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中华人民共和国驻欧盟使馆  
Mission of the People's Republic  
of China to the European Union

# TACKLING CHINA'S ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHALLENGES: A ROLE FOR EUROPE?



Winter 2012

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Policy Briefing, Autumn 2012

### TACKLING CHINA'S ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHALLENGES/A ROLE FOR EUROPE?

Policy Briefing, Winter 2012



## Asia Programme

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# TACKLING CHINA'S ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHALLENGES: A ROLE FOR EUROPE?

Report of the Europe China Forum  
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Winter 2012

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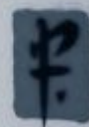
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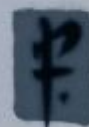
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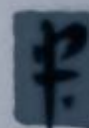
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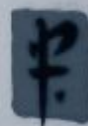
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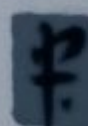
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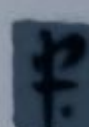
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For months, the European Union (EU) and the world have been riveted to the once-in-a-decade leadership change in China. Though speculation abounds as to whether the new seven-man Standing Committee of the Politburo will be reformers or take a more conservative stance towards governance, “China’s new leaders face old and well-known problems,” noted moderator Shada Islam, Head of Policy at *Friends of Europe*.

The appointed future President, Xi Jinping, and Premier, Li Keqiang, have demonstrated that they recognize the daunting array of economic and social challenges facing the country and have shown a willingness to tackle them head on, she continued.

They have vowed to fight corruption, narrow the urban-rural income divide and deal with environmental issues. Moreover, the new Chinese leadership must strive to meet the quality of life aspirations of China’s growing and increasingly influential middle class.

Finally, there is much pressure to rebalance China’s economic growth model and change from an export-driven economy to one based on domestic consumption, investment and innovation. “The current model of economic development that has demonstrated impressive growth over the last three decades is no longer valid,” she concluded. “It needs to be transformed.”



## WHAT CHALLENGES FACE CHINA'S NEW LEADERSHIP?

Though much is to be accomplished, noted **Zhang Lirong**, Chargé d'Affaires at the Mission of the People's Republic of China (PRC) to the EU, the foremost concern for the new government will be the economy. "The world is suffering from the financial crisis and the EU from its debt crisis. This means an austere outlook for a sound Chinese economy which has seen a downturn in recent months," he said. "The top priority, therefore, is to keep our economy going."

The target for 2020 is to double GDP and per capita GDP, which entails maintaining a minimum growth rate per annum of 7.2%, he added. Alongside this effort, economic reforms will be made in terms of tax and financial reforms as well as creating equal opportunities for urban and rural inhabitants.

**"The situation is changing rapidly...If China wants to implement new policies quickly, it will need to rely on foreign partners."**



**Xining Wang**, Press Counsellor at the Mission of the People's Republic of China to the EU



**John Farnell**, Principal Adviser in the European Commission Directorate General for Enterprise and Industry

This top priority is understandable, noted **John Farnell**, Principal Adviser in the European Commission Directorate General for Enterprise and Industry, though it is doubtful that implementing technical reforms will be sufficient to maintain the Chinese economy without considering the deeper underlying issues in the country and the world at large.

"There are a lot of underprivileged people in China," he underlined. "The 7% growth figure hides the strains in the system." Though Chinese economic growth has been



high, the distribution of income and social services has worsened as a result of political and social systems.

It will not be easy for the new government to postpone tackling issues that have been avoided for years, stressed Farnell. As it stands, 40% of Chinese exports go to the US and EU, both of which are struggling economically. This alone should be seen as a call to shift from China's current economic paradigm. There is, however, strong resistance to this coming from vested interests that are resisting industrial reforms and benefiting from income inequality and low regulatory and labour costs.

With the growth of the last thirty years driven by cheap land and cheap and plentiful labour, the time is coming when China needs to rethink its economic policies. "The situation is changing rapidly," he concluded. "If China wants to implement new policies quickly, it will need to rely on foreign partners."

