of his outstanding performance and profound expertise in the field of cross-border mergers and acquisitions, and was awarded the title of “Outstanding Lawyer Recommended by General Counsels in the Manufacturing Industry for 2026.”

Lawyer Jin has been deeply engaged in the cross-border M&A field since the early 1990s. Regardless of changes in the geopolitical and economic environment, he has consistently relied on sharp judgment, steady strategies, and superb execution capabilities to successfully complete complex transactions for numerous European and American clients, including major manufacturing groups.

Since last receiving this award, Lawyer Jin and his team have, despite challenging economic conditions, successfully handled a number of mergers, acquisitions, and restructuring projects involving both European and Chinese companies

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### “Cross-Border M&A in China: Key Legal Considerations for Foreign Investors, with a Focus on IP Protection” by Mr. Winston Jin, Senior Partner of Shanghai Fangben Law Firm, Structural Partner of the Flanders-China Chamber of Commerce

**FANGBEN**  
LAW FIRM

### Cross-Border M&A in China: Key Legal Considerations for Foreign Investors, with a Focus on IP Protection

**Winston Jin**  
Lawyer and Senior Partner  
FANGBEN LAW FIRM

Cross-Border Perspective | Practical Legal Solutions | IP Protection Focused | Your Trusted Legal Partner in China

M&A  
FOREIGN INVESTMENT  
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY  
PRC LAW

**Mr. Winston Jin, Senior Partner of Shanghai Fangben Law Firm**, a Structural Partner of the Flanders-China Chamber of Commerce, has written a short paper on “**Cross-Border M&A in China: Key Legal Considerations for Foreign Investors, with a Focus on IP Protection**”.

#### Introduction

This short paper provides a practical overview of key legal issues that foreign investors should consider when conducting cross-border M&A transactions in China, with particular attention to intellectual property protection.

#### 1. Choosing the Right Transaction Structure

The first legal question in a cross-border M&A transaction is structure. In China-related deals, the most common structures include equity acquisition, asset acquisition, capital increase, merger, joint venture arrangement, and sometimes a combination of these methods.

In an equity acquisition, the foreign investor acquires shares or equity interests in the target company. The advantage is

that the target company continues to exist, and its contracts, permits, employees, assets, and business relationships usually remain in place. This may be commercially convenient. However, the investor also inherits the historical liabilities of the target company, including tax exposure, employment disputes, environmental liabilities, unpaid social insurance, product quality claims, undisclosed debts, and potential intellectual property disputes.

In an asset acquisition, the investor selects specific assets to purchase, such as equipment, inventory, land-use rights, patents, trademarks, software, or customer contracts. This may reduce historical liability risk, but implementation can be more complex. Certain assets may require separate transfer registration, third-party consent, government approval, tax assessment, employee settlement, or customs and foreign exchange arrangements. Some contracts may not be assignable without the counterparty's consent.

A capital increase structure may be suitable where the foreign investor wishes to inject new funds into the target company and become a shareholder together with the existing shareholders. This structure is often used in strategic investment, growth capital investment, or joint venture cooperation. However, the investor must pay close attention to governance rights, veto rights, exit mechanisms, reserved matters, dividend policy, deadlock resolution, and protection against dilution.

There is no universally best structure. The appropriate structure depends on the industry, regulatory restrictions, tax consequences, liabilities, intellectual property ownership, employment issues, and the investor's strategic objective. A carefully designed structure can reduce risk before due diligence even begins.

## **2. Foreign Investment Access and Regulatory Review**

Before acquiring a Chinese target company, a foreign investor must confirm whether the target's business is open to foreign investment. China adopts a foreign investment administration system based on pre-establishment national treatment plus a negative list. In general, if a sector is not listed as prohibited or restricted, foreign investors may invest under the same general principles applicable to domestic investors. However, if the target operates in a restricted sector, the foreign investor may need to satisfy specific conditions, such as shareholding limits, senior management requirements, or Chinese-party control requirements. If the sector is prohibited, foreign investment is not permitted.

In practice, it is not sufficient to look only at the registered business scope of the target company. The investor should examine the target's actual business activities, revenue sources, licenses, online operations, technology applications, customer contracts, and future business plan. A target may have a broad business scope on paper, but only part of that scope may be actually used. Conversely, a company may be conducting business activities that are not fully reflected in its registered business scope.

In addition to foreign investment access, some transactions may involve merger control filing, national security review, industry-specific approval, state-owned asset procedures, data security review, or other regulatory requirements. For example, if the parties meet the applicable turnover thresholds, a concentration of undertakings filing may be required before closing. If the transaction involves sensitive sectors, critical infrastructure, important technology, military-related areas, major agricultural products, energy resources, or other areas affecting national security, additional review may be triggered.

Foreign investors should therefore treat regulatory analysis as an early-stage issue, not as a closing formality. A common mistake is to negotiate the commercial terms first and only later discover that the transaction structure is difficult to implement or requires a longer regulatory timetable than expected.

## **3. Due Diligence: Looking Beyond the Data Room**

Legal due diligence is often the most important risk-control tool in a China M&A transaction. It allows the investor to verify what it is actually buying, identify historical liabilities, adjust valuation, require conditions precedent, negotiate indemnities, or even walk away from the transaction.

A proper due diligence review should cover at least the following areas: corporate existence and authority, shareholder ownership, registered capital contribution, articles of association, board and shareholder approvals, business licenses, material contracts, financing documents, land and real estate, tax compliance, employment and social insurance, environmental matters, customs and import/export issues, litigation and arbitration, anti-bribery compliance, data and cybersecurity, intellectual property, and related-party transactions.

