



DRÖGE & VAN DRIMMELEN

corporate communication & public affairs

The Energy Transition in China and the EU

Opportunities for public
affairs in the relationship
between China and the EU

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Preface

The Dr2 2021 Trend Report contains interviews with experts on the challenges and opportunities for public affairs in the relationship between China and the EU with regards to the global energy transition. The report gives insight in the potential role of public affairs and international cooperation in the path towards reaching net-zero by the 2050 (U.N.) and 2060 (China) climate goals in these two major CO2 producing markets. The report analyzes high-level trends coupled with practical insights for governments and businesses into how win-win solutions in the global energy transition can be created with the help of international public affairs.

The contribution of the Dr2 network to the energy transition

All offices within the Dr2 network facilitate public-private cooperation in the energy transition. For example: in China our consultants closely monitor and analyze China's climate policy legislation and political developments, focusing on innovation stimulus and enforcement mechanisms to reach the governments' 2030 and 2060 goals. Our team in Shanghai finds and develops potential international projects through Chinese government channels. They aim to match demand and supply by bringing European innovative solutions to the forefront while advising companies on navigating cultural differences.

Our office in Brussels developed tools for companies to interpret the 'fit for 55' package on the impact for the energy transition in their sector. Brussels works closely together with the Copenhagen office to include the impact of environmental taxation, the EU's Emission Trading System and proposals for a Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism.

Our office in New York closely monitors the climate and energy negotiations in multilateral settings like the U.N. High-Level Dialogue on Energy and the COP26, and helps companies to provide input on the discussions. Our office in The Hague organizes and operates closely on the tri-fold policies for CO2-reduction, clean energy and energy-savings.

Our Dutch office deals with topics that are pushing the transition forward: green gas, green hydrogen, increasing network capacity for clean energy, CO2-utilization (CCU) and Thorium reaction. We are active in many public-private energy networks and initiatives, such as the Dutch Association for the Charging Network and the CCU-Alliance.

About the Dr2 network

Dr2 Consultants is a strategic consultancy network that operates at the intersection of corporate communication and public affairs, with offices in The Hague (Dröge & van Drimmelen), Brussels, Copenhagen, New York and Shanghai. We consider it important to contribute to the professionalization of the field of public affairs. Our employees are (active) members of the Professional Association for Public Affairs (BVPA), our founder and director Frans van Drimmelen wrote the Handbook on Public Affairs, and the office in The Hague organised the annual Ben Pauw Lezing between 2011 and 2016. Since 2017, we publish an annual trend report in which we research trends and developments in the field of public affairs.

Introduction

As the world is making an attempt to transition towards carbon neutrality, it becomes clear that relevant change can only be pushed forward by governments guiding and stimulating civil society in a speed that meets the goals of the Paris-Agreement. The immense challenge of reducing global warming with 1,5 degree Celsius defies borders and can only be addressed through cooperation of international public and private sectors. The global energy landscape varies widely in terms of socio-economic, political and geographical developments. To bring governments up to speed on the latest promising innovations from across the world, and to capitalize on these innovations in a global level playing field, close collaboration with civil society is needed. The methods of public affairs are often crucial to bring governments and society together in complicated policy debates.

So how can we use national and international public affairs to reach the very challenging global climate goals? To answer this question, we have researched the progress made on the energy transition in two of the world's largest CO2 producing markets: China and Europe. More specifically, we looked at what governments and businesses in these markets can do to further strengthen bilateral cooperation in order to accelerate implementation of promising innovations in the energy sector. As public affairs is an important tool in bridging government goals and business ambitions into concrete action, we take this as a lens for the answers we gather from the experts active in the field.

The focus on China

China is crucial for the global sustainable development agenda because of its sheer size in terms of population, production, consumption, energy use, and carbon footprint. As the second largest economy with 1.4 billion people, global success of the 2030 agenda of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (U.N. SDGs) will largely depend on successes achieved in China and with China internationally.

China is the world's largest contributing country to CO2 emissions, currently producing 28% of global emissions. At the U.N. General Assembly in September 2021, in the run-up to COP26, President Xi Jinping pledged that his country would end coal fired power plants abroad – a substantial shift in China's investment in energy infrastructure abroad. It's an example of steps that are being taken, but there is of course still a long way to go.