**"The new government must shift its strategy to the improvement of people's lives and livelihoods"**



**Lina Song**, Professor and Chair in Economic Sociology and Chinese Studies at the University of Nottingham

In recent years there has been growing discontent in China as a result of this increasing inequality, indicated **Lina Song**, Professor and Chair in Economic Sociology and Chinese Studies at the University of Nottingham. For the last ten years, investment-driven GDP growth has been the supreme aim of China's economic policies, while personal spending has always been low.

As China's middle class grows, the country risks falling into a middle income trap unless changes are made to the governing economic structures. "The new government must shift its strategy to the improvement of people's lives and livelihoods," she added, suggesting four actions that should be taken to ensure this.



**"I do expect that reforms will take place in the near future"**

**Zhang Lirong, Chargé d'Affaires at the Mission of the People's Republic of China (PRC) to the EU**

Firstly, the state must have less influence on the economy. "Letting the market work on its own will be more sustainable for economic growth," she said. Changing the structure of GDP composition to focus more on consumption might drastically improve the lives of Chinese citizens

The second action is to remove state monopolies in key sectors. Thirdly, she continued, policies to improve the livelihoods of citizens should prioritise the society's most vulnerable members. Finally, and most importantly, the political system needs to be re-examined in order to create a more representative and equal system.

While the economy is the top priority for the new government, political reforms will be a necessary part of the process. "I do expect that reforms will take place in the near future," Zhang Lirong said. In some ways, this is already occurring with direct elections happening on the township level.

These elections are the beginning of a more grassroots approach to democracy which will be bolstered by new social policies. "First of all, social equality will carry a greater weight in policy decisions in order to provide equal opportunities for everyone," he said.

"China wants to improve its social contract," stressed Cui Hongjian, Director of the Department for EU Studies at the China Institute for International Studies (CIIS), in a video intervention from Beijing. "China wants to adhere to a philosophy of social justice in order to improve its credibility and position on the global stage." Reforms in the areas of education, medical care and social security will figure prominently in the new leaders' agenda.

## CHINA'S URBAN/RURAL DIVIDE AND RETHINKING HUKOU POLICY

One of the more divisive issues in China is the Hukou (household registration system). This system restricts migration between urban and rural areas and greatly limits opportunities for those rural residents wishing to move to China's burgeoning cities.

"The Hukou system has led to a two-class society," indicated **Gudrun Wacker**, Senior Associate in the Research Division Asia at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP). "With 230 million people – the population of Germany and Russia together – registered in rural Hukou living as second class citizens in China's urban areas, the dimensions of this problem are almost unbelievable."

The root of the Hukou dilemma is how to manage differences in urban and rural areas, noted Zhang Lirong. "Although the economy is strong and continues to develop, there are still clear differences in rural and urban areas," he stressed. "With this system as it is, we cannot say that China will enjoy moderate prosperity in the future."

**"There is a sense of urgency in China for more political reforms. Civil society is a big driver for these reforms and their use of new media plays a big role in effecting change."**



**Gudrun Wacker**, Senior Associate in the Research Division Asia at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP)

Two things may be done to resolve this issue, he continued. Improvements in rural living standards will serve to improve the lives of rural inhabitants. On the other side of the equation, China is aiming to raise the urbanisation rate – currently at 51% - to over 60% by 2020. "Moving more people to medium-sized cities would create more benefits for urban populations," he concluded.

## CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS AND CHANGES IN THE CHINESE MEDIA

In some Asian countries, quality of life improvements are often led by civil society organisations, Islam said, adding that the voice of civil society has been under-represented in China.

“We need to make clear that China’s civil society is not entirely independent,” agreed Wacker. In many cases, groups that offer services normally provided by civil society actors are government-sponsored. Furthermore, though many such groups are active in demanding reforms on local levels, there are yet to be larger-scale actions initiated and seen through by these organisations.



“Chinese politicians are ambiguous about civil society actors,” she indicated. On the one hand, politicians recognise that they need support from society at large while on the other hand, there exists a perception that these civil society actors want to undermine the political system and might be supported or guided by forces outside China.