In China, due diligence should not rely solely on documents uploaded by the seller. Public searches, court record searches, administrative penalty searches, trademark and patent database searches, company registry checks, land and real estate verification, and interviews with management are often necessary. Site visits may also be important, especially for manufacturing, logistics, chemical, medical device, food, automotive, and environmental-sensitive businesses.

Foreign investors should pay particular attention to consistency. Do the target's financial statements match its tax filings? Do its invoices match its contracts? Do its employees match the payroll records? Do its actual premises match the registered address? Do its trademarks match the products being sold? Do its patents match the technology being promoted? Do its customer contracts match its revenue claims?

The most serious risks are often not hidden in one single document, but revealed through inconsistencies among documents, public records, interviews, and operational facts.

#### 4. Intellectual Property as a Core Asset

In many cross-border M&A transactions, intellectual property is the central commercial reason for the deal. A foreign investor may be acquiring a company because of its technology, brand, patents, software, formulas, product designs, manufacturing process, customer data, or technical team. However, IP ownership in practice can be complicated.

The first question is ownership. Does the target company actually own the IP assets it claims to own? For registered rights such as trademarks, patents, and software copyrights, the investor should verify the registered owner, registration status, validity period, renewal history, pledge or encumbrance, license record, opposition, invalidation, and pending disputes. It is not unusual to discover that a key trademark is registered under the founder's personal name, an affiliated company, a distributor, or even a former business partner.

The second question is use rights. If the target uses IP owned by another party, the investor should examine the license agreement. Is the license exclusive or non-exclusive? Is it transferable? Can it be sublicensed? Does it survive a change of control? Are royalties fully paid? Is the license limited by territory, product category, field of use, customer group, or duration? If the target's business depends on a license that can be terminated after closing, the acquisition may lose much of its value.

The third question is employee-created IP. Many technology assets are created by engineers, designers, software developers, consultants, or external contractors. The investor should check whether employment contracts, invention assignment agreements, confidentiality agreements, and contractor agreements clearly assign relevant rights to the target company. If key technology was developed before the employee joined the target, or by a contractor without proper assignment language, ownership may be disputed.

The fourth question is trade secrets. Some of the most valuable assets in China-related transactions are not registered rights, but trade secrets, such as technical formulas, production parameters, source code, supplier information, customer lists, pricing models, and manufacturing know-how. Trade secret protection depends heavily on whether the company has taken reasonable confidentiality measures. These may include access control, confidentiality agreements, internal policies, document marking, IT restrictions, physical security, and exit procedures for departing employees.

The fifth question is infringement risk. A target may be successful in the market, but its products may infringe third-party patents, trademarks, copyrights, trade dress, software rights, or trade secrets. The investor should not assume that market success means legal safety. Freedom-to-operate analysis may be necessary where the target operates in patent-intensive or brand-sensitive industries.

#### 5. IP Due Diligence Checklist

For practical purposes, a foreign investor should consider the following IP due diligence checklist in a China M&A transaction:

First, identify all registered IP rights, including trademarks, patents, design patents, utility models, copyrights, software copyrights, domain names, and records with customs where applicable.

Second, verify whether the registered owner is the target company. If the IP is owned by a founder, employee, affiliate, distributor, or offshore entity, the investor should require assignment, license, or restructuring before closing.

Third, review all IP license agreements. Special attention should be given to change-of-control clauses, termination rights, sublicensing restrictions, exclusivity, royalty obligations, audit rights, and territorial limitations.

Fourth, examine R&D arrangements. The investor should review employment contracts, contractor agreements, cooperation agreements with universities or research institutes, government-funded project documents, and joint development agreements.

Fifth, assess trade secret protection. The investor should examine whether the target has internal confidentiality policies, NDAs, technical access controls, employee exit procedures, and evidence of reasonable secrecy measures.

Sixth, check infringement and disputes. Searches should be conducted for litigation, administrative enforcement, opposition, invalidation, customs seizure, online complaints, and cease-and-desist letters.

Seventh, review IP used in marketing. Product brochures, websites, e-commerce stores, WeChat accounts, social media, packaging, and exhibition materials should be checked against registered rights and license rights.

Eighth, consider post-closing integration. If the investor plans to transfer technology, integrate brands, centralize software, or move production, the legal feasibility of such steps should be assessed before signing.

In a well-managed transaction, IP due diligence is not a separate technical exercise. It should directly influence valuation, transaction structure, representations and warranties, indemnities, closing conditions, and post-closing integration.

#### 6. Data, Cybersecurity, and Digital Assets

Modern M&A transactions increasingly involve data. A target company may possess customer data, employee data, supplier data, production data, R&D data, industrial data, algorithmic models, software systems, or operational databases. These assets may be commercially valuable, but they may also be regulated.

Foreign investors should examine what categories of data the target collects, where the data is stored, who has access, whether personal information is involved, whether cross-border transfer occurs, whether the target is subject to cybersecurity obligations, and whether any important data or sensitive personal information is involved.

Data issues are particularly important where a foreign investor plans to integrate the Chinese target into a global IT system after closing. For example, headquarters may wish to access HR records, customer information, technical data, pricing data, or production data from outside China. Such access may constitute cross-border data transfer and may require legal assessment, internal procedures, standard contractual arrangements, certification, security assessment, or other compliance steps depending on the type and volume of data.

In practice, data compliance should be considered at both signing and integration stages. Before signing, the investor should identify whether data compliance violations may create historical liability. Before closing, the investor should confirm whether any regulatory filings or contractual consents are needed. After closing, the investor should implement a compliant data governance system that fits the group's global compliance framework while respecting China's local rules.

litigations may determine who effectively controls the company after closing.

## **7. Practical Recommendations for Foreign Investors**

Based on experience in cross-border transactions, foreign investors may consider the following practical recommendations.

