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**RELATIONS BETWEEN CHINA AND THE EU IN THE
CONTEXT OF THE 17+1 INITIATIVE**

Master's thesis

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I hereby declare that I have compiled the paper independently and all works, important standpoints and data by other authors have been properly referenced and the same paper has not been previously presented for grading.

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ABSTRACT

In this work the relations between the European Union and China in the frame of the 17+1 initiative are analysed in order to understand whether this mechanism provides extra opportunity for the EU and China to cooperate with each other or not. The interactions between these players are analysed through the prism of concept of international cooperation, which presumes the availability of similar aims and mutual rewards, which lead to adjustment of policies of participated parties. In addition to that, the patterns of communication of China with the EU and Central and Eastern European countries are analysed. Qualitative document analyses of primary and secondary data and interviews with experts are chosen as the main methods of current research. After conducting the research, it becomes clear, that China and the EU countries, participants of 17+1, have common economic goals, however the rewards are tilted in favour of China. China has adjusted its policies, but there is still no clear regulatory framework from the EU side. In addition to that, China communicates with the EU and Central and Eastern European countries in different ways. Also, the EU still does not have a common strategy on China in case of 17+1, which leads to certain political and economic risks. All these findings bring to the conclusion that at the moment the 17+1 initiative does not facilitate the cooperation between the EU and China.

Keywords: 17+1 initiative, international cooperation, relations between China and the EU.

INTRODUCTION

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China and the European Union, China has experienced dramatic transformation from being one of the poorest countries in the world to becoming one of the main global powers on the international scene. The European Union has since that time also changed dramatically in size as well as in structure. Nowadays, being among the world's top economies, the People's Republic of China and the European Union recognise an ever-increasing need to cooperate more closely with each other in a globalised, more and more interconnected and an uncertain world.

Seven years ago China initiated the 16+1 initiative, which was transformed into 17+1 in the spring 2019. Due to the high number of the European Union countries involved, this mechanism could become an excellent possibility for the EU and China to promote and enhance cooperative relations with each other. After the introduction of the initiative, a lot of articles of different scholars appeared, who analysed it, trying to understand the real intentions of China, evaluating the impacts of the initiative on the relations between the EU and China. Many scholars have been negative regarding this initiative and afraid that 17+1 may contribute to destroy the Union. The other scholars have a completely different opinion. They believe that the 17+1 initiative is complimentary to strategic partnership, established between China and the European Union, and serves as a tool, which strengthens the ties with Central and Eastern European countries and the EU as a whole. Due to the fact that there is no single opinion regarding the impacts of the 17+1 initiative on the relations between the EU and China, 17+1 was chosen as the main matter of current research. Thus, the aim of this paper is to analyse the relations between the European Union and China in the context of the 17+1 initiative in order to answer the **research question of this work**, namely: **does the 17+1 initiative facilitate the cooperation between China and the EU?**

This topic was chosen not occasionally. Due to the fact, that Estonia is a country-participant of 17+1 and at the same time, Estonia is a member of the EU, the author of this work finds it very important to investigate the relations between the EU and China in the context of the 17+1 initiative. Moreover, this theme is very topical especially in the light of recent events, when the

negotiations regarding construction of the Tallinn-Helsinki tunnel, using giant Chinese investments, are under way. In addition to that, recently Italy became the first G7 country, who expressed its wish to join the Chinese Silk Road project. Moreover, in 2019 Greece also joined the initiative, changing the project into the 17+1 initiative.

It has already been seven years since the first announcement of the initiative. After so many years it is possible to evaluate some impacts of this initiative on the relations between the EU and China. The author in her work applies the concept of international cooperation in order to impartially assess, whether the 17+1 initiative facilitates the cooperation between two world powers or not. As the result, systemic summarized overview of the EU and China relations in the 17+1 initiative is ready in the frame of current work. The author of this work considers this as a novelty and thus, brings her contribution into the uncovering of understanding of current topic.

In order to achieve the aim of current work, the qualitative document analysis of primary and secondary data was used as the main method to collect necessary data. Due to the high number of available literature, this method is considered by the author to be the best technique to conduct the research on chosen topic. In addition, interviews with the experts of China in Estonia were conducted, in order to better understand the subject.

In order to answer the research question of current work, the research paper is divided into three parts. In the first part of this work, “theory, methodology, literature review”, which is divided into three sub-chapters, the author provides the definition of the concept of international cooperation, which serves as a theoretical base of current research. Also, the methods, which were used for conducting the research, are described in details and the review of the literature on the current topic is provided in the first chapter. In the second chapter, “the 17+1 Initiative”, which is divided into two sub-chapters, the author provides an overview of 17+1 from the beginning till nowadays and emphasizes the importance of cooperation between the EU and China. The third part, “the EU and China in 17+1: goals, rewards, communication”, constitutes the analytical part of current paper. This part is divided into six sub-chapters, where the following topics are discussed: China’s goals, the goals of the European Union and the EU countries, the rewards for the EU and China, the ways of communication of China with the EU and with Central and Eastern European countries, who participate in the 17+1 initiative; the obstacles, which impede the cooperation between the EU and China in the frame of 17+1 and the possible risks for the EU.

1. THEORY, METHODOLOGY, LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. The concept of cooperation

The research question of this thesis is: does the 17+1 initiative facilitate the cooperation between China and the EU? As the focus of this work is on the matter of cooperation between two global partners within the frame of 17+1, the concept of international cooperation was detected to be the main theoretical framework, so-called “starting point” (Flick 2015, 118), on the basis of which to build forthcoming research.

After the World War II, the notion of international cooperation or “cooperation between nations” (Milner 1992, 466) became a focus of different studies of economists, politicians, diplomats etc. The desire for peace and stability during these times in the economic and security affairs led scholars to seek for possible ways of cooperation. Many years have passed since that time, but cooperation remains one of the main tools for the states to interact with each other. As Helen Milner writes in her article: ”Than, as today, cooperation has proved to be as elusive to realize as to analyse” (*Ibid*). Whereas cooperation remains still important, it is necessary to define the meaning of this notion.

Although the concept of cooperation became the centre of concern of many scholars, no single theory of international cooperation was created. Despite this, the scholars achieved a consensus on a definition of cooperation. Common definition of cooperation among nations is provided by Helen Milner. Citing Charles Lindblom, she writes in her article that cooperation occurs “when actors adjust their behaviour to the actual or anticipated preferences of others, through a process of policy coordination” (*Ibid* 467). This definition of cooperation consists of two important components. The first component presumes that each participant has its goal(s) and its behaviour is directed towards achieving this goal(s). Explaining this Milner adds, ” It needs to be the same goal for all the actors involved, but it does assume rational behaviour on their part” (*Ibid* 468). The second important component of the notion of cooperation is, that cooperation presumes that cooperative

parties will be granted with gains or rewards. “The gains need to be the same in magnitude or kind for each state, but they are mutual. Each actor helps the others to realize their goals by adjusting its policies in the anticipation of its own reward” (Milner 1992, 468) says Milner, explaining the second component of the definition of cooperation. It does not mean that the countries are there to help each other altruistically, but it means that by means of cooperation the participants expect to improve their own position, which leads to regulation of their own policies.

Xinyuan Dai, Duncan Snidal, and Michael Sampson in their article also provide a definition of cooperation, saying that the cooperation is “the coordinated behaviour of independent and possibly selfish actors that benefits them all” (Dai, Snidal, Sampson 2017). Although their definition has the same characteristics, as it has been previously discussed, they specify, that “cooperation occurs not only among individuals but also among collective entities, including firms, political parties, ethnic organizations, terrorist groups, and nation-states” (*Ibid*). Usually the cooperation between the nation states is defined in the concept of international cooperation, but despite this, international cooperation may involve other actors. From one side this assumption seems to be evident, but from the other side it is very important to understand that. Especially in the frame of this work, where the cooperation between the EU - the union of nation states, and the People’s Republic of China – the nation state, is under the discussion.

As it was previously mentioned, in order to establish cooperation, participating actors need to have the same goal. However, it is mistakable to think that the actors with conflicting goals cannot cooperate with each other. Xinyuan Dai, Duncan Snidal and Michael Sampson point out the important finding, that even in case of conflicting goals the cooperation is still possible, because “actors with conflicting goals nevertheless share a common interest that leaves much room for strategic interaction and for cooperation” (Dai, Snidal, Sampson 2017). Eiiti Sato also shares this point of view saying:” that the natural condition is that the existence of cooperation indicates that there may be conflicting points, real or potential, but that the parties are willing to hear arguments regarding the interests of others and to seek negotiated solutions and, to the extent possible, considered satisfactory to all parties “ (Sato 2010, 45). By this statement he points out that conflicting points are not only possible, but the existence of conflicting points is even natural. Moreover, in case of cooperation the parties are willing to work with each other in order to find common agreements in order to satisfy all involved parties.

It should also be mentioned that cooperation may be initiated with different purposes, for instance: to establish cooperation between interested parties, to improve it, to increase interactions between involved actors etc. Eiji Sato confirms this statement, saying that in the field of international relations states can initiate cooperation with the aim to establish interactions or even to increase them with other states or regions (Sato 2010, 46). The purposes of cooperation, initiated by nations, can also be different, for instance: economic, political or social (*Ibid*).

This thesis is dedicated to the relations between the EU and China in the framework of the 17+1 initiative. Having discussed the concept of international cooperation, the positions of different authors regarding this notion were described. The current research is built upon the distinct approach of international cooperation, provided by Helen Milner. As the promotion of cooperation between the EU and China in the frame of 17+1 is the main research focus of this work, the interactions between the EU and China within this project will be discussed in accordance with the main elements of cooperation, described in Milner's article.

The above mentioned conception of cooperation does not cover the communication patterns between the involved parties. The author of the research considers this to be the biggest drawback of current theoretical approach. As the author of the paper believes, that this is a very important issue, the ways of communication of these two world powers will also be analysed in current work. In order to provide further research on this topic, the research methods, which were applied in this work, will be discussed in the following chapter.

1.2. Methodology

In order to achieve the goal of this work and to answer the research question, the qualitative analyses, in the form of document analyses and interviews with the experts, was chosen as the method to conduct the research because it allows to investigate the topic more deeply, to get more details and to look at the topic from different angles. As Uwe Flick writes in his book, qualitative research method allows "to discover new aspects in the situation under study" (Flick 2015, 11).