Currently, she continued, in 2011 there were 250,000 registered social groups, 2,510 foundations and 202,000 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in China. In addition to that, many organisations registered as enterprises serve similar purposes. One thing is certain, she concluded. “There is a sense of urgency in China for more political reforms. Civil society is a big driver for these reforms and their use of new media plays a big role in effecting change.”

Over the last thirty years, as China’s economy boomed, so too did its media, noted **Zhang Xinghui**, Brussels Bureau Chief for the China Youth Daily. “Traditional media has developed quickly in China,” he noted. Prior to 1978 and the Open Door Policy, there were only 50 newspapers in all of China. This number has increased to over 2000 newspapers, 8000 magazines and 400 television stations, he said.

While traditional media have done quite well, new social media are also seeing vast increases in number of users. Currently, he noted, there are more than 530 million internet users in China, a 2000% increase since the year 2000. “Chinese internet users now outnumber the entire population of the EU,” he stressed. “I believe that media in the future will play an increasingly important role in effecting change.”

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**Zhang Xinghui**, Brussels Bureau Chief for the China Youth Daily

The effect of new media on China – now the largest media market in the world, with Chinese versions of Google (Baidu), Youtube (Youku) and Facebook (Renren) – has been and will continue to be a valuable way for ordinary people to express themselves and make their voice be heard by those in power. In addition, the Chinese government is increasingly using the power of social media to interact with an ever more aware population.

## WHAT ROLE FOR THE EU?

China has enhanced its role in international trade and affairs in the last decade, with the EU-China Strategic Partnership<sup>1</sup> playing a great part at aligning the interests of two of the top global economic forces. “We are happy to deal with the new leadership which in recent years have been more exposed to the international agenda and specifically engaged in EU-China relations,” noted **Viorel Isticioaia-Budura**, Managing Director for Asia at the European External Action Service (EEAS).

“We are happy to deal with the new leadership which in recent years have been more exposed to the international agenda and specifically engaged in EU-China relations”



**Viorel Isticioaia-Budura**, Managing Director for Asia at the European External Action Service (EEAS)

In recent years, the EU and China have worked to create synergies and share experiences beyond their longstanding trade partnership. In particular, he said, over the last two years great efforts have been made to identify areas of common concern between the EU 2020 Strategy and China’s Twelfth five-year plan for economic and social development.

<sup>1</sup> [http://eeas.europa.eu/china/index\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/china/index_en.htm)

As China's new leadership adopts its role in March 2013, he foresees much closer alignment of efforts to identify common priorities. The past year in particular has seen important developments in the EU-China relationship. The three-tiered approach of high-level political dialogue, broadened trade relationship, and people-to-people exchanges is aimed at working with China to expand its global position commensurate with its economic and political power.

"We are trying to inject substance into a real strategic partnership going beyond bilateral agreements," he said, "so that China can play a responsible role in global structures now and for the future."

The political dialogue was bolstered this year by two high-level meetings – in Brussels and Beijing – which demonstrated that the two parties can find important ways of cooperation on international issues.

"There is huge potential in our strategic partnership, for example in the area of social security reform," Zhang Lirong underlined. "The Chinese middle class is currently 27% of the population and this is expected to increase to 40% – about 600 million people – with a purchasing power of \$10tn by 2020. We would like to share experiences with the EU on this and other issues."

In terms of trade, the last ten years has seen a tripling of the bilateral trade volume between the EU and China. There is still much potential for further development, particularly in the areas of innovation, technology, small and medium enterprises and new industrial sectors searching for global top-level partners. "China remains for the EU one market with many possibilities," underlined Isticioaia-Budura.

"In China, we must focus more on innovation and technology and in these fields, EU countries can provide valuable assistance," agreed Zhang Lirong. "We expect that China and the EU can keep their status as important trading partners."

The final pillar of the EU-China Strategic Partnership – people-to-people exchanges – has had a fruitful year. Through these exchanges, there has been demonstrated a strong potential for introducing civil society organisations, universities, NGOs, and other groups to one another as well as a confirmation that cultural exchanges are meaningful and successful, Isticioaia-Budura underlined.

