

The Sofia Guidelines for Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries

On July 7, 2018, the 7th Summit of China and Central and Eastern European Countries (hereinafter referred to as "CEECs") was held in Sofia, Bulgaria. Prime Minister Boyko Borissov of the Republic of Bulgaria, Premier Li Keqiang of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, Prime Minister Edi Rama of the Republic of Albania, Chairman of the Council of Ministers Denis Zvizdic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic of Republic of Croatia, Prime Minister Andrej Babis of the Czech Republic, Prime Minister Juri Ratas of the Republic of Estonia, Prime Minister Viktor Orban of Hungary, Prime Minister Maris Kucinskis of the Republic of Latvia, Prime Minister Zoran Zaev of the Republic of Macedonia, Prime Minister Dusko Markovic of Montenegro, Prime Minister Viorica Dancila of Romania, Prime Minister Ana Brnabic of the Republic of Serbia, Prime Minister Peter Pellegrini of the Slovak Republic, Prime Minister Miro Cerar of the Republic of Slovenia, Deputy Prime Minister Jaroslaw Gowin of the Republic of Poland and Minister of Finance Vilius Sapoka of the Republic of Lithuania attended the meeting. They expressed appreciation and gratitude to Bulgaria for the efforts it had made as the host country to ensure the success of the meeting. Austria, Belarus, the European Union (EU), Greece, Switzerland, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development were present as observers.

The Participants note the progress and achievements of China-CEEC cooperation (hereinafter referred to as "16+1 Cooperation") and the implementation of the Budapest Guidelines for Cooperation between China and CEECs and are convinced that 16+1 Cooperation across various fields is on the way to becoming a practical and beneficial cross-regional cooperation platform.

The Participants remain committed to the principles of mutual respect, mutually beneficial cooperation and building an open world economy, making economic globalization more dynamic, inclusive and sustainable. They further reaffirm their commitment to develop cooperation in the spirit and according to the principles of the UN Charter.

The Participants underline that 16+1 Cooperation constitutes an important part of and a positive complementary to the relationship between China and the EU and that they

are ready to work together, through this format and in line with their respective competences and existing commitments to ensure that China-EU relations continue to develop in a balanced way. The Participants are ready to actively implement the Belt and Road cooperation MOUs that they signed to bring more results to this cooperation while maintaining its openness, based on market rules and international norms which, on the part of EU member states would also complement relevant EU policies and projects.

The Participants reiterate that they will cooperate on the basis of willingness, transparency, inclusiveness, reciprocity, fairness and mutual benefit through consultation and cooperation, which will contribute to the achievement of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, within the applicable norms of international law, and in accordance with the laws, regulations and respective competences of each other and EU standards and policies for EU member states and candidate countries.

EU member states and candidate countries within the 16 CEECs support the EU-China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of peace, growth, reform and civilization and EU-China Agenda 2020, including actively promoting practical cooperation through pilot projects in the framework of the EU-China Connectivity Platform , the Investment Plan for Europe and the extended Trans-European Network (TEN-T) and supporting the conclusion of an ambitious and comprehensive Agreement on Investment between the EU and China.

The Participants, acting upon the spirit of the Medium Term Agenda and past Summit Guidelines, formulate and issue the Sofia Guidelines for Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries with "Deepening open and pragmatic cooperation for inclusive prosperity" as its theme.

1. The Participants support Croatia in hosting the 8th China-CEEC Summit.
2. Strengthening 16+1 coordination
 - (1) The Participants support the Secretariat for China-CEEC Cooperation in strengthening coordination together with relevant departments of China and CEECs so as to further improve the system and structure of cooperation.
 - (2) China will invite National Coordinators of the 16 CEECs to visit China and attend 16+1 National Coordinators' Meeting during the first half of 2019. Croatia will hold 16+1 National Coordinators' Meeting during the second half of the year.
 - (3) The Participants support continuing to hold meetings between the Secretariat for 16+1 Cooperation and CEEC Embassies in China and strengthening its communication with associations and coordination centers in various fields. The

Participants encourage the Secretariat to conduct 16+1 cooperation consultations in China and CEECs through bilateral and multilateral activities. The Participants support website building for China-CEEC cooperation to provide more accessible information to institutions, companies and people in our countries.