First, start legal planning early. Regulatory access, merger control, foreign exchange, tax, and IP issues should be reviewed before signing a term sheet, not only before closing.

Second, do not treat due diligence as a box-ticking exercise. The purpose is not merely to collect documents, but to understand the real legal and commercial condition of the target.

Third, pay attention to the difference between ownership and use. A target may use a trademark, patent, software, or technology, but that does not necessarily mean it owns it or can transfer it.

Fourth, connect due diligence findings with transaction documents. Every material risk should lead to a legal response: price adjustment, closing condition, covenant, indemnity, escrow, restructuring, or walk-away right.

Fifth, consider the Chinese and international dimensions together. A cross-border transaction may involve Chinese law, offshore law, tax treaties, export controls, sanctions, data rules, and dispute resolution across jurisdictions.

Sixth, protect trade secrets before, during, and after the transaction. During due diligence, the seller may disclose sensitive information. The buyer should also protect its own strategic intentions and proprietary information. A strong confidentiality agreement is essential.

Seventh, plan post-closing integration in advance. Legal control, operational control, IP control, and financial control should be aligned as early as possible.

## **Conclusions**

- Cross-border M&A in China can offer significant strategic opportunities for foreign investors, but it also requires careful legal planning and disciplined execution. The most successful transactions are not necessarily those with the fastest signing, but those in which the investor understands the target, verifies the assets, identifies the liabilities, protects the intellectual property, designs a workable structure, and prepares for post-closing integration.

- For foreign investors, intellectual property should not be treated as a secondary legal issue. In many sectors, IP is the heart of the transaction. A company's patents, trademarks, software, know-how, trade secrets, and R&D capability may determine whether the acquisition creates long-term value or future disputes.

(3) In a changing regulatory and geopolitical environment, cross-border M&A requires lawyers who understand both legal rules and business realities. A practical, forward-looking, and risk-based approach can help foreign investors make better decisions, avoid unnecessary disputes, and build sustainable business operations in China.

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## ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED BY FCCC

### Chengdu Eastern New Area Industry Promotion Conference 1 July – 14h to 17h – Brussels



The Chengdu Eastern New Area Industry Promotion Conference is hosted by the Chengdu Eastern New Area Administration, Chengdu Municipal Port and Logistics Office, and the Chengdu Opening-up and International Cooperation Center, and is organized by the Administrative Committee of Chengdu Tianfu International Aerropolis. The conference will take place on July 1, 2026 at

The conference is organized to seize the opportunities from the Chengdu to Brussels direct flights, further deepen economic, trade and industrial cooperation between Chengdu and Europe, and fully leverage the advantages of Tianfu International Airport as an international aviation hub. The theme of the conference is “Departing from Tianfu, Forging a Shared Future”.

The conference will provide a focused presentation on the development opportunities, investment environment, and industrial policy support of Chengdu Eastern New Area. It will also feature dedicated business matchmaking and negotiation sessions for Chinese and European enterprises, as well as a signing ceremony for cooperation projects. Chengdu and Belgium enjoy a solid foundation for cooperation and broad prospects for future development. Through this event, we hope to create opportunities for both sides to explore practical areas of collaboration in technology cooperation, market expansion, investment projects, and business establishment, thereby achieving mutual benefit and win-win development.

#### The program is as follows:

**14:00 – 14:30** Event Registration (warm-up with promotional video), Pre-meeting session with representatives of key enterprises and guests

**14:30 – 14:40** The host introduces the participating leaders and guests

**14:40 – 14:50** Speech by **Wu Zhengyu, Deputy Director of the Chengdu Port and Logistics Office**

**14:50 – 15:00** Speech by **Ms. Gwenn Sonck, Executive Director, Flanders-China Chamber of Commerce (FCCC)**

**15:00 – 15:20** Industrial promotion of Chengdu Eastern New Area by the Administrative Committee of Tianfu International Airport New City

15:20 – 15:40 Industrial promotion by the Industrial Development Division of the Chengdu Port and Logistics Office

15:40 – 15:50 Plaque Presentation Ceremony, Chengdu Opening-up and International Cooperation Center presents the "Open Chengdu" Overseas Partner plaque to the Flanders-China Chamber of Commerce.

**15:50 – 16:10 Agreement Signing Session**

- Sichuan Airlines Logistics Co., Ltd. and ATC Aviation Services AG sign a cooperation agreement on cargo consolidation for Brussels cargo flights

- Sichuan Silk Road Leader Supply Chain Management Co., Ltd. and Manuport Logistics of Belgium sign a cooperation agreement
- E-Origin and the Belt and Road Supply Chain Frankfurt Service Station sign a cooperation agreement
- Sichuan International Air Cargo Development Co., Ltd. & Dubai National Air Travel Group Brussels

**16:10 – 16:50** Interactive exchanges and discussions on project cooperation, business environment, industrial matchmaking, and other topics

**16:50 – 17:00** Group Photo Session

**Practical information:**

**Date:** 1 July, 2026

**Time:** 14h – 17h CEST

**Location:** Tangla Hotel Brussels (Royal 1 meeting room), Avenue Emmanuel Mounier 5, Woluwe-Saint-Lambert

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## **6<sup>th</sup> 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 6<sup>th</sup> 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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## MARKETING

### No Chinese team at FIFA World Cup 2026, but companies show tech achievements



**China's national team once again failed to qualify for the World Cup football, having reached the tournament only once, in 2002. Yet Chinese companies occupy some of FIFA's most prominent commercial positions, with Lenovo serving as a top-tier FIFA partner.** Inside a sprawling broadcast hub in Dallas, thousands of devices supplied by Lenovo are helping FIFA manage and distribute content from stadiums across the United States, Canada and Mexico, forming part of the technological backbone of the largest World Cup ever staged. Electronics maker Hisense is also a World Cup

sponsor and technology provider, and dairy firm Mengniu is maintaining a long-term relationship with the event.