China cannot reach its climate ambitions alone, no single country can, for that matter. As a party to the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, China has engaged in and committed to global dialogue around the energy transition, for example by ratifying the Paris Agreement. Moreover, China is already the world's largest investor in energy infrastructure projects around the globe. With China's important role in mind, it is thus interesting to see how this relates to the ambitions and goals that Europe has set in the Green Deal. In this narrative of bridging cultural differences towards a common goal, public affairs can play a prominent role. The fact that public affairs has a different meaning and/or practical interpretation in these markets, already establishes an interesting and important base for further discussion.

Differences in public affairs in Europe and China

As Dr2 research of the past two years has pointed out, the state of global public affairs is far from static. Local, national, and multilateral institutions everywhere increasingly find the world stage to discuss and tackle problems that defy regional borders. By interacting with their global counterparts, these institutions reshape the policy process through pragmatic and ideological adaptation for common goals. Fighting climate change is per definition a challenge that requires public organizations all over the world to learn from each other in terms of policy processes, -content, and -governance. Important for the objective of this research is that these learnings also present an opportunity for reshaping the role and influence of the private sector in policy dynamics so that we can work towards a green economy in a much more efficient way.

Public affairs is commonly seen as the strategic representation of an organization's interest towards governments, political parties and the public domain. In Europe, the practical implementation often includes open dialogue and discussions with policy makers with the aim to form relevant policies together that are influential for public and private parties. In China, the process of public affairs from a cultural and historical background can be indicated as more hierarchical. Government affairs are mostly done on a G2G (Government-to-Government) level, especially for public perception. This G2G process does however not exclude companies, as many organizations in vital sectors like the energy sector are semi-public.

So what can Europe and China learn from each other? How can differences in public affairs protocols be bridged to reshape global public affairs and ultimately reach climate goals? Through interviews with Chinese and European experts from both the public and the private sector this research examines the main theme; The role of public affairs in accelerating the global energy transition. In the next pages, we discuss the following topics:

- 1. The state of Europe's and China's climate policies**
- 2. The state of international collaborations**
- 3. The case for a global business case**
- 4. The role of public affairs**



1. The state of Europe's and China's climate policies

European climate policy

The European Union – which has recently released its own ambitious ‘fit for 55’ climate policy – could be seen as a rival to China’s leadership in clean energy technology like hydrogen, but the good bilateral cooperation on energy between many of its Member States and China could become key in the journey to carbon neutrality.

The European Green Deal (EGD) sets the objective of becoming climate neutral in 2050 in a manner that contributes to European economy, growth, and jobs. This objective requires a greenhouse emissions reduction of 55% by 2030, as confirmed by the European Council in December 2020. The current EU target of at least 32% renewable energy by 2030 is not sufficient and needs to be increased to 38-40%. Therefore, the Fit for 55 plan calls for an increased need for EU action. The EU should take steps in developing a cost-efficient accelerated sustainable renewable energy within a more integrated energy system. However, this cannot be achieved by Member States alone. An EU approach is needed to provide the right incentives to Member States with different levels of ambition to accelerate the energy transition from the traditional fossil fuel-based energy system towards a more integrated and more energy-efficient energy system based on renewables. Though there are different energy policies and priorities among Member States, it is more likely to achieve the required deployment of renewables with EU level action.

‘The Netherlands does a lot with climate adaptation. Issues that are considered include water drainage, heat stress and such techniques, ensuring that clean energy can be generated, and combating environmental pollution by interest groups that are specialized in this. Climate adaptation is therefore an important subject and a spearhead in the Dutch trade missions we carry out to China. Taking issues like this as a driving force in bilateral relations is a tactic that the Chinese could adapt from us as well.’