The Participants recognize the need to conduct a review of existing 16+1 cooperation mechanisms and meetings to ensure efficient use of administrative resources of Participants and a more focused, result oriented approach.

(4) The Participants will explore the possibility of conducting exchanges and cooperation in areas such as international law and training for civil servants.

(5) Participants will organize activities within the framework of 16+1 cooperation in relation to the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and some CEEC countries.

(6) The Participants welcome the constructive role of observers and other third countries and institutions in 16+1 cooperation, and their potential involvement on the basis of prior consultation and consensus by all Participants.

3. Deepening Practical Cooperation in Trade, Investment and Connectivity.

While welcoming the growing cooperation in trade between China and CEECs and China's recent efforts to improve market access and investment environment, the Participants recognize the need to develop a more balanced economic partnership, in the case of WTO members in compliance with WTO rules, based on the principles of level-playing field and equal opportunities. The Participants will examine possibilities of practical cooperation in trade in services and e-commerce.

(1) The Participants support the participation of enterprises and institutions from CEECs in the 2nd China International Import Expo to be held in Shanghai in 2019 which aims at increasing exports to China. The Participants commend the establishment of the CEEC exhibition pavilion in Shanghai Pilot Free Trade Zone and support Chinese cities such as Shenyang in building similar platforms. The Participants encourage more Chinese cities and provinces to set 16+1 economic cooperation and trade demonstration zones. China welcomes more CEEC investors' participation in the building of the Hainan Free Trade Port to share in the development opportunities. The Participants encourage the aforementioned platforms and relevant enterprises to take effective measures in promoting trade facilitation between China and CEECs.

(2) The 5th China-CEEC Investment and Trade Expo will be held in Ningbo in June 2019.

(3) The Participants support continuing the meeting of the China-CEEC Investment Promotion Agencies Contact Mechanism in Poland.

(4) The Participants welcome a more active role by the China-CEEC Business Council in Poland in promoting cooperation in trade and investment between China and CEECs and support making the council meeting a regular mechanism. The fifth meeting of China-CEEC Business Council will be held in 2019.

(5) The Participants are willing to strengthen the building of China-EU Connectivity Platform. The Participants agree to promote projects within the Platform on the basis of level playing field, market rules and international norms so as to create a favorable environment where investment in transport is fair and open.

(6) The Participants recognize the importance of open, transparent and non-discriminatory procurement procedures. The Participants support China's accession to the WTO Government Procurement Agreement.

(7) The Participants will further promote container block trains services and combined mode transport solutions, while strengthening cooperation in customs clearance facilitation in the China-Europe Land Sea Express Line to increase the efficiency of border-crossing management and shorten waiting time on border crossings. Inter alia, the use of existing complementary capabilities offered by CEECs and ensuring of smooth flow of traffic in the presence of constantly increasing number of trains.

(8) The Participants welcome the important progress that has been made by China, Serbia and Hungary on the Belgrade-Budapest railway project and are willing to explore the possible extension of the connection between Belgrade-Budapest railway and the Albanian, Croatian, Montenegrin and Slovenian ports, taking note of the Three Seas Initiative proposed by relevant countries. The Participants support moving forward practical cooperation in the development of the China-Europe Land Sea Express Line. The Participants welcome similar infrastructure development cooperation by enterprises from the 17 countries to develop routes of China-Europe Land Sea Express Line and the container block trains services.

(9) The Participants are willing to foster synergies between the Belt and Road Initiative and the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) and its extension to the Western Balkans and the relevant neighborhood initiatives, which would be of benefit to European integration. Coordination on economic cooperation and connectivity between initiatives, including China-CEEC Cooperation, EU-China Connectivity Platform and EU Eastern Partnership, will provide opportunities for deepening cooperation among interested parties.

(10) China, Hungary, Serbia and the Republic of Macedonia will hold the 5th Working Group Meeting and Experts Seminar on Customs Clearance Facilitation Cooperation on China-Europe Land and Sea Express in 2019.