The central role played by Lenovo highlights a reality often obscured by geopolitical tensions between Washington and Beijing: while U.S. policymakers have increasingly scrutinized Chinese technology firms and sought to reduce security risks in strategically sensitive sectors, Chinese companies remain deeply embedded in global commercial ecosystems, including one of the highest-profile international events ever hosted in North America. The stakes are enormous. FIFA is expected to generate between USD2.5 billion and USD3 billion in sponsorship revenue from **the 2026 World Cup**, making it one of the most commercially valuable sporting events ever staged and **a coveted platform for companies seeking global visibility.** "It's the coming out party for Chinese global brands," said Craig Allen, former U.S. Ambassador and Senior Fellow at the Asia Society.

The visibility of Chinese companies at a championship hosted across North America underscores the complex relationship between geopolitical competition and commercial integration. While Washington and Beijing remain locked in disputes over trade, technology and national security, **global sporting events continue to offer Chinese brands unmatched worldwide exposure.**

“The World Cup is a global event with billions of fans from around the world watching,” said Scott Kennedy, Senior Adviser in Chinese Business and Economics at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). “What this shows is that Chinese consumer-facing firms are pursuing a global strategy for fans around the world, an effort which continues regardless of any government-level tensions.”

The companies’ prominence at the tournament also reflects the selective nature of Washington’s scrutiny of Chinese firms. Neither Lenovo nor Hisense was included on the Pentagon’s updated Section 1260H list released last week, which added companies including Alibaba, Baidu and BYD. “If people come away from the FIFA World Cup only knowing that Lenovo sponsored the tournament, not what we have delivered from a technology and innovation standpoint, then we have failed,” said Jeff Shafer, Lenovo’s Chief Communications Officer. The company says its technology is powering FIFA’s Intelligent Command Center, a real-time operational hub designed to support tournament management before, during and after matches. Lenovo is also supplying AI-powered analytics tools for all 48 participating teams, fan-facing applications as well as digital player models intended to assist match officials with offside decisions.

Lenovo is not the only Chinese company playing a key role at the tournament. Hisense, a World Cup sponsor, has spent years associating itself with major football competitions and is providing technology linked to video

review systems and other match operations. Mengniu, meanwhile, has maintained one of the longest-running relationships between a Chinese company and FIFA, although its sponsorship is almost exclusively aimed at Chinese and Southeast Asian customers since there are strict U.S. import restrictions on dairy products. Over the past decade, Beijing’s push to transform China into a football powerhouse triggered billions of dollars in investment in clubs, academies and infrastructure. Chinese conglomerates bought stakes in European clubs, sponsored tournaments and sought a greater role in global football.

Simon Chadwick, Professor of Sport and Geopolitical Economy at Skema Business School, argues that Chinese policy documents describe **an ambition for the country to become a “leading FIFA nation” by 2050**, a goal that could be achieved through a variety of channels, including hosting tournaments, influencing football governance and becoming more deeply embedded in the sport’s commercial ecosystem. For Chadwick, the growing role of companies such as Lenovo, Hisense and Mengniu suggests China has achieved at least part of that objective. “China, arguably, through its commercial activities, has become a leading FIFA nation,” he said. As billions of viewers tune in to view matches across North America over the coming weeks, China’s absence from the competition may be most visible on the field. Off it, however, its brands have secured a prominent place in the global game, the South China Morning Post reports.

## AUTOMOTIVE

### BYD’s sales to be limited by battery production while Geely Auto plans to slash overcapacity



**Chinese electric vehicle (EV) firm BYD said demand for its second-generation blade batteries currently outstrips existing capacity**, as Chinese cars gain popularity around the globe. **Geely Chairman Li Shufu said the company would assess the oversupply of capacity across all units.**

At BYD’s annual general meeting in Shenzhen, Chairman and President Wang Chuanfu told shareholders that its Blade Battery 2.0 and Flash Charging technology had received a warm response in domestic and overseas

markets, but that battery cell production remained insufficient to meet demand. BYD was increasing its battery production capacity by 20,000 units to 30,000 units per month, Wang said, adding that this year’s sales volume would be subject to the supply of its latest batteries. “Once our battery production catches up next year, we are confident that both domestic and international markets will see strong growth,” he said.

The Shenzhen-based company started mass production of its second-generation Blade Battery in early March, which it said was able to charge from 10% to 97% in nine minutes, initiating a charging speed war among domestic battery makers including Contemporary Amperex Technology Ltd. (CATL) and CALB Group. BYD also started using the new battery and charging technology in at least 12 of its models, which led to a shortage of battery cells, Deutsche Bank said, causing waiting times of four to five weeks for the company’s Denza Z9 GT sedans, the first model to include the new technology. Thanks to the fast-charging batteries, BYD’s sales volume in May increased 0.26% to 383,453 units, ending eight months year-on-year declines.

**The increase in May reversed the decline in the domestic market, where retail sales dropped 7.5% to around 950,000 vehicles year-on-year** due to the

abolition of subsidies in January. Squeezed by reduced government incentives, BYD had a slow start to 2026, with its monthly EV sales sinking below 200,000 units in February for the first time in nearly two years and first-quarter net profit plunging 55% year-on-year. With the capacity ramp-up, BYD's car sales were expected to grow 6% to 4.9 million units this year, according to Deutsche Bank, which added that BYD would book CNY10 million second-quarter net profit, a big jump of 59% year-on-year.