"These three pillars show that together we have a good vision about how to build our relationship for the future," he concluded. "The challenge now is how to tackle the priorities of China's new leadership."

## ANNEX I – Programme

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15.30 – 16.00 Welcome coffee and registration of participants

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16.00 – 18.00 PANEL DEBATE

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The rise in China's global economic and political clout has raised expectations that Beijing will seek a higher profile on the international stage. China's new leaders, however, are likely to spend more time, energy and money on addressing internal challenges and meeting public expectations. How can the European Union help China to tackle its national economic and social challenges and meet the key concerns of China's growing middle class? How much pressure is there from the Chinese public as regards quality-of-life improvements such as a cleaner environment, higher food-safety standards, water security, and social protection? Can the EU assist China as it seeks to meet the diverse demands of its "urban billion"- and an ageing population? How difficult will it be for China to undertake the much-needed switch from exports and labour-intensive manufacturing to growth based on domestic demand and innovation? What are the key areas for future cooperation between Europe and China?

<a href="#">John Farnell</a>	Principal Adviser in the European Commission Directorate General for Enterprise and Industry
<a href="#">Viorel Isticioaia-Budura</a>	Managing Director for Asia at the European External Action Service (EEAS)
<a href="#">Lina Song</a>	Professor and Chair in Economic Sociology and Chinese Studies at the University of Nottingham
<a href="#">Gudrun Wacker</a>	Senior Associate in the Research Division Asia at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP)
<a href="#">Zhang Lirong</a>	Chargé d'Affaires at the Mission of the People's Republic of China (PRC) to the EU
<a href="#">Zhang Xinghui</a>	Brussels Bureau Chief for the China Youth Daily

ADDITIONAL VIDEO CONTRIBUTIONS BY:

<a href="#">Cui Hongjian</a>	Director of the Department for EU Studies at the China Institute for International Studies (CIIS)
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Moderated by [Shada Islam](#), Head of Policy at *Friends of Europe*

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18.00 End of debate

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The debate was followed by an invitation-only dinner organised by the Arenberg Foundation.





## ANNEX II – List of Participants

**Victor Angelo**, International Affairs Strategist & Columnist, Visao Magazine

**Raluca Ardeleanu**, Policy Officer, Horizontal Coordinator, Public Service Ethics, European Commission Secretariat General

**Olivier Arifon**, Professor, Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB) Information and Communication Sciences Department

**Jan Bakkes**, Senior Project Leader, Global and European Outlooks, Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency

**Nicole Baromska-Glab**, Assistant, European Commission: Legal Service

**Sue Basu**, EU Public Affairs Manager, Huawei Technologies

**Louis Bellemin**, Advisor to the President, National Authority for Scientific Research (ANCS)

**Inigo Bilbao**, Director General of Strategic Planning, Municipality of Vitoria-Gasteiz

**Alison Birkett**, Desk Officer, China, Japan and Korea, European Commission: Directorate General for Communication Networks, Content and Technology

**Helene Blondel**, Translation & Sinology, Belgian-Chinese Chamber of Commerce (BCECC)

**Olivier Bulto**, Senior Analyst, K City

**Geert Cami**, Co-Founder & Director, Friends of Europe Les Amis de l'Europe

**David Cantor**, Attorney & Advisor, Telecommunications Law & Strategy

**Christoffer Carleson**, Intern, Permanent Representation of Sweden to the EU

**Bartosz Cielezynski**, Policy Officer, European Commission: Directorate General for the Environment

**Maja Cosic**, Second Secretary, Mission of Serbia to the EU

**Pierre-Valentin Costa**, Liaison Officer, EU Correspondent, Inter Euro Media

**Frederick Cutajar**, Mayor, Mayor of Santa Lucija

**Elizabeth de Bony**, Senior Director, Burson-Marsteller

**Geoffroy de Carbonnières**, Financial Assets Manager, Next World Group Global Investments

**Stefaan De Corte**, Senior Research Officer, Centre for European Studies (CES)

**Nicolas de Gennes**, Campaign Strategy Advisor, Mostra Communications Media Relations Department

**Frederic de Hemptinne**, Principal Consultant, The Sustainable Synergies Group

**Jean De Ruyt**, Senior European Policy Adviser, Covington & Burling

**Philippe de Saint Aulaire**, Head of Environmental Affairs, AeroSpace and Defence Industries Association of Europe (ASD)