China and the CEECs that are Member States of the EU will cooperate within the structures of the EU-China Agreement on Cooperation and Mutual Administrative Assistance in Customs Matters and of the EU-China Strategic Framework for Customs Cooperation. Eligible CEECs are encouraged to take part in the China-EU Smart and Secure Trade Lanes Pilot Project. China and CEECs are ready to further strengthen cooperation in customs clearance facilitation. The cooperation in customs between China and CEECs will take place within the constraints of their respective competences.

(11) The China-CEEC Customs Cooperation Forum will be held in Poland in 2019.

(12) The 4th China-CEEC Transport Ministers' Meeting will be held in 2019 in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

(13) The Participants continue to support conducting civil aviation cooperation including expanding air connections between China and CEECs. The 1st CEEC-China Civil Aviation Forum will be held in the Czech Republic in 2019.

(14) The Participants welcome China and CEECs' cooperation on various types of infrastructure investments.

4. Cultivating New Drivers for Cooperation in Science, Technology, Innovation, Finance, Green Environmental Protection, Agriculture, Energy, Forestry and Health

(1) The Participants support strengthening mutually beneficial cooperation, based on level playing field, in research and innovation, launching the China-CEEC Science, Technology and Innovation Partnership, holding the China-CEEC Conference on Innovation Cooperation on a regular basis. Participants are willing to work together to build joint labs, conduct joint research, strengthen technological personnel exchanges and conduct cooperation in popular science education, on a voluntary basis. The Participants will explore the possibility of establishing China-CEEC Innovation Capacity Building Working Group in Serbia.

(2) The Participants are willing to take active measures to support the development of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), encourage SMEs and entrepreneurs to strengthen communication and cooperation, and support exploring the establishment of mechanisms for liaison between enterprises. Participants support Croatia in leading the efforts to establish the 16+1 Coordination Mechanism for SMEs, and support China in establishing China-CEEC SMEs Cooperation Zone.

(3) The Participants commend the progress made in the preparation for the establishment of the 16+1 Environmental Protection Cooperation Mechanism in Montenegro, welcome the participation of environmental agencies and enterprises on a voluntary basis and support the bigger role of this mechanism in moving forward environmental cooperation.

(4) Participants encourage financial institutions, on a voluntary basis, to continue to strengthen existing cooperation on investment and financing, introduce innovations in the mode of investment and financing according to the demands of the market, create new financing instruments, strengthen the dialogue between banks and enterprises and explore cooperation on RMB financing and green financial bonds. China would welcome the inclusion of RMB into the Foreign Exchange Reserves of CEECs.

(5) Participants welcome China and more CEECs signing bilateral MOUs on cooperation related to financial regulation and the strengthening of such cooperation.

(6) The Participants support strengthened cooperation between relevant banks and financial institutions in China and CEECs to achieve further expansion of China-CEEC trade and deepened cooperation in areas such as infrastructure and energy. The Participants support the work of the International Working Group on Export Credits.

(7) The Participants support Romania in establishing a 16+1 Smart City Coordination Center.

(8) The Participants support Lithuania in establishing a 16+1 Fintech Coordination Center. The 16+1 High Level Fintech Forum will be held in Lithuania in 2019.

(9) The Participants support greater development for financial cooperation platforms such as the China-CEEC Inter-Bank Association and welcome its first council meeting.

(10) The Participants commend Lithuania for hosting the 3rd China-CEEC Agricultural Ministers' Meeting, the 13th China-CEEC Agro-trade and Economic Cooperation Forum. The Participants deem that the success of these events and decisions adopted play a positive role to moving forward practical 16+1 agricultural cooperation. The 4th 16+1 Agricultural Ministers' Meeting and the 14th 16+1 Agro-trade and Economic Cooperation Forum will be held in China in 2019.

(11) The Participants support exchange of activities between agricultural enterprises in China and CEEC countries, the building of an effective platform for investment cooperation and agricultural machinery and technology cooperation. China will be the partner country of the International Economy Fair in Mostar in 2019 during which an

event related to the 16+1 cooperation will be held. The Participants welcome China's efforts to pursue policies aiming to facilitate market access for CEEC products, including inter alia agricultural goods, in order to promote more balanced trade between China and CEECs.