Yale Zhang, Managing Director at consultancy Automotive Foresight in Shanghai, said that any improvement in next year's sales could be minor compared with this year given increased competition and a potential fall in oil prices. At the shareholders' meeting, BYD Chairman Wang said he expected "dual-engine growth" in both domestic and overseas markets, bolstered by the new technologies to be launched in the coming two years that would enable "Chinese technologies to reach a global audience". The sales increase in export markets was expected after the carmaker had shifted its focus to the export market to compensate for weakening domestic demand. **Overseas sales in May surged 80% year-on-year to a record high 160,644 units**, the South China Morning Post reports.

**Geely Auto, which is locked in a fierce battle with BYD for dominance in China's crowded automotive market, plans to purge excess capacity through an asset restructuring** while ramping up its go-global drive with an eye on greater international competitiveness.

Chairman Li Shufu said during the Chongqing Auto Show that the Hong Kong-listed carmaker would assess the oversupply of capacity across all units to determine whether to close, suspend, merge or sell redundant production facilities. "Geely Auto is determined in its resolve to achieve sound corporate development by concentrating our superior resources on a vertically integrated automotive group," he said in a video clip posted online. "By doing so, we will transform Geely into a strong and large carmaker with advantages in systemic development, corporate governance and global competitiveness." While Geely's billionaire founder did not reveal specifics, such as the number of plants or the scale of excess capacity that could be disposed of amid the asset revamp, the move signals a strategic pivot for the Hangzhou-based manufacturer.

**Geely operates a diverse stable of brands, including Zeekr, Lynk & Co, and Galaxy.** The company, which sells both petrol and electric vehicles (Evs), unseated BYD as

China's largest carmaker in the first quarter of this year, but dropped back behind BYD in April and May as a global energy crisis spurred demand for fully electric vehicles. Geely Auto's net income for 2025 rose 1.7% from a year earlier to CNY16.6 billion. Revenue jumped 25% to CNY345.2 billion, and deliveries jumped 39% to 3.02 million units.

Li Shufu also indicated that he had been mulling a new growth strategy for Geely Auto and vowed to map out a formal succession plan, without elaborating. Geely Auto's parent company, Zhejiang-based Geely Holding Group, also owns Volvo Cars and holds a stake in Mercedes-Benz Group. Betting on its technological prowess in EVs, Geely has quickened the pace of its international expansion over the past two years, with plans to utilize space vacated by international brands to build its cars. In November, the firm and its parent bought a 26.4% stake in Renault Group's Brazilian operations. At the end of 2025, the company opened a massive safety-testing facility in Ningbo in Zhejiang province. In February, Geely said that it would focus on extending driving range and improving charging speeds rather than cutting prices to defend its position in China. Its overseas sales – including both petrol and electric vehicles – jumped 158% year-on-year, to 371,354 units in the first five months of 2026, representing nearly a third of total deliveries. China's output of vehicles – including buses, lorries and passenger cars – rose 10.5% to 34.5 million units in 2025, according to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers (CAAM), the South China Morning Post reports.

**Electric vehicles accounted for a record 66.7% of new car sales in China during the first week of June**, up from 62.9% in May. "The Middle East conflict has given Chinese EV makers an unexpected shot in the arm," said Eric Han, Senior Manager at Shanghai consultancy Suolei. "Petrol cars may have run out of steam," he said. EV deliveries in China exceeded 152,000 units between June 1 and 7, up 8% from the corresponding period a month earlier, according to the China Passenger Car Association (CPCA). **In May, no Chinese petrol-car brand ranked among the country's 10 bestselling vehicle models**, a first for the market. Foreign carmakers held a combined 30.3% share of the Chinese market in April, down from 34.7% for full-year 2025. Deutsche Bank forecast in January that total vehicle sales in China – including both EVs and petrol-powered cars – would decline 5% this year, while UBS projected a 2% fall, citing overcapacity and reduced government support.

# HIGH-TECH

## “Hefei model” of state capital investment is boosting emerging industrial clusters



The city government of Hefei, capital of Anhui province, has leveraged over CNY220 billion in state-owned capital to drive project investment in emerging industrial clusters. The leading champion of this strategy is Changxin Memory Technologies (CXMT), which is leading China’s self-sufficiency drive in semiconductors. The company is preparing for a massive public offering (IPO) on Shanghai’s Nasdaq-style Star Market. While pre-IPO estimates value the chipmaker at roughly CNY150 billion, market analysts project that once public trading begins, CXMT’s market capitalization could exceed CNY1 trillion, providing the ultimate validation of the “Hefei model”. Formerly **dubbed “China’s most aggressive venture capitalist”**, Hefei’s city government provided enormous backing for CXMT’s quest to become a top memory chipmaker, helping to make the city a poster child for China’s technological progress.

The rise of Hefei’s tech ecosystem is rooted in **an extraordinary tolerance for long-term, capital-intensive bets**. When CXMT Founder Zhu Yiming set his sights on the dynamic random-access memory (DRAM) sector in 2016, private investors deemed the sector too risky, balking at the high starting costs and the formidable technical challenges of foreign competitors like South Korea’s Samsung and SK Hynix. Hefei, however, stepped in with conviction. In 2016, the city took an 80% stake in the first phase of a 12-inch memory wafer manufacturing base project that cost CNY150 billion, Anhui’s largest single industrial investment project at the time. During a recent downturn in the DRAM cycle, local government-led capital patiently held the line, refusing to demand quick financial returns. **Former Hefei Party Secretary Yu Aihua said the city was not making venture capital bets based on luck, but pursuing industrial investment to “win the future”**. The “Hefei model” has transformed the city into a magnet for hi-tech sectors including artificial intelligence (AI), semiconductors and new energy vehicles (NEVs).