– Jaap Smit – King’s Commissioner of South Holland

China's climate policy

China is the world's largest consumer of electricity, well ahead of the second-place consumer, the United States. Currently, 80% of China's energy comes from fossil fuels, but its climate plan envisions only 14% coming from coal, oil, and natural gas in 2060. It has accelerated the transition towards green development, implementing the Paris Agreement and actively participated in global climate governance;

- Carbon intensity has accumulatively dropped by 18.8%;
- Clean energy now accounts for 23.4% of its energy mix;
- China leads the world in installed capacity and output of photovoltaic and wind power generation.

China's ambitions are to scale up nationally determined contributions and setting aims to peak its carbon dioxide emissions before 2030 to achieve carbon neutrality before 2060. Also President Xi has pledged to inject strong impetus into global climate actions as well as green and low-carbon development worldwide.

'China generates more solar power than any other country, and its wind power installed capacity is three times that of any other country last year; however, there is still a long way to go due to the enormous size of China and the huge population, but the steps they're doing now should be taken as lessons for the rest of the world.'

– Simon Lemin – Director Industry Services Division TÜV SÜD Greater China

Trend 1: Governments learn from each other

Progress is being made in both China and Europe. Many respondents specifically praise the Chinese government for investing in the renewable energy industry, enabling the rest of the world to make use of cheaper solar photovoltaics (PV) and wind power technologies. Also, it is widely acknowledged that China is far ahead in developing smart cities demonstrated by things like hydrogen facilities and the enormous market for electric vehicles. European companies expressed a wish for their governments to take note from the Chinese government in how low-carbon industries are stimulated through infrastructure and urban planning policies.

In Europe, governments and businesses work well together in planning, funding, and operating small-scale innovation projects in promising areas like hydrogen. The democratic approach taken seems to lead to buy-in from the public and private sector for reaching their common goals together. Companies in China recognize the potential of this increased dialogue at an earlier stage in the policy planning process, in which public affairs can play a vital role.

'Once the Chinese have decided to go in a certain direction, they do so with great confidence and without hesitation. As they are still in a stage of economic growth, they are less inclined to take part in participatory processes or consultations. So if they can do it themselves, they also want to do it themselves.'

– Robert Dencher – Chair Dutch National Hydrogen Platform

Government-to-government (G2G) exchanges are an excellent tool for policy makers to obtain learnings from each other about policy content, as well as about policy processes. Interestingly, even though as Dr2 we often work together with both European and Chinese governments to promote their own green energy technologies overseas, for the purpose of this research politicians and civil servants asked were hesitant to collaborate. Many potential interviewees asked indicated they did not feel comfortable or were not able to openly comment on international energy policy matters.

Bilateral exchanges between Chinese and the national and international European governments would benefit both governments and businesses, as the key to successfully stimulating a national green economy might be found in a combination of European and Chinese policy strengths: a democratic policy process leading to coordinated ambitious (urban) planning policies which create a regional level playing field. Companies like the organizations that were interviewed for this research indicate they are well-suited to provide input to these government-to-government exchanges to benchmark where policies are a success for the market, and where their output lacks striking power or practical acumen.



2. The state of international collaborations

Urgent action is needed to speed up the global energy transition. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported that worldwide temperatures are currently rising more quickly than feared, and countries are still not doing enough to tackle climate change. In a historic opportunity to accelerate action on clean, affordable energy for all (U.N. SDG7), this September the High-Level Dialogue on Energy took place during the U.N. General Assembly.

In this first gathering in 40 years of political leaders solely dedicated to energy, Heads of State and Government as well as leaders from business, foundations, and international civil society formed a global roadmap with recommended milestones and actions to accelerate achievement of SDG7 by 2030; as well as voluntary commitments from Member States and other stakeholders in the form of over 130 “Energy Compacts” setting out plans to reach net zero emissions by 2050.

The global roadmap that the High-Level Dialogue on Energy produced is a fundamental guideline for all U.N. members to voluntarily commit to the transitional goals of 2030 and eventual goals of 2050/2060. Skeptics criticize the voluntary nature of the international commitments and call for more strategic moral leadership. Relevant for our research purposes, the plans laid out in the “Energy Compacts” predominantly cover national or regional collaborations and do not have a distinct international focus.