(12) The Participants will discuss the possibility of formulating a China-CEEC Agricultural Cooperation Action Plan, and aim to work together to move forward the building of 16+1 Agricultural Cooperation Demonstration Zones in China and CEE countries, and "16+1 E-Commerce Logistics Hub and Pavilion for Agricultural and other Products" in China and CEE countries and to explore cooperation on the production of fruits and vegetables and gardening. The Participants encourage the relevant institutions to develop instruments to support the Agriculture Cooperation Demonstration Zones and the implementation of development projects of common interest.

The Participants welcome the collaboration between the Academy of Agricultural Sciences of China and relevant scientific institutions in CEECs to build joint labs and conduct joint agricultural researches.

The Participants support activities such as exchanges of information and experts on the prevention and control of animal diseases, plant pests and diseases and training for veterinarians and phyto-sanitary inspectors.

The Participants encourage the strengthening of communication and cooperation in green development and rural revitalization through seminars, forums and other events.

The Participants are willing to take measures to facilitate the market access of agricultural and food products in line with respective laws and regulations and on the precondition of safety, including speeding up the finalization of the procedures for meeting the requirements for import of agricultural products from CEE countries into China. The Participants may jointly conduct study of cooperation on highly infectious and severe diseases of mutual interest.

The Participants will explore the possibility of establishing a veterinary science cooperation center in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Participants will be informed on the developments regarding this initiative.

(13) The 4th China-CEEC Health Ministers' Forum will be held in 2019. Interested Participants support existing Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) centers in Hungary, the Czech Republic and Montenegro and are willing to explore the building of TCM centers in other countries, welcome the China Academy of Chinese Medical Sciences

and local TCM universities conducting direct cooperation with medical universities in CEECs and support exploring building herbal medicine cultivation bases in CEECs.

(14) The Participants support deepening bilateral dialogues on agricultural irrigation policy and exchanges and sharing best practices on agricultural irrigation technology and experience. The Participants support multilateral agricultural irrigation exchanges and cooperation within frameworks such as the China-Europe Water Platform and the China-EU Water Policy Dialogue to move forward relevant cooperation projects.

(15) The Participants commend Serbia for hosting the 2nd China-CEEC High-Level Conference on Forestry Cooperation and support the holding of high-level meetings on a regular basis, the further strengthening of cooperation on areas such as forestry research and education and forestry trade and investment between China and CEECs. The Participants welcome visits to China by CEEC delegates for forestry-related exhibitions and activities to promote mutual understanding.

(16) The Participants welcome the role of the China-CEEC Energy Dialogue and Cooperation Center in Romania and commend its efforts in conducting joint energy research projects such as national researches and technical exchanges.

(17) The Participants agreed to establish a Global Partnership Center of CEECs and China in Bulgaria to provide policy advice and legal advice, as well as expertise for the 16+1 cooperation when needed.

5. Expanding People-to-People Exchanges

(1) The Secretariat for Cooperation between China and CEECs will continue to invite high-ranking officials and press corps from CEECs to visit China in 2019.

(2) The Participants declare the year 2019 as the 16+1 Year of Education and Youth Exchange. The Participants support the strengthening of mutual understanding through dialogues, visits and training programs and the deepening of cooperation in education and youth area. The Participants commend China for hosting the 6th China-CEEC Education Policy Dialogue and are ready to conduct education capacity building projects together. China will invite education officials and school principals to visit China and have education capacity building training. In order to strengthen dialogue among CEEC and China's universities, CEE countries are welcome to participate in the China Education Expo in 2019. The Participants support establishing a 16+1 Youth Development Center in a CEEC. China will continue to hold the Bridge of the Future China-CEEC Youth Exchange Camp in 2019. The 7th China-CEEC Education Policy Dialogue and The 6th meeting of China-CEEC Higher Education

Institutes Consortium will be held in a CEEC in 2019. A 16+1 winter festival for college students will be organized in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2019.

(3) The Participants support continuing to expand tourism cooperation with CEECs within the framework of 16+1 cooperation. The Participants support continuing to expand the scale of and further facilitate two-way tourism and exchanges, work for the implementation of more convenient traveling procedures and encourage more direct flight connections. The Participants support the tangible development of tourism cooperation platforms and strengthening cooperation between local governments and agencies. The 5th China-CEEC High-Level Conference on Tourism Cooperation will be held in 2019 in Riga, Latvia.