**Diedrick Degryse**, Cameraman, Xinhua News Agency European Regional Bureau

**Bart Dessein**, Professor Chinese Studies, Gent University Faculty of Political and Social Sciences

**Toon Diegenant**, Co-founder and Partner, I-Propellor Innovation & Action Lab

**Burckhard Doempke**, Managing Partner, Conference Interpreters International

**Yan Dong**, Correspondent, China Central Television (CCTV)

**Jing Dong**, Senior Toxicologist, Dow

**John Douglas Hamilton**, Political Officer, Embassy of the United States of America to Belgium

**Lucie Durocher**, Policy Officer, Agency for the Promotion of European Research (APRE)

**Virginia Enache**, Deputy Director, Romanian Office for Science and Technology (ROST)

**Julia Ewert**, Research Fellow, EU-Asia Centre

**Theresa Fallon**, Senior Associate, European Institute for Asian Studies (EIAS)

**John Farnell**, Principal Advisor, European Commission: Directorate General for Enterprise and Industry

**Vicent Fenollar**, Advisory Officer, Paragon Europe

**Claudia Fischer**, Multilateral Relations Officer, European External Action Service (EEAS)

**Michael Fridrich**, Policy Officer, Securities markets, European Commission: Directorate General for Internal Market and Services

**Carole Fromage-Duforêt**, Senior Consultant, MSL Group

**Jing Fu**, Chief Correspondent, China Daily

**Qian Fu**, Journalist, China Youth Daily

**Nathalie Furrer**, Director, Friends of Europe Les Amis de l'Europe

**Andreas Galanakis**, Policy Director, American Chamber of Commerce to the EU (AmCham EU)

**Alessandro Gallo**, Student, Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB)

**Marjorie Gass**, Senior Consultant (Energy, Environment), Cabinet DN

**Hervé Gauthier**, Programme Manager, International Cooperation, European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization (CENELEC)