Among different forms of qualitative research the document analyses of primary and secondary data was chosen as the main method to conduct the research within this field. Among the primary documents, which were analysed for the purpose of this work, there were official documents, such

as: the EU-China 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation 2013; elements for a new EU strategy on China of 2016; European Parliament resolution of 16 December 2015 on EU-China relations; European Parliament resolution of 12 September 2018 on the state of EU-China relations; Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament. EU Strategy towards China: Implementation of the 1998 Communication and Future Steps for a more Effective EU Policy of 2001; European Commission's policy paper regarding EU-China relations of 2003; Joint Communication to the European Parliament 2016; China's Twelve Measures for Promoting Friendly Cooperation with Central and Eastern European Countries; The Medium-Term Agenda for Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries. In addition to the documents, mentioned above, the speeches of key officials of the EU and EU countries were analysed for the sake of this work, namely: the speech of Staffan Nilson during the 9th China International Finance Forum; the speech of Federica Mogherini at the plenary session of the European Parliament on the state of the EU-China relations in September 2018, the speech of former Prime Minister of Poland, Donald Tusk, at the Poland - Central Europe - China Economic Forum in 2012, the welcoming speech of the Prime Minister of Romania, Victor Ponta at the Economic and Trade Forum China –Central and Eastern Europe 2013, the opening speech of the Prime Minister of Latvia Mr. Māris Kučinskis on the 5th meeting of the Heads of Government for Central and Eastern Europe and China in Riga, the speech of Victor Orban, the Prime Minister of Hungary at the China – Central and Eastern Europe summit in Budapest in 2017, the speech of Mr Andrej Plenković, the Prime Minister of Croatia during the Opening of the 9th Business Forum of Central and Eastern European Countries & China, held in Dubrovnik in 2019. Among the secondary data there were articles of different scholars and experts of this field.

While choosing a particular method of research, different advantages and limitations were taken into consideration. In favour of qualitative document analyses speaks the fact that documents are already produced and available by the moment of research. This notion helped to save time on collecting information during conducting the research. Among the limitations of this method there were the following aspects: huge amount of articles of different scholars, which needed to be read through; the documents, which had other points of focus than current work, needed to be sorted out; problems to find and access some information, especially concerning the Chinese side. Despite the mentioned limitations, the existence of already produced documents was considered to be an overwhelming advantage. That is the reason why this method was chosen as the main method to conduct the research on this topic.

In addition to qualitative document analyses, the interviews with China experts in Estonia were conducted during September-October 2019. Transcripts of interviews are added in the Appendix 1. The letters with the request to participate in the research were sent to nine people, who were well-known in Estonia as China experts or who commented publicly on the EU-China relations in local newspapers. The list of main questions for the experts is added in the Appendix 2. The questions were formulated in accordance with the structure of current work, taking into consideration the main components of the concept of international cooperation, which serves as the main theoretical background of this research. As the limitations of this method were considered the following: a small number of experts in this field in Estonia; inability to reach China experts from the EU and China side; the small amount of experts, who agreed to participate (two agreed to be interviewed, one answered the questions via email and one sent the unpublished article regarding this topic). Despite these limitations, the interviews were conducted, adding certain depth and extra value to the research, helping to answer the research question.

1.3. Literature review

The 17+1 initiative, initially called 16+1, was firstly introduced by the People's Republic of China in 2012. Due to the fact that this project was introduced seven years ago, and one year later it became a part of One Belt One Road initiative, which was a project of significant importance for China and the international community, there appeared a lot of research papers and articles of different scholars regarding this topic, who tried to understand intentions of China and to evaluate the impacts of this initiative onto EU-China relations. After analysing the articles it became clear that the authors had two main standpoints regarding this initiative. These standpoints are provided in the current chapter.

Some scholars believe there are only economic reasons, which motivated China to create the initiative. They have claimed, that the 17+1 initiative is complimentary to strategic partnership, established between China and the European Union, serving as a tool, which strengthens the ties between China and Central and Eastern European countries and consequently, with the EU as a whole. Among them there are Fu Cong and Zhao Chen. In their article these scholars write that there is "no geopolitical consideration like 'divide and rule' strategy to separate the European Union by establishing a special relationship with the CEE countries in China's foreign policy landscape. In fact, China mainly takes the '16+1' and 'BRI' as the tools strengthening the economic

ties with the CEE countries and the EU” (Cong, Chen 2017, 97). They also add that “the economic cooperation on product capacity, infrastructure connectivity and digital economy between the CEE 16 and China are beneficial to the development of the EU economy in all and fit for China-EU strategic partnership” (*Ibid 101*). The other scholars share the same opinion. For instance, Inna Šteinbuka, Tatyana Muravska and Andris Kuznieks in their article write, ” China is exploring new ways to expand its exports, looking for secure and reliable channels and hopes that building up better relations with the CEEC, most of whom are also EU MS, can help push forward its overall relations with the EU” (Šteinbuka, Muravska, Kuznieks 2017, 110). In addition to previous authors, Liu Zuokui supports the idea that China doesn’t want to separate Central and Eastern European countries from the European Union, claiming that China “supports EU’s unity and self-reliance” (Zuokui 2017, 25). He believes that China is interested in developing better cooperation with the European Union and the framework of 16+1 is an efficient tool in order to achieve this. In his article Liu Zuokui writes, “16+1 Cooperation has truly boosted China-Europe cooperation and will become a new driving force for furthering that cooperation” (Zuokui 2017, 26). Another author, He Zhigao in his article examines the 16+1 initiative as a regional platform for cooperation between China and the CEE countries. As the previous scholars, this author also claims, that China has no intentions to separate the CEE countries from the European Union through the bilateral cooperation with them, in contrary China tries to combine the cooperation with the CEE countries in the frame of 16+1 with the cooperation between China and the EU (Zhigao 2017, 122).

The other scholars have a completely different opinion. Their attitude is rather cautious regarding this initiative. In their articles they express concerns that by means of the 17+1 initiative China tries to increase its influence in the region and thus, the 17+1 mechanism may contribute to destroy the European Union. Among them is Alper Erdal, who calls the new strategy of China towards the CEE countries “ a crucial issue that might negatively affect the future of the Union” (Erdal 2018). In addition to that, Evangjelia Sali writes in her article that this initiative is an attempt of China to increase its influence on and presence in the CEE countries (Sali 2018, 8). She adds that the 16+1 initiative is “fueling fears of disunity and of a bilateralisation of the EU-China relations, where Beijing circumvents the Institutions in order to directly negotiate with the different EU capitals” (*Ibid 10*). Slobodan Zečević is also cautious regarding China’s intentions regarding 16+1 project and claims that China has rather political aspects. In his article he says, “China also wants to increase its political influence in the world and get out of encirclement policy led by the USA” (Zečević 2017, 107). He also argues, that instead of reciprocal benefit, which supposed to be gained by both involved parties, China and the EU, from the cooperation within the project, “China

appears as a country that practice a policy of unfair competition” (Zečević 2017, 111). He adds that China practices the policy of protectionism of its national companies and Chinese custom’s politics in some industries serve as barriers for foreign investors, who are trying to enter Chinese market. In his article he writes, “The European Commission estimated that the Chinese trade barriers for entering on China market are the cause of the European trade deficit with China” (*Ibid*). Andris Spruds shares the same opinion as the previous author, that China is practicing unfair competition, giving its companies a priority. In his articles citing the article from the online magazine the Baltic course he says, “the EU legislative and regulatory framework creates strict and transparent tender conditions in a highly competitive business environment. Participation of China’s companies in the construction of this project has been discussed without the agreements being finalized” (Spruds 2017, 47). As Slobodan Zečević, Andris Spruds is also cautious regarding China’s motivations. For him it is still unclear “what the geopolitical underpinnings of China’s vision are” (*Ibid*). Due to China’s growing economic presence, it becomes one of the major global actors. In his article he concludes that “China shapes globalization through its various connectivity initiatives” (Spruds 2017, 47).

In addition to the discussion among the different scholars regarding China’s intentions to initiate the 16+1 mechanism, one more important issue arose from the articles of different authors. Namely, despite the fact that this initiative was firstly announced seven years ago, the European Union still does not have a common strategy towards this issue. Anastas Vangeli confirms this point of view, saying in his article, that although some of the CEE countries have already a tight cooperation with China, “the EU, as in case of 16+1 is slow to formulate the official policy and is rather suspicious of the intentions of China” (Vangeli 2017, 137). Inna Šteinbuka, Tatyana Muravska and Andris Kuznieks have the same opinion. In their article they claim that Chinese policy is centrally well coordinated, while the EU is rather weak “when it comes to framing common political and economic strategies” (Šteinbuka, Muravska, Kuznieks 2017, 114). This may lead to a situation, where member states instead of cooperation, compete with each other when it comes to economic benefit, which in turn, may damage the economies of the majority of MS (*Ibid*). Slobodan Zečević in his article also points out the fact that there is a lack of common EU strategy towards the 16+1 initiative. He emphasizes the need for the Union to have a “common policy towards China to preserve its economic and political interests” (Zečević 2017, 112).

These were the main standpoints of different scholars regarding the 17+1 initiative. From the literature review, provided in current work, it is clearly seen that there is no unanimity among the scholars regarding the initiative. This fact justifies the aim of this research and shows its necessity for uncovering of current topic.

2. THE 17+1 INITIATIVE

2.1. From 16+1 to 17+1

Initially, the name of the project was the 16+1 initiative, which was firstly introduced in 2012. This was a framework for cooperation of the People's Republic of China with 16 Central and Eastern European countries (CEEC). These 16 countries included 11 members of the European Union, namely: Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia; and 5 Balkan countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia. One year later, in 2013, after announcing Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the project of 16+1 was linked to the BRI, becoming "the East European platform for the BRI's implementation" (Hala 2018). In April 2019 at the China-CEEC summit in Dubrovnik Greece officially joined the group, becoming the 12th EU country in this project, after which the initiative was renamed to 17+1.

The aim of this project is to intensify and expand the cooperation between China and the above mentioned countries in different fields, such as investments, transport, finance, science, education, and culture (About 16+1 2016). Within the framework of the 17+1 initiative the People's Republic of China has defined the most prioritized areas for economic cooperation, namely: infrastructure, high technologies and green technologies (*Ibid.*). In the frame of this project the representatives of the member states meet annually at the China-CEEC summits. The earlier Summits were organised in:

2012 - Warsaw, Poland;

2013 - Bucharest, Romania;

2014 - Belgrade, Serbia;

2015 - Suzhou, China;

2016 – Riga, Latvia;

2017 – Budapest, Hungary;

2018 – Sofia, Bulgaria;

2019 – Zagreb, Croatia.