(4) The Participants support the implementation of the Hangzhou Declaration on Cultural Cooperation (2018-2019) and the Cultural Cooperation Plan between China and Central Eastern European Countries for the years 2018-2019 and actively cooperate with the Cultural Coordination Center. The 4th China-CEEC Ministers' Forum on Culture Cooperation will be held in the Republic of Macedonia in 2019. The 5th Summer Dance Camp, Field-trip to China by CEEC Painters and the 3rd China-CEEC Dance Masters Workshop will be held in China. The 4th 16+1 Cultural and Creative Industry Forum will be held in Hungary. The 2nd 16+1 Summer Music Camp will be held in CEEC. The Participants encourage in-depth exchanges and practical cooperation among the members of the China-CEEC Dance Culture Union, Music Academy Union, China-CEEC Arts Creation Research Center, China-CEEC Youth Center for Arts Training and Practice and China-CEEC Center for Cultural and Creative Industries Exchanges and Cooperation to conduct in-depth exchanges and cooperation. The Participants support establishing a 16+1 Cooperation People-to-People Exchange Experience Center in China.

(5) The Participants commend Serbia and China for co-hosting the 1st China-CEEC Cultural Heritage Forum. The 2nd China-CEEC Cultural Heritage Forum will be held in 2019 in China. The Participants support the outlining of a road-map for cooperation in the protection of cultural goods and heritage with focuses on world cultural heritage filing and management, joint archaeological research and relics protection. The Participants support building an open, inclusive and equal platform for dialogue and development featuring wide consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits on the foundation of 16+1 cooperation. In the meantime the Participants support the development of cooperation on the protection of cultural heritage to build a stable multi-dimensional inter-governmental cultural heritage cooperation network.

(6) The Participants support China and CEECs in conducting joint projects on translation and publication of each other's literary works and encourage participation in international book fairs in CEECs and the Beijing International Book Fair.

(7) Interested Participants support strengthening communication and cooperation in press release, making the China-CEEC Spokespersons Dialogue a regular mechanism and working actively to establish an Association of Publishing Houses.

(8) The Participants support Romania in organizing a conference on the promotion of women entrepreneurship in 2019.

(9) The 6th China-CEEC High-Level Symposium of Think Tanks will be held in 2019.

(10) The Participants encourage and support strengthening exchanges and cooperation in the field of sports within the framework of 16+1 cooperation. The Participants encourage sport organizations to establish direct contacts, and carry out various activities that may include conducting different sports training programs and holding competitions on ball games and winter sports. The Participants encourage sport organizations to cooperate on international sports affairs of common concern and contribute to the development of sports in each country.

(11) The Participants think highly of the positive role of the Year of Cooperation between Local Governments and Local Enterprises for sub-national exchanges and cooperation between China and CEECs. The Participants support the China-CEEC Association of Provincial Governors in conducting communication and coordination, promoting mutual understanding at a sub-national level and deepening sub-national cooperation. The 6th working group meeting of Local Provincial Governors Association will be held in 2019.

(12) The 4th China-CEEC Capital Mayors Forum will be held in 2019 in Tirana, Albania.

(13) The 3rd China-CEEC Mayors Forum will be held in China in 2019.

Annex:

Implementation of the Budapest Guidelines for Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries

1. Stage two of China-CEEC Investment Cooperation Fund went into operation in February 2018.

2. The exhibition of Chinese companies and the China-CEEC Agriculture Investment and Equipment Cooperation Fair were held during the Economic and Trade Fair in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina in April 2018.