Different countries and regions are individually addressing their current situations, as their economic developmental states warrant distinct focuses. As Maslow’s hierarchy of needs dictates: only when one level of societal needs have been ‘satisfied’ can the focus be shifted to the next.

‘The definition of ‘energy transition’ means different things for different people: It is fluid depending on whether you are a dynamic developing economy or whether you are in an advanced economy - whether you are in a high-income bracket or a low-income bracket. I think we should look very simple at the functionality of things. What is it that we are trying to achieve?’

– Christof van Agt – Director Energy Dialogue, International Energy Forum

Successful international collaboration requires trust that each is doing its part, which can only be established through mutual understanding and the willingness to bridge over differences. Companies that have boots on the ground in multiple countries already engage in pragmatic economic cooperation which addresses the local issues at hand. Involving them in not only national and regional plans but also in multilateral policy decisions would greatly aid practical implementation of global roadmaps.

‘Europe can put herself in a better position if she tries to understand what is actually going on in China and accept that they have a different order of priorities than we have. There are a few big reasons to engage in much more pragmatic economic cooperation. Then you are not only dealing only with the climate issue, but also industrial issues at the same time.’

– Ulco Vermeulen – Board of Directors Member Gasunie

Policy that stimulates or even follows pragmatic international economic collaboration can also develop more efficient enforcement and governance mechanisms. Successful private sector collaborations often have a proven history of years of overbridging cultural differences and consolidating strengths. The many cases mentioned in the interviews of this study show that these kinds of examples can provide input and practical insights for international collaboration mechanisms.

‘Chinese people are big risk-takers, such as whenever they have an idea, they are eager to test it on a large scale and put in into the market. On the other hand, Europe is really good when it comes to taking initiative. So working together, we can better achieve the carbon neutral mark.’

– Zhonghua Xu – VP, Head of R&D TotalEnergies Asia

Trend 2: International policy does not reflect reality

Whereas there are already successful international energy collaborations – and as this research has shown – specifically between China and Europe, multilateral climate negotiations and consequential international policies do not reflect practical realities. There is not yet a global level playing field in terms of policy priorities. International high-level events like the Dialogue on Energy and COP26 are mainly focused on getting all countries to commit to shared policy objectives and binding one-size-fits-all agreements.

‘In this current geo-political climate, negotiating legally binding agreements is very time-consuming. We are nine years away from the 2030 targets. We may want to go for more functional understanding, more flexible agreements. If we create trust on this agenda, countries may rely on these informal mechanisms’
– Christof van Agt – Director Energy Dialogue, International Energy Forum

Bilateral cooperation takes a more pragmatic approach and is mostly led by the private sector which looks beyond cultural differences and policy priorities and focuses mostly on opportune economic collaboration. Often, (semi-)private companies have invested significant time and resources to overcome practical challenges that are overlooked or ignored by their national governments. Many experts interviewed for this research stress that further bilateral dialogue and binding agreements on practical economic collaboration are needed.

‘The private sector fosters new ideas and products, but it needs a favorable environment in order to thrive. Companies need clear government policies in order to make investment decisions. That means long term goals are necessary. Subsidies can of course guide investment in certain directions but it is important that policy supports technology-neutral solutions and that the solutions will be viable once subsidies are removed.’

– Flora Kan – Team Leader, EU-China Energy Cooperation Platform

Once supported by more favorable bilateral cooperation policies like investment and trade agreements, pragmatic economic collaboration like the (semi-)private projects already happening between Europe and China could form – together with other successful international cooperation projects - part of a blueprint for binding multilateral cooperation agreements. These agreements should entail technology-neutral policy objectives and subsidies that stimulate further international innovation.

3. The case for a global business case

Renewable energy resources such as wind, water and sun are not divided equally across the globe. More international collaboration can mitigate climate and geography risks for a more even distribution of green energy. In addition, some interviewees see regional cooperation as very beneficial to put infrastructure to the test that can then be expanded to geographically and culturally similar neighboring countries.

However, without a level-playing field for companies in all continents, innovations on clean and affordable energy cannot reach those areas where they are most needed. Trade barriers and lack of trust prevent companies to share technologies and innovate together. Moreover, vastly differing socio-economic conditions prevent innovations to reach those markets most in need because demand does not trigger innovative supply.