The next Summit in 2020 will be held for the second time, in China (Grieger 2018, 2; Bastian, 2018).

2.2. Cooperation between the EU and China

In order to understand whether 17+1 facilitates the cooperation between two global powers, China and the European Union, it is crucial to understand first of all the importance of cooperation of those two major powers. The People's Republic of China is an important strategic partner for the EU. This statement could be confirmed by the high number of EU-China dialogues, which are held every year. As it is stated in Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council of 2016 "the EU and China are engaged in almost one hundred dialogues and workshops in a typical year" (Joint Communication...2016, 18). Also, the European Union and China are important trading partners for each other. According to the data, provided by the European Union External Action Service, China is the second largest trading partner for the EU and the EU is China's biggest trading partner (EU-China Relations...2018). Trade in goods between these partners is estimated to be more than €1.5 billion a day (*Ibid*). In 2017 the EU exported to China €198 billions and imported €375 billions (*Ibid*). The EU exported to China in 2016 €38 billions of services and China exported to the EU €30 billions of services (*Ibid*). From these figures it is seen that trade between the EU and China has gained an enormous scale. Due to this both the EU and China "have a major stake in each other's sustainable growth and prosperity" (China and the EU 2016).

Staffan Nilson also stressed during the 9th China International Finance Forum, held in October 2012, the importance of China-EU relations, saying, "...trade and investment relationship with China has become a major source of wealth, jobs, development and innovation for both sides, the EU and China. All European countries are facing challenges, synergies but also complementarities of the bilateral trade between the EU and China" (Nilson 2012). Thus, the numbers, mentioned above, show, that trade between China and the European Union has already achieved high results. By promoting better cooperation, there is still a potential to increase trade flows between these two players. "After all, the digital transformation of business and society presents enormous cooperation potential for the EU and China" (Cong, Chen 2017, 96), say Fu Cong and Zhao Chen, confirming opinion about unused potential in the relations between China and the EU.

Apart from the trade, being among the top three world's economies according to the GDP, China and the European Union are the important global actors. As two important global players China and the EU understand the need to collaborate with each other not only in trade, but also in the security field. Andris Spruds, citing in his article Ghiasy and Zhou, says, "The EU and China are both interested in dealing with current traditional and non-traditional global and regional security

challenges such as terrorism, cyber security, energy and environment, human development and resilience. This creates a platform for more coherent engagement” (Spruds 2017, 50).

Nowadays trade and security are two very important fields. Trade helps to improve people’s level of lives, whereas security provides smooth running of trade deals. However, trade and security are not the only reasons, why China and the EU need to cooperate with each other. Federica Mogherini at the plenary session of the European Parliament on the state of the EU-China relations in September 2018 stated, “...Europe and China recognise and understand each other's importance in shaping a more cooperative global order” (Mogherini 2018). In other words, China and the EU are important actors also from the political point of view, they are significant global partners. As Zhou Hong states in her article: ” In an increasingly globalised world, despite differences, China and the EU not only have the potential to work as partners, but also the need and way to cooperate as truly strategic partners” (Hong 2018, 23). This is due to the fact that under the Donald Trump’s rule the United States of America has become a less reliable partner on the international scene, than it used to be before, for both the European Union and China. Tim Rühling confirms this point of view, stating in his article, that nowadays America is “questioning the very foundation of the transatlantic alliance and the rules-based international system” (Rühling 2018). In addition, the world society has lately observed obvious warming trend in relations between China and Russia. Due to these reasons the EU needs to seek for better cooperation with China.

The same situation applies for China as well. In the light of current events, when the US implies constantly new tariffs for Chinese products, the People’s Republic of China is facing the reality, when it needs to seek for more reliable partners on the global scene. That is the reason why from the Chinese side „there is a renewed interest in the EU as a more balanced partner in a multipolar world” (Joint Communication to the European Parliament...2016, 10).

Moreover, the inclusion of the EU into the Belt and Road initiative, was not an occasional, but on the contrary, a logical step from the Chinese side. Being located on the other side of the Silk Road, the EU is seen as a great power with the huge potential market and sufficient political power in the world arena. In other words - “China’s natural counterpart on the other end of the Eurasian landmass” (Rolland 2018), as Nadège Rolland writes in her article. Furthermore, the EU is perceived by China as “a potential major pole within a long sought-after multipolar world that can eventually defy the American hegemon’s rule (*Ibid*).

On the basis of the information written above it becomes evident, that at the current international situation the EU and China are facing the reality, where they need to cooperate with each other more. In 2012 the People's Republic of China initiated the 16+1 initiative, which in 2019 was transformed into 17+1. Due to the high number of the European Union's member states involved, the 17+1 could become an excellent possibility for the EU and China to promote cooperation with each other. Is it as promising in reality? To understand it, the 17+1 mechanism will be further analysed as a possible cooperative platform between the EU and China.

3. THE EU AND CHINA IN 17+1: GOALS, REWARDS, COMMUNICATION

3.1. China's goals

Seven years have already passed since the first announcement of the 16+1 initiative, becoming 17+1 in 2019. In response to constantly rising concerns from the EU side, Chinese leaders and different scholars (Cong, Chen 2017; Zhigao 2017) try to reconvince the society that China does not want to divide the EU and thus, the 17+1 mechanism is complimentary to strategic partnership, established between China and the EU, providing additional cooperation opportunity. Consistent with the concept of international cooperation, discussed at the beginning of this work, the cooperation may be established, when participants have common goals and all the participated parties will be granted with mutual rewards. The possible goals of the People's Republic of China in the frame of the 17+1 initiative will be discussed in the current chapter.

Being a part of One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative, the framework of 17+1 is a project of a significant importance to China. The purpose of OBOR is to “connect Asia with Europe and Africa by the network of roads, railways, ports, airports, gas and oil pipelines” (Zećević 2017, 107). Although the 17+1 initiative is only one part of this enormous project, its significance can't be overestimated, because the task of this initiative is no less and no more, than to connect Asia with Europe.

Initiating of 17+1 project, may be counted as a part of China's Grand Strategy. Zhong Feiteng in his work claims that the vision of the president of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping, is a “two-stage development plan” (Feiteng 2018). This grand plan presumes that between 2020 and 2035, the first stage of it will be completed and the main goal of China will be achieved, which is “to build on the foundations of China's modern economy” (*Ibid*). In the time frame between 2035 and 2050, the second stage of the grand plan will be achieved: China will try to become “a state with substantial global influence” (*Ibid*). In other words, the ambition of China is to become a

leading state in the world arena, and the 17+1 mechanism serves as one of the tools to achieve this goal.

Fu Cong and Zhao Chen in their article say that the 16+1 initiative is a “sub-regional cooperation channel between China and Europe” (Cong, Chen 2017, 94). Among the reasons, why China initiated 17+1, the most commonly revealed reasons by different scholars are economic and political ones. As it has been previously mentioned in this work, China and the EU are important trading partners for each other. Due to the connections, created in the framework of 17+1, China will have better access to the European market, which will allow better delivery of its products on the world markets (Zećević 2017, 107) and also, placing its capital in infrastructure projects will enable “the preservation of Chinese foreign exchange reserves” (*Ibid*), which had been invested in the financial markets and decreased due to financial crisis in 2007. According to Slobodan Zećević, by creating better infrastructure, China hopes to reactivate its gradually slowing down economy by increasing exports and opening new markets for its products (Zećević 2017, 107). Also, by investing into different infrastructure projects in Central and Eastern European countries (CEEC), the economies of these states develop, and thus, China creates “a much more attractive economic partner” (Vangeli 2017, 134) for itself, which in turn, will additionally increase trading capacity between China and the CEEC. Two China experts, who were interviewed during current research, also pointed out the same economic reasons of Chinese behaviour. They commented, that by initiating 17+1, China wanted to create better conditions for export of Chinese goods and by this move to boost Chinese economy as a whole, because “export is the engine of China's economy” (Interviewee 1, Appendix 1). In addition to that one of the experts pointed out that by investing into infrastructure projects, China tries to put into work its huge currency reserves, which otherwise would stay unused and lose their value (Interviewee 2, Appendix 1).

These were the economic reasons, which motivated China to initiate 17+1. Apart from them the scholars and experts of this field reveal the political reasons as well. During the interview one of the experts stated, that in countries like China economic cooperation is tightly connected to politics (Interviewee 1, Appendix 1). The other expert added that “political considerations are leading here” (Interviewee 2, Appendix 1). On the basis of the read literature it may be concluded that this project gives China more political power in the CEE region. Creating cooperative framework such as 16+1 mechanism, which was later linked to Belt and Road Initiative, helps China to create “a China-centered trading network” (Erdal 2018). In other words, China creates an attractive framework for other states, where the interested parties, in order to participate in it, should follow

China's rules, becoming dependable on China. During the interviews some of the experts also pointed out China's desire to increase its power in the region. Among the political reasons, why China initiated 17+1, the experts pointed out in the interviews China's wish to show its presence in the region; to show, that some EU countries have special interests towards China; to achieve better positions; to implement divide and rule policy; to create special relations with the countries. The above mentioned actions allow China to manipulate the positions of the EU as a whole (Interviewee 1, Appendix 1) and to weaken EU's political and economic integration (Interviewee 2, Appendix 1). As a result, this helps to increase political power of China in the region and even in the world arena, which in turn may help China to "get out of encirclement policy led by the USA" (Zečević 2017, 107).

3.2. The EU's goals

What the goals of the European Union in case of the 17+1 initiative are, it is much more difficult to understand, because the framework of 17+1 is established between China and 17 individual countries. Moreover, the EU joined the framework only starting from the fifth 16+1 summit and not as the main participant, but as an observer. Analysing the framework of 17+1 through the prism of the concept of international cooperation gets already stuck on this very first stage, where it becomes obvious, that the EU does not have clearly stated goals, because the EU, as the inseparable entity, is not a member of this project.

However, if we consider the fact that twelve participants of this project are the members of the European Union, who should approach China with one voice and act in accordance with the EU laws, their goals, which drive them towards cooperation with China in the frame of this project, may be considered to be the EU goals. So, what are the goals of Central and Eastern European countries? Till now there have already been eight China-CEEC Summits. In order to understand the goals of the European Union countries, who are members of the 17+1 initiative, the opening speeches of the Prime Ministers of these European countries on the summits were analysed.