Beyond CXMT, Hefei’s capital ecosystem has nurtured a host of other tech titans that have set up headquarters in the city. In emerging industrial clusters – including new energy vehicles, integrated circuits and new displays – Hefei leveraged over CNY220 billion in state-owned capital to drive project investments worth more than CNY840 billion by the end of last year. Hefei’s gross domestic

product (GDP) grew by 6.8% year-on-year in the first quarter of this year, the highest increase among China’s top 30 cities. The success of its capital city helped Anhui’s annual industrial revenue grow from CNY3.8 trillion to CNY5.9 trillion in the past five years, jumping from 10<sup>th</sup> place to fifth among provincial-level regions.

Hefei, unlike other economic centers, cannot attribute its rapid development to its proximity to a large metropolitan hub. That makes its success more exceptional and interesting to policymakers and observers. Wang Dongwei, Anhui’s Executive Vice Governor, attributed the province’s broader success to **a four-pillar strategy: long-term industrial planning, an excellent business environment, efficient financial support, and a policy for attracting and nurturing enterprises**. Academics point to the “multiplier effect” of the city’s uniquely open capital system as state capital leverages social capital and drives employment and tax growth, creating a new form of capital supply.

“By cooperating with top domestic and foreign investment institutions like Temasek and Sequoia Capital, it not only brings in funds but also advanced investment concepts,” said Zheng Jianguai, Dean of Nanjing University’s School of Economics, in March. Entrepreneurs hailed Hefei’s talent pool, business environment and tech ecosystem as features that drew them into the city. Zhou Fu, Senior Vice President of Chinese electric vehicle (EV) battery maker Gotion High-Tech, said the company’s deep connection with Hefei is based on the city’s unique resources, saying it provides “a tremendous amount of talent”. “It brings us exceptional research funding, an outstanding business environment, and a massive influx of top-tier tech talent,” he said.

Hefei’s innovative heft can be partially credited to the presence of the University of Science and Technology of China (USTC), one of the country’s top scientific institutions, which was relocated from Beijing in 1970. iFlyTek, China’s AI voice-recognition pioneer and an AI model developer, highlighted the role of local government support in building a completely localized tech ecosystem. “The Hefei and Anhui governments have provided immense support, from policy guidance and talent cultivation to helping us build an upstream and downstream ecosystem,” said iFlyTek Vice President Wang Wei. “The government helped us build the platforms so we could better use domestic technologies,” noting that the company’s computing infrastructure was being powered entirely by home-grown tech.

**Hefei has also attracted manufacturing giants from across the country**. EV maker Nio, which was founded in Shanghai in 2014, began building its advanced F2 plant in Hefei in 2021. Production commenced just 17 months later. The fully digitized smart factory features 90 km of embedded fibre optics and uses AI to manage 80% of manufacturing decisions. Fuyao Glass began production at a CNY7.75 billion plant in Hefei in June 2025 after starting construction in 2024.

**Can the “Hefei model” be replicated?** Analysts suggest the answer lies less in mimicking Hefei’s specific portfolio choices, and more in adopting its philosophy. A key lesson to be taken from Hefei was that **local governments needed to adopt an “investment banking mindset” rooted in industrial logic**, said Yang Haiping, Researcher

at the Securities and Futures Institute of the Beijing-based Central University of Finance and Economics. He said that Hefei’s use of a “jungle of funds” to cultivate industries was fundamental for local governments to guide economic development, the South China Morning Post reports.

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## CHINA NEWS ROUND-UP

### Baidu, PostBus to start robotaxi service in Switzerland

**Baidu announced that its autonomous vehicle service AmiGo, developed in partnership with Switzerland’s public bus operator PostBus, received a regulatory approval for operations in the eastern region of Switzerland.** Baidu aims to launch regular fully driverless operations of the joint service by early 2027, provided all safety and regulatory requirements are met.

The company said the service is set to be Europe’s largest automated public transport operation of its kind. The service will use Apollo Go’s fully electric RT6 vehicles, each capable of carrying three passengers and equipped with over 30 sensors, the company said. Baidu said AmiGo’s services will be bookable through a dedicated app. Level 4 autonomous driving is a level of automation where the vehicle can operate without a human driver under specific conditions.

Baidu had announced a partnership with PostBus last year, as the Chinese tech firm accelerates a global push of its self-driving business. China’s leading search engine operator Baidu has been increasing its focus on technologies including AI and self-driving as its advertising-driven search engine business has slowed due to a weakening Chinese economy.

### U.S. adds Alibaba, BYD and Chinese tech firms to military company blacklist

**The Pentagon has added Alibaba, BYD, Baidu and dozens of other Chinese companies to its list of entities it says are linked to China’s military under Section 1260H of the National Defence Authorization Act.** The companies include electric vehicle makers, artificial intelligence companies, battery manufacturers, biotech firms and solar suppliers. The designation can complicate companies’ access to U.S. capital markets and government business, although it does not automatically trigger sanctions. Among the most prominent additions were **Alibaba, BYD, Nio, WuXi AppTec, Unitree, TP-Link, JA Solar and Trina Solar.** The list also included

battery makers CALB and EVE Energy, lidar firms Hesai and RoboSense, and display-panel manufacturer BOE Technology Group.

The Pentagon said the companies met statutory criteria for the designation based on factors including alleged affiliations with Chinese state entities, military-civil fusion programs, the People’s Liberation Army or government industrial initiatives. Several companies were cited for participation in programs such as China’s “Little Giant” or “Single Champion” schemes, which Washington increasingly views as supporting Beijing’s strategic technology ambitions. The move marks a significant expansion of a list that has evolved from focusing largely on state-owned defense and telecommunications groups to encompassing a much wider range of technology companies. The latest additions underscore growing U.S. concerns about China’s advances in sectors including AI, biotech, EVs, robotics, batteries, semiconductors and renewable energy.