‘You can’t do much about natural conditions, but you can do something about the global market. If you can organize those markets together, everyone benefits’.

– Ulco Vermeulen – Board of Directors Member Gasunie

Promising innovative European developments like those in hydrogen would benefit from better international cooperation as it would open them up to economies of scale. For example, China’s economy has been opening up to a certain extent but more transparency is needed to allocate resources more efficiently and to encourage foreign companies to invest. For this exchange in technology and working together on innovation, mutual trust is needed. Interviewees suggest that European and Chinese governments can take the lead in developing this trust by making solid and fair bilateral agreements about common hurdles like investment structures, exchanges of funds and talent, and transparency in cooperation.

‘Governments need to listen to the experts, whether they come from chambers of commerce, or industrial associations or policy advisory teams, and private companies need to get involved in these organizations so that they can steer policy and standards. This works well already in many sectors.’

– Simon Lemin – Director Industry Services Division TÜVSÜD Greater China

Trend 3: Civil society needs governments to create a global business case

In all interviews we observe that dialogue between the public and private sectors, as well as between countries, is already happening. But to actually achieve the commitments laid out in the plans formed in intergovernmental events like the High-Level Dialogue on Energy and COP26, a global business case must be formed.

Some of the interviewees mention unequal competition to be one of the main reasons for a lack of trust in international collaboration. To compete in a global economy, (semi-)private and public, national and international companies should have equal standing. Government policies and stimuli in both Europe and China can create baseline conditions in which a level playing field is guaranteed and societal impact and business priorities are balanced.

'We need to find a new business model including government, SOEs, private sector, and even financial sectors to ensure sustainable cooperation between them. The main role of the government should be to try and provide a clear vision for the whole country, in the sense that it provides a detailed roadmap with an action plan for SOEs and private sectors. Furthermore, China must make a more open and transparent market, so that resources could be allocated more efficiently, which would encourage foreign companies to invest in the future.'

– Zhonghua Xu – VP, Head of R&D TotalEnergies Asia

Both nationally and internationally operating companies should be included in bilateral dialogues to ensure that policy can stimulate or at least follows innovation and so that a level playing field for the home economy and the import- export markets can be established.

Public affairs can help in creating a framework for this practical roadmap to navigate in nationally and internationally, whilst taking into account the specific local government dynamics. Civil society is more than just companies; input from interest associations can ensure vulnerable groups are not left behind.

4. The role of public affairs

Between China and Europe there are shared goals but also vastly different socio-economic circumstances. Policy influences practical reality and vice versa; understanding and explaining these nuances in a local context allows public affairs professionals to bridge cultural differences for sustainable success.

‘Time and manpower are issues; government cannot do everything for everyone. As public affairs professionals, it’s important to understand and being able to deal with cultural differences, having a physical presence in China helps. Visiting once or twice to experience the workings of trade missions or the negotiations with different stakeholders is necessary to gain first-hand experience.’
– Robert Dencher – Chair Dutch National Hydrogen Platform

As the journey to carbon neutrality seems far away, it is important to note that there is a common understanding of the importance of creating a more sustainable future together. While the EU member states are looking into an integrated European approach, China similarly is looking at an integrated model for its energy mix. By 2060, China is set to have 42% of its energy coming from solar and nuclear, while by 2025 this is only expected to be 6%.

‘The challenge to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060 is immense. The EU’s experience in the use of markets to give new impetus to the power sector while guaranteeing security of supply and the integration of an increasing amount of renewables into the power sector and the markets is likely to be of interest to Chinese policy makers.’
– Flora Kan – Team Leader of the EU-China Energy Cooperation Platform

China is the factory of the world with a relatively young industrial infrastructure, still being a developing country. On the other hand, it is also the biggest investor in sustainable low-carbon energy sources, home to advanced technological & digital know-how & talents. Europe often struggles with providing an economically interesting market of scale for high-tech innovation companies.

Aligning interests will only be successful when more awareness and mutual understanding is developed. This requires open dialogue and transparent decision making with cultural sensitivity. Public affairs plays an important role in bridging differences to work towards our common goals.