In his opening speech former Prime Minister of Poland, Donald Tusk, at the Poland - Central Europe - China Economic Forum in 2012 pointed out the main aim of this event. He said that the main aim is to "strengthen and invigorate the economic relations between this very ambitious region and China" (Tusk 2012). One year later, the Prime Minister of Romania, Victor Ponta, in

his welcoming speech at the Economic and Trade Forum China –Central and Eastern Europe also indicated the same economic goal, namely “to connect and boost economic relations” (Ponta 2013) between involved countries. Besides that Mr. Victor Ponta pointed out the need to strengthen the cooperation with China in order to reciprocally face and combat nowadays common challenges.

Three years later the 5th meeting of the Heads of Government for Central and Eastern Europe and China was held in Riga. In his opening speech the Prime Minister of Latvia Mr. Māris Kučinskis said that due to increased investment and trade volumes and increased number of tourists, the 17+1 initiative contributed into “the growth of our nations” (Kučinskis 2016), that is the reason why it was important for Latvia to continue to participate in this project. In other words Mr. Māris Kučinskis reaffirmed the economical reason to be the main driving force for the CEE countries to get involved into the cooperation with China in the 17+1 initiative. Talking about the development of cooperation within this project, the Prime Minister of Latvia emphasized the development of trade routes, transport infrastructure, cargo flows, direct flights etc. Thus, pointing out the main spheres of interest of the CEE countries.

As his previous colleagues, Victor Orban, the Prime Minister of Hungary at the China – Central and Eastern Europe summit in Budapest in 2017, was also talking about economic benefits in general, but in his speech he especially emphasized the importance of Chinese investments, saying, “As we can all see, the world economy is undergoing major changes. Here in Central Europe today developments and projects which would not be possible with European resources alone can be carried out with the resources and capacity of China” (Orban 2017). Making financial cooperation a priority of the summit, Mr. Orban revealed the main goal of its country for cooperation with China, namely: attracting foreign investments into the country.

As well as previous speakers, the Prime Minister of Bulgaria, Mr Boyko Borissov, at the 7th Summit of 16+1 in Sofia in 2018 and Mr Andrej Plenković, the Prime Minister of Croatia during the Opening of the 9th Business Forum of Central and Eastern European Countries & China, held in Dubrovnik in 2019, also emphasized the economic benefits for the CEE countries, cooperating with China in the frame of the 17+1 initiative. Moreover, the Prime Minister of Croatia pointed out the opportunity, which emerged from the opening up of the Chinese market. Regarding this Mr Andrej Plenković stated, “Considering the rising domestic demand in China and the size and sophistication of its market, this represents a great opportunity for all of our countries and

businesses” (Plenković 2019, 8). In addition, among the goals of Croatia for cooperation with China in the 17+1 format were boosting of tourism, modernizing of sea ports and rail network. After analysing the speeches of the Prime Ministers of the European Union’s countries, it becomes clear that the main goal of the CEE countries, which drives them into the cooperation with China in the frame of 17+1 is of an economic character. This includes the improvement and strengthening of economic relations between the CEE countries and China, development of infrastructure, creation of new trade routes, better cargo flows and new direct flights, the development of tourism, inviting Chinese investments, opening up of the Chinese market etc. Marsela Musabelliu confirms this statement, saying, ” The CEEC, experiencing the heat of the financial crisis of 2008, turned to China in search of investments, financial cooperation and new trade agreements” (Musabelliu 2017, 72). Due to the favorable location of Central and Eastern European countries between East and West, creation of better infrastructure connections, can help these countries to become a linking bridge between Asian and European markets, “which could give the area enormous potential to end up as a key point for direct exchange between the two continents” (*Ibid*).

China experts were also asked regarding the reasons why the EU countries joined the initiative. Among the answers the economic reason was also brought out, namely: the CEE countries’ need of investments and the possibility to get them from China more easily (Interviewee 2, Appendix 1). In addition to that the curiosity of the CEE countries was mentioned as one of the reasons to join the initiative, naming it a “political groping” (Interviewee 1, Appendix 1) in order to see and understand what China has to offer them.

So far it is seen, that China and the CEE countries have the same economic goals: to boost the economies of the involved countries. As it was written above, China has a political goal as well - to increase its influence in the region. Men Jing writes in her article, “while the Commission is eager to attract Chinese investment, it nevertheless makes it clear to Beijing that it is only interested in its money, not in its influence” (Jing 2018, 61). As it is seen from this statement, the European Union doesn’t share the Chinese political goal, whereas the existence of conflictual goals doesn’t disturb possible cooperation. As having stated at the beginning of this work, if the actors with the conflicting goals share a common interest, there is still a lot of possibilities for cooperation and strategic interaction (Dai, Snidal, Sampson 2017). Thus, it is seen that participating parties of the 17+1 initiative have a mutual goal – to enhance economic growth, which serves as a common ground on the way of increasing cooperation.

3.3. Rewards for the EU and China

Consistent with the concept of international cooperation, apart from the existence of common goals, the second obligatory component should be evident for involved parties in order to establish or promote cooperation, namely: real possibility to get mutual gains or rewards. It has already been seven years since the announcement of the 16+1 format. The initial aim for trade between China and the CEE countries was to reach 100 billion of US dollars by 2015 (Grieger 2018, 5). Instead, trade in goods didn't achieve these results, reaching only 57.3 billion euros in 2017 (*Ibid*). Besides that, the involved parties find the benefits heavily tilted in favour of China. From the graph (Appendix 3) it is clearly seen that by 2017 the exports from China grew much quicker, than imports from the CEE countries. It may be explained by the fact, that European entrepreneurs still face a lot of barriers, while entering the Chinese market, for instance, "equity gaps, forced technology transfers and licensing restrictions" (Barisitz, Radzyner 2017, 4).

In case of big infrastructure projects, it could be assumed, that the CEE countries' economies would benefit from additional employment or consumption during the construction works. However, the reality turned to be different, because Chinese entrepreneurs mostly employ Chinese workers and practically do not use local resources (*Ibid*). As an example of such a situation serves the construction of Pupin Bridge in Serbia, where the Chinese company used Chinese workers, who used their own materials and lived in isolated environment next to the bridge. As the result, "the local economy did not benefit greatly in terms of employment or consumption – at least in the short run" (*Ibid*). Thus, it is clearly seen, that by now the rewards are mostly gained by China and its companies. This opinion can be also supported by some experts, who were interviewed in the frame of this work. One of the experts believes that theoretically this framework can be beneficial for the European Union and its countries if with the help of Chinese investments the economy of involved EU countries improve. However, in the way it has been currently driven, the gains are mostly tilted in favour of China and China is the country, who at the current situation has more to gain from it (Interviewee 2, Appendix 1). The other expert was even more critical regarding the mutual gains the participant parties could gain from it, saying that there was not any direct benefit the EU could gain from this initiative. Supporting his opinion he added, "If the EU could cooperate more within this project and could create some rules for the deals in the frame of 17+1, in some time the EU may benefit from it, but as long as 17+1 does not obey the rules of the EU, we can't talk about any mutual benefit" (Interviewee 3, Appendix 1).

Helen Milner in her book claims, “Each actor helps the others to realize their goals by adjusting its policies in the anticipation of its own reward” (Milner 1992, 468). In other words, while expecting the rewards, the participating parties regulate their own policies, adjusting them in accordance with the situation. After conducting the research, it came out, that “China has signed memorandums of understanding with all 16 Central and Eastern European Countries” (Saarela 2018, 9). Moreover, it was revealed, that Belt and Road Initiative was included into the Chinese constitution in October 2017 (*Ibid* 20). Thus, China has clearly documented the initiative. This act, by adding a political weight to this project, shows the significance of it for Chinese government. Also, it shows the seriousness of Chinese government’s action and clear intentions to deal with this project further.

In order to understand the seriousness of the EU in case of 17+1, the main documents, which regulate the relations between the EU and China were analysed. After the research it appeared, that there is not any official document signed between the EU and China in case of the 17+1 mechanism. Moreover, the Chinese initiative hasn’t been even mentioned in the EU-China Partnership of 2013, which is the main document, which regulates the relations between the European Union and China. Although the 16+1 mechanism was mentioned in Elements for a new EU strategy on China of 2016, no clear regulatory framework was created in order to handle the relations of the EU member states with China within the 16+1 cooperation format, which means that there is not any official document within the EU, which coordinates the behaviour of the EU member states with China in case of the 16+1 initiative. As Urmas Hübepappel writes in his article, “However, one should not think that if we do not deal with China, China will not deal with us either” (Hübepappel 2019). The People’s Republic of China initiated the project, it has clear goals and has even included it into the constitution, which shows how seriously China takes this initiative. Due to the fact that there is still not any regulatory framework regarding the 17+1 on the EU side, the author of this work believes that at the moment this is the last time for the European Union to take this project seriously and to finally create a common strategy on China. Gaia Rizzi confirms this point of view, saying that the European Union should „take in higher consideration the “16+1” initiative, with the option of officially supporting and institutionalizing it in the EU-China Partnership, which since 2003 represents the official basis of its relations with China” (Rizzi 2017).

To sum up, in case of 17+1 the People's Republic of China has clear goals, it has already received touchable rewards and it has a clear regulatory framework. In terms of the European Union countries, the goals are clear, but the rewards from the project are doubtful. Moreover, the European Union hasn't adjusted its policies in case of the 17+1 initiative. It means that in accordance with the concept of international cooperation, which assumes that the cooperative parties have clear goals, receive mutual rewards and adjust their policies, the 17+1 initiative does not facilitate the cooperation between the European Union and China.

So far the cooperation between the EU and China has been analysed through the prism of the conception of the international cooperation. As this concept does not cover the ways of communication between involved parties and the author of this work counts this significant for uncovering this topic, the ways of communication between China and the EU will be further discussed.

3.4. The ways of communication

3.4.1. The EU and China relations

In order to understand the relations between the EU and the People's Republic of China in the context of the 17+1 initiative, it is crucial to understand the ways of communication of these two world powers between each other in general. The People's Republic of China and the European Economic Community, the predecessor of the present European Union, established diplomatic relations between each other in 1975 (Chronology of EU-China Relations 2018), which subsequently led to a creation of full partnership (China's policy paper on EU 2003) between China and the European Union in 2001. During this time the EU defined its framework of communication with China as a comprehensive partnership (EU Strategy towards China 2001). Due to the active cooperation between the two sides and China's consistent rise in the global scene the EU reconsidered its framework of communication with China and started to count China as its important strategic partner. Thus, a model of communication of comprehensive partnership was transformed into a comprehensive strategic partnership in 2003. Since that time the framework of communication of the EU with China basically remained the same. It may be confirmed by the documents, published since 2003 till now, namely: the EU-China 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation issued in 2013, elements for a new EU strategy on China in 2016 etc. As strategic

partnership is the main model of communication of the EU with China, it is important to understand what the framework of strategic partnership specifically consists of.