- Tihomir Georgiev**, Head of Finance, Contracts and Audit Section, European Commission: Delegation to Georgia
- Ziruo Gu**, Third Secretary, Mission of the People's Republic of China to the EU
- Guo Haijian**, First Secretary, Mission of the People's Republic of China to the EU
- Qian Han**, Third Secretary, Mission of the People's Republic of China to the EU
- Hannes Hanso**, Research Fellow, International Centre for Defence Studies
- Loksan Harley**, Associate, Kreab Gavin Anderson
- Carsten Hess**, Vice President and Head of Corporate Representation, Deutsche Post DHL
- Jean Hiller**, Political Officer, Mission of the United States of America to the EU
- Mathieu Hoeberrigs**, Principal Administrator, Tourism & International Relations, European Commission: Directorate General for Enterprise and Industry
- Jie Hu**, Deputy Secretary General, Federation of Young Chinese in Europe
- Hongbo Hu**, First Secretary, Mission of the People's Republic of China to the EU
- Yiyang Huang**, Counsellor, Mission of the People's Republic of China to the EU
- Peipei Hui**, Journalist, Xinhua News Agency European Regional Bureau
- Daniela Iller**, Policy Officer, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) EU Office
- Shada Islam**, Head of Policy, Friends of Europe Les Amis de l'Europe
- Vioel Isticioaia Budura**, Managing Director, Asia and the Pacific, European External Action Service (EEAS)
- Julia Jasinska**, Manager, Public Affairs, DIGITALEUROPE
- Dietlind Jering**, Policy Officer, International Co-operation, European Commission: Directorate General for Research and Innovation
- Huiting Jia**, Analyst, Fédération Générale des Jeunes Chinois en Belgique
- Yang Jiang**, Second Secretary, Mission of the People's Republic of China to the EU
- Jan Jonckheere**, Editor, Chinasquare.be
- Serge Joseph**, Senior Finance and Contract Manager, European Commission: Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
- David Koczij**, Journalist, DKO Entreprises
- Nancy Kontou**, Managing Director, Kontou Associates
- Achim Ladwig**, Speechwriter for Commissioner Reding, European Commission: Directorate General for Communication
- Milan Lajciak**, Ambassador, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Slovakia
- Patrick Lambert**, Director, Executive Agency for Competitiveness and Innovation (EACI)
- Viktorija Laurinaityte**, Independent researcher,
- Carl Lawson**, Student, University of Kent Brussels School of International Studies (BSIS)
- Victoire Lefebvre**, Chargée de mission "Think Tanks", Service de presse et d'information, Permanent Representation of France to the EU
- Guinian Liao**, Counsellor, Mission of the People's Republic of China to the EU
- Xi Lin**, Official, Mission of the People's Republic of China to the EU
- Ge Liu**, Correspondent, People's Daily European Center
- Jia Liu**, Assistant Journalist, China Daily
- Martina Lodrant**, Policy Officer - Trade Strategy, European Commission: Directorate General for Trade
- Maité Lubs**, Member, EGMONT, Royal Institute for International Relations
- Gwennaëlle Maes**, Student, University of Kent Brussels School of International Studies (BSIS)
- Michel Maricau**, Executive Adviser, International Electronics & Engineering (IEE)
- Mauro Martini**, EU Regional Policy and Programme Analyst, International Organization for Migration (IOM) Regional Liaison & Coordination Office to the EU
- Martin Matas**, Analyst, European Commission
- Giuseppe Luigi Mazza**, Senior Adviser Foreign Affairs, China Delegation, Group of the European People's Party (EPP)
- Jing Men**, InBev-Baillet Latour Professor of European Union - China Relations, EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies Department, College of Europe
- Giles Merritt**, Secretary General, Friends of Europe Les Amis de l'Europe
- Rony Mertens**, perss brussel europe diplomatic / Manager Robrivin, . perss perss brussel europe diplomatic / Media desnerck
- Vincent Metten**, EU Policy Director, International Campaign for Tibet
- Ning Mi**, Policy Officer, Mission of the People's Republic of China to the EU
- Iulia Mihail**, Director, Romanian Office for Science and Technology (ROST)
- Zhang Min**, Financial Analyst, Next World Group Global Investments
- Mary Minch**, Director, Legal Service, European Commission: Directorate General for Research and Innovation

**Michael Morass**, Deputy Head of Unit, International Affairs and Enlargement, European Commission: DG for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

**Matthias Müller**, Senior Policy Adviser, Liaison Office of Saxony to the EU

**Gyorgyi Nyikos**, Counsellor, Cohesion Policy, Permanent Representation of Hungary to the EU

**Javier Palmero Zurdo**, Deputy Head of Unit, European Commission: Directorate General for Internal Market and Services

**Stefano Palmieri**, Member, European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)

**Mireia Paulo**, Researcher, Madariaga - College of Europe Foundation

**Gisela Payeras**, Director, Government Affairs Emerging Market & Asia Pacific, GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) Corporate & European Government Affairs

**Moritz Pieper**, PhD candidate, University of Kent Brussels School of International Studies (BSIS)

**Boudewijn Piscaer**, Project Consultant, Univerde

**Piero Piu**, Head of Division & Administrative Services, Municipality of Grimbergen

**Sylvain Plasschaert**, Professor, University of Antwerp (UFSIA)

**Jean Plume**, Director, Association Belge de Services (ABS)

**Matthew Powell**, Chief Executive Officer, Primax

**Frank Raes**, Head of unit, Climate Risk Management, European Commission Joint Research Centre: Institute for Environment and Sustainability (IES)

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**José Antonio Segura**, Counsellor, Embassy of Spain to Belgium

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