'In Europe, public affairs is crucial in the energy transition. It requires collaboration, synchronized decision making, and aligning interests. Which is not easy, especially in China but it wouldn't surprise me if we worked closely together in a few years' time so I think public affairs has a role that everyone benefits from.'

– Ulco Vermeulen – Board of Directors Member Gasunie

Trend 4: Public affairs bridging the world

Whilst all respondents identify cultural differences between China and Western countries play an important role in cooperation, none of them see these differences as unbridgeable. Taking the time to understand each other, building trust and offering (reasonable) transparency are seen as the best methods to come to closer collaboration in both the private and the public sector.

'Companies that want to go to China often must have an entrance through the government, without this it can be very difficult to do business.'

– Jaap Smith – King's commissioner of South Holland

Respondents underline that the government plays an undeniable role in allocating and developing international projects in both Europe and China, and that public affairs is especially important in the energy sector to be able to establish commercial success creating understanding based on the expertise and experience of private parties. Several ways to do this have been mentioned, for example participation of private companies in chambers of commerce and associations' dialogues with government to advise on standards and policies, as well as forming broad coalitions together with government to collaborate and synchronize decision-making.

'Public affairs is very important to ensure cross-fertilization, to ensure the transmission of ideas and inspiration. People-to-people diplomacy is excruciatingly important especially at the high levels. It allows producer and consumer to talk to each other in a practical way.'

– Christof van Agt – Director Energy Dialogue, International Energy Forum

Conclusion

Leaders from both civil society and politics recognize the urgent need for further international climate cooperation. Frantic multilateral negotiations show that governments realize what is at stake, and that they still have a lot of work to do. Legally binding agreements are not in place, and informal agreements do not create enough investment security for the private sector. A worldwide level playing field and a global business case need to be created. Also, global agreements need to ensure energy innovations leave no one behind.

Despite international policy negotiations stalling, the (semi-)private sector understands that international collaboration is necessary for further innovation to keep up with the 2030, 2050 (U.N.) and 2060 (China) climate goals. Shared objectives have spurred bilateral projects between China and Europe which have overcome vast cultural and economic preferences and differences. However, for these types of projects to succeed on a larger scale, governments need to facilitate better understanding and trust through solid bilateral trade agreements.

The largest barriers for international cooperation, such as concerns surrounding intellectual property protection, or unequal treatment between private and public sector companies, are not topics of multilateral negotiations but are subject to informal bilateral G2G exchanges. These exchanges between European (national) governments and the Chinese (national) governments could take learnings from existing pragmatic economic collaboration to form policy stimuli and governance structures. These policy frameworks could in turn form part of a blueprint for better international policy, as barriers for international cooperation can only truly be removed when they are dealt with on a global scale.

For governments to learn from each other, an open and honest dialogue which is based on practical realities is needed. Input from civil society is crucial in shaping fair, efficient and equal policy content and -processes. Through public affairs, ideas about practical- and policy solutions are continuously exchanged between the public and private sector. The function of public affairs is to bring convergence between interests: the opportunities & threats, the goals & barriers, the costs & financing, the expectations & fears, the supply & the demand. International public affairs recognizes the practicalities of the energy-transition even across cultural and socio-economic differences. Global public affairs forms a link between different sectors as well as different countries.

Internationally operating companies, or companies that have the ambition to have a positive impact on the energy transition, do wise to organize their public affairs function well. Public affairs professionals that take the time to understand and explain cultural and socio-economic differences can truly build the bridge between the private and the public sectors that is needed for commercial success, accelerated innovation, and ultimately a successful global energy transition.

Methodology

In the wake of COVID-19, the international consultants of the Dr2 network set out to interview leading figures in government, business, science, and NGOs actively involved in the energy transition between Europe and China. The aim was to create a diverse pool of interviewees with experience in both local and international public affairs.

In general, the response has been very positive, although conducting interviews in person was still a challenge on occasion. It did show us that people have adapted the new ways of working, in which we are all comfortable using different technologies to connect virtually.