China's dynamic growth, which has created opportunity for the country to gain more power on the international arena and become a considerable player on the world stage, has changed the attitude of the EU towards China from being a growing power, which requires assistance for "political and economic integration into the international community" (EU Strategy towards China...2001, 20), to the position of strategic partner of the Union. Being a strategic partner for the EU means, that the country owns not only a political and economic power, but with the power it gains a responsibility for the well-being of the world order. As it is stated in the European Commission's policy paper regarding EU-China relations of 2003, "to safeguard and promote sustainable development, peace and stability" (Commission policy paper 2003, 3).

Establishing a comprehensive strategic partnership in 2003, followed by tight cooperation with each other, lead to a high level of interdependency between China and the EU. As the result, the EU-China 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation was issued in 2013. The main strategic fields were pointed out in this document, mainly: peace and security, prosperity, sustainable development and people-to-people exchanges (EU-China 2020...2013). In this document the parties emphasized the principle of multilateralism, the importance of "effective rules in key fields" (*Ibid* 3), mutual benefits in the trade and investment areas, promotion of "open, transparent markets and a level-playing field" (*Ibid* 5), deepen cooperation on human rights questions etc. Moreover, having a strategic partnership for the EU, means sharing and promoting its core values and interests. The main values and principles of the EU are, as they have already been mentioned, a rules-based global order, principle of multilateralism, promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect of the international law, open and fair market system, mutual beneficial cooperation. All these principles of the EU are mentioned in the EU-China Strategic Agenda for Cooperation and later on in the European Union Global strategy.

Remarkable is the fact, that this document: EU-China 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation, was issued in 2013. The project of 16+1 was introduced in 2012, and after announcing the Belt and Road Initiative – the project of an enormous scale, 16+1 was linked to this Chinese main project in the same year. Despite a long-term durability of the Strategic Agenda, until 2020 and the great amount of the EU countries involved to the 16+1 initiative, this project was not mentioned in the Agenda.

3.4.2. China - CEEC relations in the framework of 17+1

In the previous chapter it was stated that the EU and China communicate in the framework of strategic partnership. As among 17 countries of this initiative, there are 12 EU member states, it is crucial to understand the ways, how China communicates with them and other members of this project. The ways of communication of China with above mentioned countries will be analysed in the following chapter, meanwhile comparing them with the principles, which are the main elements of the strategic partnership between the EU and China.

In order to analyse the methods of communication of China with its 17 partners, first of all, the main document, namely: China's Twelve Measures for Promoting Friendly Cooperation with Central and Eastern European Countries, shall be analysed. This document was issued in April 2012 and is considered to be the main document, which provides legal framework for the initiative. At the very beginning of the document it is clearly stated that China will “ take concrete steps to move forward bilateral economic cooperation and trade” and adding, China will work with these countries to increase “two-way trade” (China's Twelve Measures... 2012). From this paper it is clearly seen that for China the EU countries, who are involved into the 16+1 initiative, are not perceived as representatives of one joint block, but in opposite, China treats them as fully sovereign, independent states, with whom to establish bilateral relations. The most remarkable fact regarding this document is, that although 16+1 consisted of 11 EU members and 5 other countries, that would like to join the EU, the EU has never been mentioned in this document.

In 2015 another important document was issued in order to guide the cooperation between the People's Republic of China and the CEE countries, namely: The Medium-Term Agenda for Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries. Although, the EU was mentioned in this document for several times, remarkable is the fact that China's way for cooperation with 16 countries, the members of the 16+1 block, remained the same. Quotation from this document confirms this point of view, “Instead of replacing existing bilateral cooperation mechanisms or platforms, it strives to complement and reinforce them, aiming at enhanced and expanded cooperation between China and the 16 countries” (The Medium-Term Agenda... 2015). This document reassures, that the main framework of communication of China with participants of the 16+1 project, remains unchanged, namely: in the form of bilateral cooperation. Anastas Vangeli in his article confirms this statement, saying, ” China treats them as fully sovereign and independent and therefore talks to them directly” (Vangeli 2017, 137). Alper Erdal shares this

opinion too, naming the principle of China's engagement with its 16 partners as a "bilateral partnership strategy" (Erdal 2018). After analysing the documents, mentioned above, it becomes clear, that the way of communication of China with 16 countries of the initiative is something completely different, comparing to one of the main principles of cooperation, stated in China-EU strategic partnership. By talking to the 16 countries according to the principle of bilateral partnership, China undermines the principle of multilateralism, established with the EU in the frame of strategic partnership.

Among the main principles of strategic cooperation, the principles of mutual benefit and open, transparent, fair trade relations, are emphasized in the agreement between China and the EU. In reality, these principles are also not followed by China in cooperation with 16 Central and Eastern European countries in the framework of the 16+1 initiative. As Slobodan Zečević states in his article "China appears as a country that practices a policy of unfair competition" (Zečević 2017, 111). While using win-win cooperation rhetoric, China practices the policy of subventions, which supports its national companies, and special custom's policy in order to make it extremely difficult for the foreign companies to enter Chinese market. Marsela Musabelliu in her article confirms this point of view. By citing Casarini in her work, she writes, "infrastructure works financed by China's soft loans are carried out by Chinese companies, as in the case of the Hungary-Serbian high-speed railway or Terminal II of Piraeus..." (Musabelliu 2017, 71). To sum up, in most of the cases with the projects under the 16+1 initiative the main beneficiaries from this framework are Chinese companies. Thus, the principle of reciprocity is not followed by the Chinese side.

He Zhigao in his work points out that in work with international organizations China stresses "informal agreements and rules, while western countries preferred formal institutions" (Zhigao 2017, 115). The same patterns of behaviour are noticeable during interactions of China with the European countries. If the EU emphasizes clear rules and open agreements, China may act differently in order to achieve its goals. An example of such a behavior is the agreement between China and Hungary regarding the Belgrade to Budapest railway project. As Anna Šteinbuka, Tatyana Muravska and Andris Kuznieks write in their article, the project assumed "implementation by a consortium from Hungary and China (15% and 85%, respectively) based on an intergovernmental agreement (Szcudlik 2016), but not through issuing tender procedures" (Šteinbuka, Muravska, Kuznieks 2017, 112). Uncertainties with the project made the European Commission to initiate preliminary investigation against Hungary.

From the information, written above, it is clearly seen that China, cooperating with 17 countries in the frame of the 17+1 project, does not act according to the principles, stated in EU-China strategic partnership, such as principle of multilateralism, behavior according to clear rules, principle of mutual benefit, transparent and fair trade. After providing the analysis, it may be concluded, that China communicates with the EU and 16 Central and Eastern European countries in two different frameworks. The People's Republic of China communicates with the EU in the framework of comprehensive strategic partnership, while the framework, in which China communicates with its 17 partners, who comprise 17+1 initiative, is "bilateral partnership strategy" (Erdal 2018).

3.5. Obstacles for cooperation between the EU and China in the frame of the 17+1 initiative

The current research was conducted in order to explore the relations of the EU and China in the frame of the 17+1 initiative with the aim to understand whether 17+1 facilitated the cooperation between the EU and China or not. After the research it became clear, that China and the EU member states, who were involved in the initiative, had similar economic goals, but the rewards from this project were heavily tilted in favour of China. In addition to that, the People's Republic of China has adjusted its policies, but the European Union hasn't done it in case of the 17+1 initiative. Moreover, after the research, it became clear, that China communicated with the European Union and 17 CEE countries in two different frameworks. The framework, in which China and the EU communicate with each other, is comprehensive strategic partnership. The framework, in which China communicates with Central and Eastern European countries of the 17+1 initiative is bilateral partnership. The existence of different frameworks of communication of China with the EU and 17 CEE countries is considered by the author of this work to be one of the most important obstacles for the development of cooperation between the EU and China in the framework of 17+1. Establishing strategic partnership with the EU, China promised to commit to the principles of engagement with the EU, namely: "the promotion of democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and respect for the UN Charter's principles and international law, with the search for reciprocal benefits in political and economic relations" (China and the EU 2016). In practice China approaches the CEE countries not as the representatives of the EU, but on a bilateral basis, communicating with them directly, as with single sovereign states. Instead of transparent, clear rules-based agreements, the countries find themselves involved in shady business deals, where the

receiving of promised reciprocal benefits is under the question. Thus, having established bilateral partnerships with the members of the 17+1 mechanism, the People's Republic of China found itself so called roundabout way, which allowed China, while committing to strategic partnership established with the EU, not to follow agreed rules. Martin Hala in his article confirms this point of view, saying, "Bilateral partnerships make it easier for China to bypass existing alliances" (Hala 2018) and adds that the 16+1 initiative "offers Beijing an alternative to dealing with the EU as a whole" (*Ibid*).

However, above mentioned findings are not the only obstacles, which impede the cooperation between the EU and China in case of 17+1. Different authors blame the European Union for being slow in formulating its common stance regarding this initiative (Spruds 2016; Vangeli 2017; Šteinbuka, Muravska, Kuznieks 2017), which culminates in having no common strategy towards the 17+1 mechanism even seven years later, after launching the initiative. The inability of the EU to quickly formulate its opinion regarding Chinese initiative and the lack of common strategy in terms of 17+1, are the other important obstacles for the EU on the way for enhancing cooperation with China in the frame of 17+1. The slowness of action of the EU becomes clear after analyzing the main documents, which guide and frame the relations between the EU and China, namely: EU-China 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation, European Parliament resolution of 16 December 2015 on EU-China relations, elements for a new EU strategy on China and European Parliament resolution of 12 September 2018 on the state of EU-China relations.

Although the cooperative format between China and the CEE countries was introduced in 2012, there is nothing mentioned regarding this initiative in EU-China 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation, which was signed in 2013 and intended to be in force till 2020. Three years later, in 2015, European's Parliament resolution on EU-China relations was issued. Although the 16+1 project was mentioned in this document, this resolution does not give any assessment of this cooperation mechanism nor any directions for Central and Eastern European countries to engage with China. Instead, this document mainly ascertains the fact of existence of such a cooperation mechanism between the CEE countries and China and "considers that this should not divide the EU or weaken its position vis-à-vis China and should also address human rights issues" (European Parliament resolution...2015).