3. The China-Bulgaria Commercial Law Cooperation Council was established in April 2018.
4. The 2nd China-CEEC Spokespersons Dialogue was held in Budapest, Hungary in April 2018.
5. The Belt and Road and Regional Financial Cooperation Seminar of China-CEEC Inter-Bank Association was held in Beijing and Chongqing, China in April 2018.
6. The 2nd China-CEEC High-Level Conference on Forestry Cooperation, the 2nd meeting of the liaison group of China-CEEC coordination mechanism on forestry cooperation and the China-CEEC Forestry Research Cooperation Seminar were held in Serbia in May 2018 and the 16+1 forestry web-page was officially launched.
7. The China Brand Show (Central Eastern Europe) was held in Budapest, Hungary in May 2018.
8. The 13th China-CEEC Agro-trade and Economic Cooperation Forum, the 7th meeting of the Consultative Board of the Association for Promotion of Agricultural Cooperation between China and CEECs and the 22nd international AgroBalt 2018 exhibition were held in Lithuania in May 2018.
9. The 6th China-CEEC Education Policy Dialogue was held in Shenzhen, China in May 2018.
10. The 5th meeting of China-CEEC Higher Education Institutes Consortium was held in Shenzhen, China in May 2018.
11. The Experts Seminar on Customs Clearance Facilitation Cooperation on China-Europe Land and Sea Express of China, Hungary, Serbia and the Republic of Macedonia was held in May in 2018. The 4th Working Group Meeting was held in June.
12. The second group of composers from CEEC visited China from May to June 2018.
13. The 2nd China-CEEC Senior Dancers Workshop will be held from May to October 2018.
14. The 2nd China-CEEC Arts Cooperation Forum was held in Chengdu, China in June 2018.
15. The meeting on cooperation in maritime issues was held in Szczecin, Poland in June during the World Maritime Day 2018.
16. The 3rd China-CEEC Cultural and Creative Industry Forum was held in Poland in June 2018.

17. The 3rd China-CEEC Ministerial Meeting on Promoting Trade and Economic Cooperation, the 4th China-CEEC Investment and Trade Expo with Latvia as the Guest of Honor, and the 2nd China-CEEC Mayors Forum were held in Ningbo in June 2018.
18. The 2nd Bridge of the Future China-CEEC youths camp exchanges was held in Chinese cities such as Shanghai in June 2018.
19. The first Technology Exchange Meeting of China-CEEC Energy Cooperation was held in June in 2018.
20. The International Think-Tank Conference "Advancing 16+1 Cooperation Platform- the Way Ahead" was held in June 2018 in Sofia, Bulgaria.
21. The 1st 16+1 Summer Jazz Camp will be held in Changchun, China in July 2018.
22. The 4th Dance Summer Camp will be held in Croatia and Hungary in August 2018.
23. The 1st China-CEEC Environment Ministers' Meeting will be held in Podgorica in September, 2018.
24. The 2nd China-CEEC Cultural Heritage Forum will be held in Hangzhou, China in September 2018.
25. The China-CEEC Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise Cooperation Forum will be held in Cangzhou, China in September 2018.
26. The 4th China-CEEC High-Level Conference on Tourism Cooperation will be held in Croatia in September 2018.
27. The 5th China-CEEC High-Level Symposium of Think Tanks will be held in the Republic of Macedonia in September 2018.
28. The 3rd China-CEEC Transport Ministers' Meeting will be held in Serbia in October 2018.
29. The 1st China-CEEC Library Union Forum will be held in Hangzhou, China in October 2018.
30. The 4th Meeting of China-CEEC Investment Promotion Agencies Contact Mechanism will be held in Poland in October 2018.
31. The China-CEEC Qigong Health Forum will be held in Serbia in October 2018.
32. The 3rd 16+1 Conference on Innovation Cooperation will be held in Bosnia and Herzegovina in October 2018.
33. The 4th China-CEEC Local Leaders' Meeting will be held in Bulgaria in 2018.
34. The 2nd China-CEEC Logistics Secretariat Focal Point Meeting will be held in Chengdu, China in November 2018.

35. The China-CEEC Drug Regulatory Cooperation Forum will be held in the Czech Republic in November 2018.
36. The China-CEEC Central Bank Governors' Meeting will be held in Budapest, Hungary in 2018.
37. The China Investment Forum will be held in the Czech Republic in 2018.
38. The 4th meeting of China-CEEC Business Council will be held in 2018.
39. The 16+1 International Agricultural Demonstration Zone will be established in Plovdiv, Bulgaria in 2018.
40. Martial arts experts will be sent to Poland, Romania and other CEECs for "Martial Arts Silk Road" Training Camp in 2018.