However, we also noticed that getting responses from relevant government leaders in China as well as Europe to contribute was very challenging, unlike many other research projects we conduct. It looks that we touched upon a topic that is very important as well as sensitive, which we can see as a trend in itself.

When preparing the questions, the idea was to see public affairs as the global communication attaché to create more understanding. Not only between government, stakeholders and organizations but more specifically in the global narrative towards sustainability.

The Dr2 Consultants network, with offices around the world, hopes this report and the detected trends will fuel the reader to activate a global mindset within themselves and their organization, to so help in the collective effort in realizing carbon neutrality.

Many thanks

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the following industry leaders and experts in the field that contributed to this year's Dr2 trend report:

Flora Kan

Team Leader

EU-China Energy Cooperation Platform (ECECP)

Zhonghua Xu

VP, Head of R&D TotalEnergies Asia & National Chair

Energy Working Group European Union Chamber of Commerce in China (EUCCC)

Simon Lemin

Director Industry Services Division

TÜV SÜD Greater China

Ulco Vermeulen

Board of Directors Member

Gasunie

Robert Dencher

Chair

Dutch National Hydrogen Platform

Jaap Smit

King's Commissioner

Province of South Holland

Christof van Agt

Director Energy Dialogue

International Energy Forum (IEF)

In the next section a short biography is included, describing the expertise and tenures whether in dealing with the energy transition and/or public affairs.



Flora Kan

Team Leader EU-China Energy Cooperation Platform (ECECP)

Dr Flora Kan is currently the Team Leader of the EU-China Energy Cooperation Platform (ECECP). She has over 25 years' experience in energy policy development. She was the EU Director of the EU-China Energy and Environment Program, the Chief Technical Advisor of the United Nation Development Program-National Development Reform Commission China End Use Energy Efficiency Program and was one of the international experts involved in the design of the China Energy Labelling Program. In 1995, under the EU Synergy Program, she formed the Romanian Energy Policy Association and was elected four times as a member of the Board of Administration.

Flora graduated in Physics and Theoretical Physics from Trinity College, Cambridge University and has a doctorate in Control Engineering from City, University of London. Before her move into energy policy development, she worked in the application of artificial intelligence in nuclear power plant safety and in advanced scheduling and planning at UK Atomic Energy Authority Winfrith and Hitachi Europe respectively.



Zhonghua Xu

**VP, Head of R&D TotalEnergies Asia
National Chair Energy Working Group European Union
Chamber of Commerce in China (EUCCC)**

He has worked at Tokyo University for 7 years as senior researcher and faculty member, and as Chief Scientist of Total China for 9 years, and now he is VP and Head of Total R&D for Asia. In 2019 and 2020, he was National Chair for R&D WG of EUCCC. He has 20+ year-experience on management at world-class academy and industry, with strong innovation background covering materials, energy, chemicals, environment, microelectronics, etc. In past 12 years, he helped Total build up wide network on energy domains for innovation, strategy, intelligence and business develop.

Zhonghua graduated from Tsinghua. He was the founder of International Green Electronic Conference. As Deputy Managing Director, he founded ECOPAC. As University Representative, he built up Tokyo University Wuxi Office. As Chief Scientist, Zhonghua initiated and managed 40 energy projects for Total in China. As VP of Total R&D Asia, he is now in charge of strategy, intelligence and project development.



Simon Lemin

Director Industry Services Division TÜV SÜD Greater China

Simon Lemin was appointed to lead the Industry Services Division for Greater China in 2018, prior to that he was focused on the strategic development for North Asia. Based in Shanghai, Simon is responsible for the overall P&L as well as for contributing to strategic options and development of Industry Services Division in the region. Since 2019 Simon has also been leading the Hydrogen Business in North Asia for TÜV SÜD. Developing products and services to support our customers across the full lifecycle of Hydrogen, from generation, storage, transportation and end users with a special focus on Green Hydrogen production.

Simon began his career in 2002 with Strachan & Henshaw as a mechanical design engineer where he gained experience in the UK nuclear industry, moving to British Nuclear Group where he led 3D CAD teams and was responsible for designing mechanical handling solutions for decommissioning of the UK's nuclear power plants. Simon received his Bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering from Aston University, England.