The other important document: Elements for a new EU strategy on China, was analysed in order to find the EU's common opinion and premises for common strategy towards the 16+1 initiative. Although this document was issued four years later after announcing 16+1 and the formulated aim of it was "to set out a policy framework for EU engagement with China for the next five years" (Joint communication...2016, 2), there still was no opinion of the EU regarding the 16+1 mechanism and no directions for the CEE countries for cooperation with China. Instead of it, the 16+1 platform was mentioned just once. It was specified that the EU must approach China with "strong, clear and unified voice" (Joint communication...2016, 4). In case of 16+1 member states were suggested to "cooperate with the Commission, the EEAS and other Member States to help to ensure that aspects relevant to the EU are in line with EU law, rules and policies, and that the overall outcome is beneficial for the EU as a whole" (Joint communication...2016, 4). Finally, in 2018 the next European Parliament's resolution was issued regarding China-EU relations. Comparing to previous documents, more space was dedicated to the 16+1 initiative. Moreover, this resolution is more critical towards actions of Chinese government and more anxious regarding the outcomes of the 16+1 cooperation. For the first time the consequences of cooperation within this framework were mentioned, the importance of the EU involvement was highlighted, the need of cooperation between member states and the EU institutions was emphasized and the need to analyse the upcoming infrastructure projects in case of "no compromising of national and European interests for short-term financial support and long-term commitments to Chinese involvement in strategic infrastructure projects and potentially greater political influence" (European Parliament resolution...2018), was pointed out. The need of approaching China in one voice was also reminded. It seems that finally, six years later, the significance of cooperative mechanism of 16+1 was understood.

During analysing the above mentioned documents, the inability or unwillingness of the EU to formulate its opinion regarding the 16+1 mechanism is clearly seen. Its slowness in action and not taking seriously the 16+1 cooperative platform, can also be proved by the fact, that the EU joined 16+1 summits only starting from the 5th summit and not as an active participating party, but only as an observer. Although the European Parliament's resolution of 2018 is penetrated with criticism of China and anxiety towards outcomes of the project, there are no signs of developing the EU's common strategy in case of the 16+1 mechanism.

In the Joint communication to the European Parliament and the Council of 2016, which proposes components for the EU for a new strategy on China, it is stated, “Dealing with such a comprehensive strategic partner as China requires a "whole-of-EU" approach” (Joint Communication ...2016, 17). This approach would link the activities of the main EU institutions, such as the Commission, EEAS and other institutions, with the activities of Member States. This approach would allow member states to engage with China not as a single state, but as a whole union. By stating this, the EU admits that it needs to have a common strategy while engaging with China, because China is not a comparable partner for the Central and Eastern European countries such as Hungary, Estonia, Latvia etc. In case of Europe, the only comparable partner for China is the EU. That is why the common EU strategy in order to deal with China is needed.

Moreover, in the same document, it is stated, “The EU should pursue an ambitious agenda of co-operation with China” (Joint Communication...2016, 17). By this statement the EU reaffirms the need for a common strategy. The EU needs to have an ambitious agenda or in other words, a strategy towards China, but not only in general, also in regards of each project. Especially, in case of a project, like 17+1 is, where the biggest number of the EU member states are engaged and all of them are not powerful EU members. Only in this case these member states will feel, that they are not left alone to deal with a global giant.

He Zhigao in his article also emphasizes the need of establishment of a common strategy towards China in case of the 16+1 initiative. He says, “When we carry out the “16+1 cooperation”, we need to establish an overall strategic direction. Without strategic considerations, we will lack continuity and strategic engagement with countries in the CEE countries, which harbors an unclear position with regard to the overall strategy and the priorities of economic policy” (Zhigao 2017, 125). The common strategy towards China in case of 17+1 would allow establishing clear and rules-based cooperation. Without it “the people and elites in the CEE countries could not really establish a strategic cooperation with China” (*Ibid* 126).

In the Joint communication to the European Parliament and the Council of 2016 is also stated that, “The EU's engagement with China should be principled, practical and pragmatic” (Joint Communication...2016, 5). Having no common strategy on China in case of the 17+1 initiative and having no clear rules of behavior while engaging with China, means that the EU's engagement with China in this project cannot be principled and pragmatic, which already contradicts with the strategical principles on China, established in 2016.

To sum up, on the basis of conducted research, the author of this work claims, that the 17+1 initiative does not facilitate the cooperation between the European Union and China, because participating parties do not gain mutual rewards, the European Union did not adjust its policies in accordance with the initiative, the People's Republic of China communicates with the EU and the CEE countries in different ways and the EU is slow in formulating its common stance regarding the initiative, which culminates in having no common strategy on China in case of the 17+1 initiative. The experts, who were interviewed during the research, also support this opinion. Answering the question, whether the 17+1 initiative facilitate the cooperation between the EU and China, all three experts answered clearly "No".

3.6. Risks for the EU

During the research it becomes clear that the EU does not have a common strategy on China in case of the 17+1 initiative and the importance of such strategy for each CEE country and the EU as a whole, was discussed in the previous chapter. Apart from the organizational problems, which were discussed above, the risks for the EU arise from the current situation. As these risks are real and may bring irreversible consequences for the EU, the author of the paper finds it crucial to discuss them in this work.

While the European Union has problems in formulating its common strategy on China in case of 17+1, it can't be forgotten, that "in China the framing and implementation of development policies is very much centrally coordinated" (Šteinbuka, Muravska, Kuznieks 2017, 114). Which means that none of the companies invest abroad without the approval of the Chinese government. As it was previously written, by initiating the 17+1 mechanism, China has its economic and political goals. As Leslie Leino writes in his article, China's wish to become more open to the world is related to "China's silencing tactics" (Leino 2019). Which means, the more the country is dependable on China, the less it wants to criticize it. In other words, China creates its supporters within the EU, who in case of need may act in favour of China, thus affecting collective actions and decisions of the EU, undermining the political unity of the Union. Although the Chinese scholars try to convince the society that China doesn't want to undermine the unity of the EU and 17+1 rather compliments the established strategic partnership between the EU and China, the formation of China's supporters among the EU members states is a real risk for the EU. This

statement can be proved by the following example, provided by Mario Telo, Ding Chun and Zhang Xiaotung: „it is said that when the EU prepared a declaration on the South China Sea Award, released by The Hague in July 2016, Hungary and Greece objected to the criticisms against China, which led to a watered-down version” (Telo, Chun, Xiaotung 2018, 62).

In addition to political risks, having no common strategy on China in case of 17+1, may lead to economic risks as well. Rait Piir, citing the minister of Foreign Affairs of Germany, writes in his article, that “China is not a liberal democracy and doing business with China, the countries may find themselves in skillfully orchestrated economic dependence” (Piir 2019). That is the reason why the countries and the European Union should be very careful in case of the infrastructure projects, which are financed by Chinese investors, like construction of the tunnel between Tallinn and Helsinki is. Although the project is still in the phase of discussion, it was announced, that Chinese investment fund Touchstone Capital Partners, was ready to invest into the project 15 billion euros, of which 10 billion would be a loan. Comparing to Estonian state budget, which is 11,31 billion euros in 2019 (Vabariigi Valitsus 2019), it is a huge amount of money. In regards of this project, the main risk might arise from a situation when the country is not able to erase the debt and China will take over the infrastructure object, like it happened in Sri Lanka, where the biggest share of Hambantota harbor was given to China to use for the next 99 years to cover the country’s debt (Leino 2019).

In addition to the risks, mentioned above, one more serious problem, which is coming out from the lack of common strategy, should be discussed. Mario Telo, Ding Chun and Zhang Xiaotung in their article write, “the Chinese are required to act in accordance with European law, including public tender, competition, employment and environmental standards” (Telo, Chun, Xiaotung 2018, 62), but China does not act in such a way. Having established direct bilateral contacts with involved countries of the CEE region, Chinese companies found a way to overcome the legal requirements, settled by the European Union. As an example, is a situation in Hungary, where the president of the country in pursuit of profitable investments, gave the priority to the Chinese companies without any public competition. Later on, the European Union started investigations of the case. As the result, it raised tensions within the Union.

These are the risks, which the European Union is facing due to the fact, that it still doesn’t have a common strategy towards China in case of the 17+1 initiative. This list of possible risks for the EU is non-exhaustive, but the author of this work pointed out, according to her opinion, the most

important ones. As it was stated at the beginning of this work, at the current global situation China and the European Union are in urgent need to cooperate with each other more closely. However, from the other side, taking into consideration the arising risks, there is a need to protect the EU members from the “Chinese economic expansionism” (Zečević 2017, 107-108). Creating a common workable strategy on China regarding 17+1 could become a straight step forward to this direction.

CONCLUSION

It has already been seven years since the first introduction of the 16+1 initiative by the People's Republic of China. 16+1 is a cooperative framework, initiated by China in 2012, in order to intensify cooperation with 16 Central and Eastern European countries. Becoming part of Belt and Road initiative, introduced in 2013, this mechanism has turned to be the main platform for implementation of BRI in the CEE region. Among the Central and Eastern European countries, which participated in this project, there were 11 EU member states and 5 Balkan countries. Since spring 2019, Greece is also a part of this cooperative mechanism, transforming it into the 17+1 initiative.

China and the EU are important strategic partners. In the current paper the author of this work claims that China and the EU are presently in need to cooperate with each other more. The People's Republic of China initiated the 17+1 mechanism. Due to the high number of the EU member states involved, this project could become a great opportunity for the EU and China to promote and enhance mutual cooperation. The aim of this paper was to analyse the relations between the European Union and China in the context of the 17+1 initiative in order to answer the research question, settled at the beginning of this work, namely: does the 17+1 initiative facilitate the cooperation between China and the EU?