One of the newly listed companies, WuXi AppTec, strongly disputed the designation and filed a complaint in the Washington federal court. It rejected allegations that it was affiliated with China’s military, defense industrial base or military-civil fusion programs. The Chinese Embassy in Washington said it “firmly opposes” Washington’s overstretched view of national security and use of “discriminatory lists”. The list now has 20 pages, but the U.S. also removed 10 companies, including Cosco Shipping Finance. The U.S. Defense Department said companies may seek reconsideration and submit evidence that they no longer meet the criteria for designation. Under the law, the Defence Department must update the list at least annually through 2030.

The Commerce Department also maintains an “Entity List”, and the U.S. Treasury Department has its OFAC Sanctions & NS-CMIC List. China responded with its own ‘Unreliable Entity List’ managed by the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM), the South China Morning Post reports. Founded in 2000, WuXi said it provides research, development and manufacturing services to more than 4,000 pharmaceutical and life sciences companies, including more than 1,200 customers in the United States.

## EU-China dialogue on digital issues postponed

**An EU-China dialogue on digital matters has been postponed as tensions between the two sides threaten to boil over.** The meeting, initially scheduled for June 23 in Beijing, will no longer take place, with no immediate date set for a follow-up, people familiar with the situation confirmed. The Financial Times reported that the talks had been abruptly cancelled by Beijing, along with a second meeting involving a senior EU official. Olof Skoog, Deputy Secretary General of the European External Action Service had been due to travel to Beijing this month to lay the ground for a potential visit by High Representative Kaja Kallas later this year. Skoog's trip was intended as part of a series of preparatory visits that kicked off with top Asia official Erik Kurzweil last month.

**A series of crucial EU meetings on China are planned this week that could set the EU on a more assertive policy path.** On June 15, EU Foreign Ministers held a debate on China in Luxembourg while the 27 national leaders will debate it in the context of macro-economic imbalances in Brussels on June 18 and 19. The European Commission is trying to convince EU member states to back the more frequent use of emergency tariffs and quotas, known as safeguards, to counter what is seen as a damaging surge in Chinese imports. It also wants permission to develop a new tool to force companies to reduce reliance on Chinese suppliers, known as a "diversification instrument".

The EU Parliament is also preparing new laws that would block certain Chinese companies from some hi-tech sectors and which would put stringent conditions on inward investments in key industries. In the Bundestag, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz signaled that he was on board with a more robust approach. "We will defend our interests and our industry against trade practices that lead to competitive distortions," he said. "At the European Council we will speak about how we can expand our toolbox. The EU market is a sought-after market for exports from the entire world. We want to use this attractiveness to enforce rules for free and fair trade."

At an event in Brussels, EU Director for Asia Trade Joanna Szychowska said "we expect that Beijing understands the economic and political strain caused by the effects of its policies". "Because the trade surplus is not an abstract concept, it affects jobs, companies, industries and social cohesion," she added. "Engagement remains our preference, but it must produce results – there is no doubt about that. So we are not turning inward, we are not abandoning open trade. But if it is needed, we will use our tools and we have a lot of tools to use not everyone likes." The cancellations come despite Beijing calling for more dialogue to resolve the widening gaps and will undoubtedly be seen as a sign of its displeasure with how relations are unfolding, the South China Morning Post reports.

## World Bank says Chinese ports are by far the most efficient

**China's ports continued to dominate global efficiency rankings in 2025, with seven in the top 10,** according to

a study by the World Bank and S&P Global. The latest edition of the annual report comes at a time when ports are playing a more vital role in the global economy than ever, as facilities strive to handle intense disruptions to global supply chains amid the aftermath of the Red Sea crisis and the ongoing fallout from the U.S.-Israel war on Iran. Launched in 2020, **the Container Port Performance Index (CPPI) compares the efficiency of more than 400 ports** around the world by measuring how long vessels spend in each trade hub on average, as a longer processing time indicates a higher chance of delays and supply bottlenecks.

China's ports once again led the way in terms of efficiency last year, with **Fuzhou in Fujian province claiming top spot, followed by Dalian in Liaoning** in second place and Oman's Salalah port in third. Hong Kong placed ninth. Ports in East and South Asia remain world-leading due to their strong focus on exports, intense inter-port competition, and sustained investment in infrastructure, according to the report. Ningbo in Zhejiang province provided a good example of how Asia's ports had been able to navigate fluctuating global supply chain stresses, with the facility able to maintain stable ship turnaround times due to its robust capacity, automation and operational discipline, the report said.

North American and European ports continued to bounce back from pandemic-era disruptions but remained structurally vulnerable to sudden congestion, labor constraints and hinterland bottlenecks, the report showed. In particular, ports are becoming more vulnerable to "burst congestion", which refers to short, intense bottlenecks caused when the number of vessel calls suddenly surges rather than increasing steadily. When such clustering occurs, backlogs can escalate rapidly even at highly advanced gateways, a vulnerability further amplified by land-side constraints, according to the report.

Supply chain disruptions cause pile-ups at ports, and then the port bottlenecks affect the overall stability of global trade networks. "Understanding this two-way relationship is essential," said Bertrand de la Borde, Director for Transport and Logistics at the World Bank. "Ports are not just passively exposed to external shocks; they also dynamically shape how those shocks are transmitted. They can either amplify disruptions or help contain them," the South China Morning Post reports.

## Chinese universities cut 12,000 obsolete degrees to embrace AI

**China's universities are undertaking a massive reshuffling of their academic offerings as part of a drive to better align higher education with the nation's development goals** – culling thousands of so-called obsolete degrees in favor of new, tech-focused programs. The sweeping campaign comes as China races to become a global leader in hi-tech "future industries" and solve a severe graduate job crisis, which has left millions of young people struggling to find work.