Ulco Vermeulen

Board of Directors Member Gasunie

Ulco Vermeulen is a member of the Board of Directors of Gasunie. Next to this, he is chair of 'Groen Gas Nederland' and chair of the strategy commission of the International Gas Union. He has had a long history in the gas- and energy industry. From 1984 until 1990, worked as a senior policymaker at the Department of Energy policy and Natural Gas. Thereafter, he held several strategic and commercial functions at Gasunie. Within these capacities he was responsible for the export of natural gas to Germany, amongst other responsibilities,

Currently, he plays a pivotal role in the (social) energy debate in the Netherlands. Thanks to both his function at Gasunie and the various other positions he holds, such as chair of the Board of Directors of the Energy Delta Institute, he has a broad background and in-depth knowledge of the energy transition and the challenges that this transition entails.



Robert Dencher

Chair Dutch National Hydrogen Platform

Robert Dencher is the current chair of the Dutch National Hydrogen Platform. This platform consists of some 50 companies, institutions, the Ministry of Environment, and the Ministry of Economic Affairs. Within this capacity, he aims to include hydrogen pragmatically in the energy transition.

Before he was appointed chair of the Dutch National Hydrogen Platform, he worked at Shell for 36 years. During this time, also gained experience in China (2001-2005) and South-Korea (2005-2010). After developing to Head Government Relations in the Netherlands, a capacity in which he had to liaise and maintain dialogue with senior government officials, politicians, and other relevant stakeholders. Due to his extensive experience at Shell, his perspective and in-depth knowledge of the energy transition on a global level are highly relevant. Moreover, in his current capacity as Chair of the Dutch National Hydrogen Platform he deals with a multitude of actors and stakeholders within the energy sector.



Jaap Smit

King's Commissioner South Holland

Mr. Jaap Smit is serving as the King's commissioner of South Holland since 2014. As the head of a province in the Netherlands, the King's commissioner plays an important role within the Dutch provincial administration and is the official representative of the central government in the province.

He is also chair of the Association of Provinces of the Netherlands (IPO) and the Economic Board Zuid-Holland. Furthermore, he is member of the Advisory Board of the Volksbank. Between 2010 and 2014 Mr. Smit was the trade union leader of the Christian National Trade Union Federation (CNV). Before this he was a director at Slachtofferhulp Nederland, an institution for victim support. He also experienced a long career in management since 1994, working as a senior consultant at KPMG and at Andersson Elffers Felix. His public affairs expertise is founded through experience from different disciplines and levels of government, various additional functions and board memberships, and social involvement.



Christof van Agt

Director Energy Dialogue, International Energy Forum

Christof van Agt is director of energy dialogue at the International Energy Forum (IEF) in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia to advance producer-consumer country collaboration through IEF ministerial fora, and stakeholder meetings with partner organizations, such as the G20 and the International Gas Union (IGU).

His work at the IEF includes coordination of the trilateral work programme with the International Energy Agency (IEA) and Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), as well as collaboration on energy security, market transparency, sustainable and inclusive transitions with other institutions, industry stakeholders, national agencies, and research centers. His areas of expertise cover energy markets policy and regulation, and international affairs. Before taking up his duties at the IEF he was Senior Research Fellow at the Clingendael International Energy Programme with the Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael where he published and lectured diplomats, and private sector trainees on energy market diplomacy and fundamentals.

Previous editions

Previous editions of the 'The Hague Late Summer Drinks', the 'Ben Pauw Lecture' and the 'Annual Trend Report'

2020

Sustainable Development Goals

2019

Global Public Affairs

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The Rise and Impact of Citizen Lobbyism

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Trends in Public Affairs

2016

International Diplomacy and Public Affairs

Sigrid Kaag

2015

Modern Councillors Acting as Lobbyists for Local Residents

Ingrid van Engelshoven

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The Ties between Politics, Journalism and Lobbyists

Pieter Broertjes

2013

Acting with Integrity

Thom de Graaf

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Constant Adaptation and Acting with Flexibility

Niek Jan van Kesteren





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