After conducting the research it was revealed, that China and the EU countries, who were involved in the 17+1 initiative, had similar economic goals, namely: to boost economies of involved countries. In addition to that, it came out, that the rewards from this initiative were heavily tilted in favour of China. Moreover, China had a clear regulatory framework in case of 17+1 and even included BRI into its constitution, but there was not any official document, which could regulate the initiative, from the EU's side. After analysing communication patterns of China with the EU and the CEE countries, who are involved into the 17+1 initiative, it came out, that China communicated with them in two different frameworks. China communicates with the EU in the framework of strategic partnership. At the same time, China communicates with Central and Eastern European countries in the frame of bilateral partnership strategy. These two communication patterns do not only sound differently, but also have different meanings. The

author of this work claims that talking to the CEE countries on a bilateral basis China found itself a way, how to bypass agreements established with the European Union. The research also revealed that the European Union was extremely slow in formulating a common stance regarding the initiative, which culminated in having no common strategy on China regarding the 17+1 initiative. Having no strategy in case of 17+1 may lead to certain risks. The author of this work pointed out according to her opinion, the most important ones, namely: political risk – formation of China’s supporters within the EU, which may undermine the unity of the Union; economic risk – some countries may find themselves in economic dependence on China; legal risk - disregarding by involved countries established legal requirements. On the basis of conducted research and above mentioned findings, it may be concluded, that at this moment, 17+1 does not facilitate the cooperation between the European Union and China. Thus, the aim of this work, established at the beginning, is considered to be achieved.

Leaning on the conducted research the following proposals were summarized:

China and the EU should seek for more opportunities to promote and enhance mutual cooperation; the European Union should take the 17+1 platform more seriously and include it into EU-China agenda for cooperation;

the European Union should create clear and workable strategy on China in regard to this initiative. Also, following the example of China, the EU should adjust its policies, creating a clear regulatory framework for 17+1.

The author of this work believes, that these actions, once applied, will allow using this initiative as a cooperative mechanism between the EU and China. The overall focus of current work was on addressing the 17+1 initiative as a possible cooperative format, which could provide the EU and China extra opportunity to cooperate with each other. In addition to that, it would be interesting to analyse possible impacts or changes that this new initiative may produce on EU - China relationship. As these issues are out of scope of current work, possible changes in EU-China relationship due to the 17+1 initiative should become a matter of future research.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Transcripts of interviews.

Interviewee 1

Wishfull thinking visioon ka.

Seal on sellest kaudselt juttu. Ja võib olla alustan üldiselt sellega enne kui Te küsite kuidas Venemaa seda esitab kui selline suur Euraasiam Greater Eurasia visioon, kus tema on muidugi maailma naba seal, Hiina ja Petseelia kui Euroopa kõige rikkam piirkond, on nagu mingisugune poolsaarekene seal. Siit ridade vahel võib otseselt välja lugeda, et Euroopa Liit läheb laiali ja siis Europe is open for grabs, nii et selles mõttes, et siis võtavad sealt mis võtta annab ja ega siis mõlemad Venemaa ja Hiina on väga hästi Euroopa, noh jah, seal on vastuolud sees põhja ja lõuna vahel ja ida ja lääne vahel ja siis püütakse omakorda neid vastuolusid veel suurendada ja näidata oma kohalolekut selle sama kasvõi formaadi järgi, aga jah palun.

Suur aitäh, et Te nõustusite minuga kohtuma.

Jah, jah.

Ja ma kirjutasin Teile sellepärast, et juunis Äripäevas oli artikkel sellel teemal, sellepärast ma otsustasin Teile kirjutada.

Kuidas Teile see artikkel tundus? Ta oli selline populaarteaduslik.

Väga hea, ma märkisin endale mõned mõtted, mida ma saan oma töös kasutada. Väga asjalik artikkel, ei ole midagi öelda.

Nii, minu töö nimetuseks, ma uurin EL ja Hiina vahelised suhted 16+1, nüüd on siis 17+1 initsiatiivi raames.

Aga see ei ole Euroopa Liit...

Jah, aga ... Miks ma seda teen, just Euroopa Liidu seisukohalt, et oma töös ma väidan, et praegusel hetkel Hiina ja Euroopa Liit seisavad reaalsuse ees, kus nad peavad koostööd tehes üksteisega rohkem. Kuna Hiina initsieeris sellist projekti, mis koosneb 12 EL riigist, äkki see võiks olla heaks võimaluseks koostööks EL ja Hiina vahel? Ja selles kontekstis ma seda uurin.

Ma arvan, et vastupidi. Täheleb, et kui Hiina tahaks just nimelt EL-ga, EL liikmed on teada, kes need on, on väga hästi teada, kuidas EL töötab. Siis see oleks Pekingi ja Brüsseli vahel koostöö, aga ilmselt tajub Hiina ja ka Venemaa, ma toon siin paralleele, et EL on ikkagi oma majanduspotentsiaali, ta ei ole sõjalises mõttes Euroopa. Enamik EL liikmetes on NATOd, aga sõjaliselt ikkagi EL sõltub Ühendriikidest. Globaalsel tasemel, kui me mõtleme 4 mängijat ja seetõttu püüab Hiina pigem divide impera, jagaja valitseja poliitikat tekitada küll läbi kahepoolsete suhete, võtame näiteks, oli see viimane Xi Jinpingi visit Euroopas, kus ta käis Itaalias, Prantsusmaal, siis ta pigem rõhutas kahepoolsetele suhetele, püüdis Hiina vägevust näidata. Siin tahame sadama, siin tahame 300 lennukit tellida ja nii edasi. Ja mõlemad nii Venemaa

kui ka Hiina näevad, kui suhtele otsepuüe, et ütleme kaubandusstiil, Euroopa Liidu kui tervikuna on palju vägevam vastaspool, kui on üksikud riigid. Nüüd tuleme tagasi 16+1 formaadi juurde, seal on ju esindatud, mmm seal ei ole EL suuri sees, mis teeb selle väga mugavaks, sellega tahetakse näidata, et osal vähemalt EL liikmetest võivad olla teatud mõttes erihuvid Hiina osas, mis tähendab, erihoiakud Hiina suhtes jne. Nii et see on jällegi viis, kuidas noh mängida, et endale saavutada üha paremat positsiooni, kuniks peab Brüsseliga tegelema. See on nagu minu selline visiooni seisukoht. Hiina seda muidugi pragmaatiliselt, aga ka nendel on umbes sama lähenemine, nagu Venemaal: nendel on äri, kõik see kaubandus, majanduskoostöö, see on puhtalt poliitikaga seotud. Ei saa arvata, et Hiinal ja ka Venemaal on mingisugused eraettevõtted ja erahuvid, mis tegutsevad kuidagi eraldi režiimi poliitikast, see ei ole võimalik. See on illusioon, nii nagu Venemaal, need mis on otseselt riigi omad, need on niikuinii Kremli parem käsi jne. Aga isegi näeb välja, et just kui era. Ei ole olemas, tähendab kõik peab järgima režiimi poliitikat otseselt või kaudselt. Täpselt sama lugu on Hiinaga, seal on kahtlused igasuguste Hiina investeringute osas ja kõik need firmad, mida Hiina püüab serverida kui eraettevõtteid jne. Nii et seal on ka see usutavuse – credibility - moment. Riigid suhtuvad erinevalt sellesse. See, et riigid on olnud nõus osalema huvi pärast selles 16+1 formaadis, mis sisaldab nii EL kui ka mitte EL liikmeid paraku – see võib olla tõesti huvist, et näha ja kuulata, mida siis Hiina tahab. Me kõik teame, et nendel on ambitsioonikad plaanid, seoses selle One Belt One Roadiga, igasuguseid riike peetakse transiitriikideks, sihtriikideks selles tohutus võrgustikus, mida nad ehitavad maismaal ja ülemere, on üks tohutu ämbliku võrk, mis on Hiina oma läbi Kesk-Aasia ja igale poole, Aafrikasse, Euroopasse, Lõuna Aasiasse, et siis ühtpidi need riigid hakkavad tajuma paremini Hiina visiooni, nii palju kui siin on, kelleks Hiina neid peab, või ja mis konkreetselt huvid seal. Noh, aga samas, see on selline best guess asi, mida tuleb lugeda, sest Hiina ei ole väga selgelt ühe või teise riigi puhul selgelt välja öelnud oma ambitsioone. Isegi seda öeldakse, et nad ise ei ole One Belt One Road kaardi välja joonistanud. Nad ei tea ise. Võib olla Hiina ise ei tea lõplikult, kuhu see jõuab, mis on ka tõenäoline, aga mingi visioon peab nendel olema ja võib olla nad pelgavad seda teha, sellepärast et see ehmatas ära, et teised teavad millised tegelikult nende ambitsioonid on. Eks elame näeme, Eesti puhul, nagu ma kirjutasin oma artiklis, et on näha, et Eesti pakub Hiinale huvi, sest muidu ei oleks loogiline, et miks nad oma esindatust nii palju suurendavad, see on väga selge märk, mida need, ma ei tea, kui palju neid on hiinlasi siin esindustes. Juhkentalis ka juba mõnda aega antennid mõndade asjadega, mida nad seal teevad, midagi nad peavad seal tegema. Kui nii vaadata, ma isegi vaatasin üle ametlikud andmed, mis on Eesti ja Hiina kaubavahetus, neid Te saate ka kenasti võtta välisministeeriumi lehelt, kui palju Hiina investeringuid Eestis tehti, ja neid asju. Et see on üpris tagasihoidlik, Hiina investeringute osakaal, kui ma ei eksi Eestisse tehtud kõikidest tehtud otse välisinvesteeringutest, on 0,02%. Üks viiendik promilli, see on väga väga vähe. Kuigi nendel oli ka huvi Tallinna sadama konteinerite terminali vastu ja vähemalt 2 korda on nad seal tahtnud midagi teha. Siis on õhus seesama tunneli küsimus. Miks peab Hiina tahtma investeerida siia Soomelahe põhja 15 miljardit, vähemalt. Sest tegelik kulu on alati suurem, kui see. Ja