**Between 2021 and 2025,** China's higher education institutions revoked or suspended 12,200 undergraduate degree programs while introducing 10,200 new ones, meaning that **more than 30% of the nation's university**

**programs underwent adjustments**, according to the Ministry of Education. The cuts have been heavily concentrated in arts, humanities, foreign languages and management – fields that are increasingly deemed outdated or oversaturated in China.

Many of the new programs are closely aligned with Beijing's economic development goals. For instance, **nine universities have added new majors in embodied intelligence**, which dovetails with a national drive to speed up the integration of next-generation AI into the real economy. Universities have faced pressure to adapt to rapid changes in the Chinese economy over recent years, as graduate numbers have soared to record levels but many have found their degrees offer little help when it comes to finding work. The University of Shanghai for Science and Technology, for example, halted admissions for its product design program this year, with one recent graduate saying the decision was partly based on the poor employment prospects. "The rapid development of AI has hit product design hard. Many core tasks, such as modeling and rendering, can now be handled by AI," said the graduate.

The Communication University of China (CUC) has restructured courses including cinematography, following the shift from film to digital. "With the rise of live streaming and short videos, the requirements for a cameraman are completely different from traditional television news shooting," a graduate said. Many of the programs cut by universities were only established a few years ago, during an earlier phase of China's push to overhaul university majors, the South China Morning Post reports.

## Imports grow faster than exports in first five months

**China's import growth outpaced exports by nearly 9 percentage points in the first five months of 2026**, underpinned by robust domestic demand and broader market-opening measures, economists and government officials said. Two key policy initiatives will sustain strong import momentum throughout the year. The Ministry of Commerce's **"Big Market for All: Export to China"** campaign has broadened access to China's vast consumer and industrial markets for global exporters. The government's expanded zero-tariff treatment for all African countries that have diplomatic ties with China, which took effect on May 1, is also expected to support import growth.

**China's foreign trade grew 15.3% year-on-year to CNY20.68 trillion during the January-May period, with exports rising 11.8% and imports jumping 20.5%**, according to the General Administration of Customs (GAC). Wang Xiaohong, Researcher at the China Center for International Economic Exchanges in Beijing, said the strong growth in imports reflected the effectiveness of policies aimed at expanding imports, boosting consumption and advancing high-standard opening-up. For example, China's imports from Africa surged 15% year-on-year to CNY95.13 billion in May alone, marking the ninth consecutive month of growth. The faster growth in imports also underscored China's role as a key engine of global demand, creating new opportunities for overseas exporters and supporting trade flows at a time when many

economies are facing slower growth, Wang said.

**Both China's imports and exports exceeded expectations in the first five months**, supported by rising prices of high-tech products, which lifted the value of both outbound and inbound shipments. Sheana Yue, Senior Economist at British think tank Oxford Economics, said China's industrial upgrading, technological advances and well-established supply chains have enhanced the competitiveness of Chinese products, helping to sustain trade growth and market share gains despite external uncertainties. Regional trade agreements are also helping both domestic and foreign businesses integrate more deeply into regional supply chains, facilitating both imports and exports, the China Daily reports.

## Humanoid robots ready to take on real-world tasks

**Chinese humanoid robot startups are moving beyond choreographed demonstrations and into factories and retail stores, racing to secure real-world deployments that could eventually scale to tens of thousands of machines.** The shift gained further momentum when the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) and the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC) launched a nationwide initiative to accelerate humanoid robot adoption across manufacturing, logistics, retail, healthcare and other sectors. The initiative aims to create more than 100 high-value application scenarios by the end of 2026 and drive large-scale deployment of more than 10,000 humanoid robots, underscoring China's ambition to turn humanoid robots into a new pillar of industrial growth.

Among the early movers is Beijing-based Robotera, whose humanoid robots have already been deployed in more than 10 logistics centers operated by China Post and SF Holding, such as packing products into cardboard boxes. Chen Jianyu, Founder of **Robotera**, said that its **humanoid robots can process up to 1,200 parcels per hour**, approaching human-level productivity in some logistics environments. "We want robots to enter factories and logistics parks and become real productive forces," he said. Robotera's Co-founder Xi Yue said the company is already delivering orders in thousands of units this year as demand accelerates.

A similar race is unfolding in retail. Beijing-based **Galbot**, another embodied AI startup, **has opened autonomous retail stores, known as galaxy capsules**, across the city, and deployed humanoid robots in some of Beijing's FamilyMart convenience stores. Inside the silver, spacecraft-like capsule stores, humanoid robots prepare coffee, retrieve drinks and serve customers without human assistance. The pace of improvement has been rapid. When Galbot opened its first capsule store last August, a robot took 46 seconds to pick up and deliver a cup of coffee. Less than a year later, that time has been cut to 18 seconds. Galbot's Co-founder Zhang Zhizheng said the company plans to launch similar stores in 10 cities, locating them in commercial districts, transportation hubs, tourist attractions and urban neighborhoods. The Galbot S1 mobile robot, capable of carrying loads of up to 50 kilograms while operating continuously through battery

swapping, has entered production lines at companies including battery giant CATL and automaker BAIC Group.

Jiang Han, Senior Researcher at market consultancy Pangoal, said: "What's happening now is a transition from laboratory validation to large-scale commercial deployment. The key breakthrough is not that the robots can move. It's that they can operate autonomously in complex, dynamic environments as part of everyday business

operations". Unitree Robotics recently launched its dual-arm humanoid robot R1 with a starting price of CNY26,900, making it the company's most affordable humanoid robot to date. Earlier, Noetix Robotics introduced its Bumi robot for CNY9,998, becoming one of the first consumer-oriented humanoid robots priced below the 1CNY0,000 threshold. Around the same time, Booster Robotics also launched its K1 series with a starting price of CNY29,900, the China Daily reports.

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