selliste projektide tasuvus on alati väga suure küsimärgiga, võtke isegi poole lühemat tunnelit Suur Britaania ja Prantsusmaa vahel. Kaks suurt riiki, väga suure elanikkonnaga ja majandusega. Seal on nii raudtee kui ka ..., kui suured probleemid seal on, seal nad on sisuliselt kahjumis kogu aeg. Hiinlased seda teavad, küsimus on selles, et kas Hiinlaste jaoks on see siis nii tähtis, et võtta selliseid riske. Teiseks, kuidas nad pärast, siit sealt võib lugeda, kindlasti uurige seda, kuidas Hiinlased kavatsevad edaspidi oma investeeringuid kaitsta. See on jälle küsimus. Teatud kohtades ulatuvad nad ka võib olla sõjaliselt kohale, varsti võib olla Lõuna Aasias, Ida Aafrikas jne. Ja Hiina sõjaline kohalolek saab olla kindlasti, nad on isegi ennast Dzibutisse instaleerinud, seal strateegilises kohas ja nii, aga ma nii ei arva, et Hiinlased omale sõjaväe baasi Naissaarele teevad, kus nad saavad siis oma tunnelit kaitsta. Nii et selles mõttes geograafia mängib siin ka teatud rolli, nii et kuidas nad siis... Nii et selles mõttes huvi Eesti vastu on, sellepärast me oleme küll EL perifeeria Idas, aga me oleme EL ja me oleme ka NATO liige ja siin võib olla see koridor Põhjast Lõunasse, mis võib avaneda. Siis kui seda Loode Leila hakatakse kasutama, siis on muidugi küsimus, kuidas Venemaa ja Hiina kaubale saavad, ja siis nendel oleks kindlasti kasulik tuua kaupu sealt kaudu, näiteks Kirkenessi, sinna Norrasse läbi Soome, läbi tunnel Skandinaaviasse, Poola ja la la la, see oleks alternatiiv merekaubateedele, sest nad katsetavad raudteid kindlasti. Täna oli ka jälle üks Postimees online artikkel, kuidas nad pidevalt teevad katsetusi, kuidas kaubad liiguvad läbi Kazahstani, küll Poola, Saksamaa suunda, küll Hispaaniasse. Aga ega see Venemaa ja Kazahstani raudteede läbilaskevõime ei ole ka kummist, tähendab kuskil lõpeb ära. Selles mõttes meritsi transpordi konteineri vedu, kindlasti see vajadus ei kao kuhugi ära. Ja kui näiteks sedasi kaupade vedamise aeg nädal aega lühem. Iga päev loeb, see on väga suur võit Hiinlaste jaoks. Nii et ühe sõnaga, kõik see ole näha, kuidas see asi areneb, ma usun, et isegi hiinlased ei tea, kuhu see asi viib. Aga igal juhul nad vaatavad, millised riigid on vastuvõtlikud, huvitavad. Nemat ei tõmba maha ühtegi riiki, millel oleks vähegi mõtet. Nii et Itaalias Trieste, Pereus Kreekas, ja siin me peame arvestama, et Hiina on ka muutunud. Kas olete lugenud raamatu Comora? Itaalia ajakirjanik, kes kunagi astus maffia liikmeks Napolis ja nägi kogu inside ja pärast kui ta tegi Itaalia politseiga koostööd.. Napolis toimub, Hiina maffia on väga jõhker.

Kui me praegu rääkisime Hiina riigi huvidest, aga kuidas Eesti jaoks, kas osalemine selles initsiatiivias, kas vastab Eesti riigi huvidele? Mis on Eesti huvi, mis ajendab teda tegema koostööd sellises formaadis?

Ei, noh, tähendab, Eesti riigi huvi... Eestile ei saa olla juba, noh, ettemääratud a priori vastumeelsus teha majanduslikku koostööd Hiinaga. Loomulikult, ma usun, et see oleks põhjendamatu. Küll aga, võib olla nii, et Eesti on üks nendest riikidest, minu isklik arvamus, mulle tundub, et ta on, nii öelda ettevaatlik. Ja mis muidugi ei pruugi kehtida kõikide puhul poliitilises sfääris, on ka neid, kes ütlevad, et Huawei ei ole midagi viga, las nad siis teevad seda 5G jne, noh niikuinii meie telefonides on pisike venelane, ameeriklane, hiinlane, kõik luuravad seal ja ei ole vahet. Pisikest venelast ei ole, aga pisike ameeriklane ja hiinlane kindlasti. Ja ei ole vahet, kui palju sinu järgi luuravad. Võib ka nii vaadata asjale. Aga siin on jällegi väga

selliseid, hm, Eestil, tal võib olla erihoiak, aga mitte erihuvi. See on väga oluline vaadata, kuidas EL kui tervik oma seisukohti kujundab. See saab olema raske, sest nii nagu ma ütlen, nii nagu Venemaa, nii ka Hiina opereerivad erinevate riikidega, selleks et mõjutada seda üldist hoiakut ja nii üks, kui ka teine, Peking ja Moskva, mõlemad tahavad erisuhteid luua erinevate riikidega, mille kaudu nad saavad EL kui terviku positsioone manipuleerida. See on nagu üldises plaanis, mida nad taotlevad. Ja kui see on nii, siis Eesti nagu väike riik, mida ta lõpuks parata saab?! Aga so far so good, üldine hoiak on selge. Erinevused on siin USA-ga, mis on kahetsusväärset, aga EL ei taha ennast angažeerida sellisesse kaubandussõtta, mis oleks destruktiivne Hiinaga, sest ka Hiina tarbimine kasvab, Prantslastel on hea, hiinlased hakkasid palju rohkem veini jooma, ka oma veini ja prantsuse veini. Ja tarbivad igasuguseid asju. Vaatame soomlasi. Soome arengustrateegias on Hiina tähtsal kohal, see ei ole niisama, et Sauli Niinistö käis riigivisiidil jaanuaris sel aastal. Vaatame juba alates Finnairist, seal on 6 sihtkohta Hiinasse ja kõik need hiinlased, keda meie siin näeme Tallinnas, on lärmakad Hiina turistid, nad tulevad ju ikkagi läbi Helsingi. Muudmoodi ei saagi siia tulla. Me oleme ka selles mõttes võib olla ka osaliselt, võib olla me olemegi Hiina orbiidis läbi Soome?! Ja siis läbi Soome prisma, Soome kaudu on meid avastatud. See on ka võimalik, eks ole. See on ka üks aspekt. Võtame, kui hiinlased tulevad välja mingi konkreetse ettepanekuga, mis on Eestile arusaadav ja läbipaistev ja kus poliitilised aspektid, kõik sensitiiivsused saavad ära klaaritud, siis ma ei näe mingit probleemi, miks me peaksime välistama Hiina investeringuid.

Õelge palun, et kuidas EL Teie arvates suhtub sellisesse initsiatiivi, nagu 17+1, kas EL oleks huvitatud sellest koostöö formaadist?

Noh, miks EL peaks sellest huvitatud olema? EL on huvitatud, et tema liikmed, need keda Hiina on sellesse formaati kaasanud, suhtleksid Hiinaga läbi EL formaadi, läbi Brüsseli. Brüsselis me istume koos, me oleme Euroopa Liit, seal me arutame Hiina asja, teeme koos otsuseid ja siis suhtleme Hiinaga. EL ei ole 16+1 ripats. Seal on rohkem minu jaoks poliitiline mäng. Seal reaalsuses sellises koosluses ei saa mitte midagi konkreetselt arutada ega otsustada. Pigem seda võib võrrelda võib olla kaudselt Kolme mere asjaga, mis on Läänemeri, Aadria meri ja Must meri. Aga seal on ikkagi EL riigid, siis sellisel juhul see on hoopis teistmoodi. See on palju segasem, seal on EL riigid, siis ka mitte liikmesriigid, siis ka Hiina, kes on 7 tuhande km kaugusel, noh, nii et kuidas see kõik kokku sobib. Tähendab, Euroopas ei saa olla, nad võivad olla, selliseid formaate teha, mis omab rohkem mõtet ja konkreetsust kuskil ma ei tea, Aafrikas, kus Hiina on sees. Siis võtab seal Ida-Aafrikast, Kesk-Aafrikast seal bunch of countries, kümnekond riiki, siis teevad 1+10 ja siis ütleb neile, jah ok, siin me ehitame läbi 2-3 riiki raudteed, siin me ehitame veel mingisuguseid kiirteid, siin on sadamad. Te saate nii palju pappi, me nii palju, toome oma hiinlased siia kohale, insenerid, töölised, kui vaja on ja mis iganes, teeme asja ära. Siis Aafrikased, yes, nad on vaesed, neil ei ole mingisugust oma, see Aafrika Liit ei ole nagu Euroopa Liit, tähendab, nendel on mingisugused organisatsioonid, aga see ei ole see. Seal nad võivad küll niimoodi opereerida. Kuid Euroopa riigid, seal hulgas hulk EL riike lasevad endaga opereerida nagu mingisugused Aafrika riigid, siis sorry, aga ilmselt

sellel ei ole väga tulevikku. Noh see on pigem ma ütlen selline nagu poliitiliselt kompamine, et vaadata mis nendel Hiinlastel öelda on ja mida nad tahavad. Aga seda ma ennem juba rääkisin. Ega mingisugust lootust, et seal käib välja Hiina mingid konkreetsed projektid, mis just neid riike hõlmab, see päris nii ei käi. Pärast nad hakkavad niikuinii kahepoolselt kellegagi rääkima ja nii, see on selline jah, tore, räägime, suhtleme, et ärme seda alatähtsusta, sest see näitab Hiina huvi ja see näitab ka nende riikide huvi Hiina vastu. Aga seda ületähtsustada kindlasti ei tasu.

Tahtsin veel seda küsida ka, kas selline initsiatiiv, kas ta toetab strateegilist partnerlust Hiina ja EL vahel või see on täiesti midagi omaette?

See on midagi omaette. Ma arvan, et tegelikult ma olen juba jupi kaupa vastanud sellele küsimusele. EL on oma strateegia, oma poliitika Hiina suhtes ja ma ei näe, kuidas oleks võimalik, et üks osa ainult liikmetest koos mitte liikmetega eraldi Hiinaga saaksid midagi teha, mis annaks lisaväärtust ja ilma EL suurriikideta. Mis lisaväärtust see saab anda? Ma ei tea, ma ei kujuta ette. Võib olla ta ei mõjuta negatiivselt, kuivõrd sealt midagi konkreetselt välja tuleb, ma arvan, sellest formaadist. Ma ei välista kahepoolsed asju, aga lisaväärtust ma ka ei näe. Selles mõttes ma pigem arvan, et see on selline, noh praktilises mõttes, neutraalne.

Aga kuidas Te arvate praegu see dokument strateegiline partnerlus Hiinaga, mis kehtib kuni 2020, aga arvatavasti luuakse uut dokumenti, uut strateegilist lähenemist, kuidas Te arvate, kas sellel initsiatiivil oleks kohta selles dokumendis?

Noh ütleme, kõigepealt ma alustaksin sellest, et sõna strateegia ja dokumendi vahel, sõna strateegia, mida pannakse poliitilisele dokumendile, pannakse sõna strateegia, strateeg, see ei tähenda alati üht ja sama asja. Ta ei oma alati üht ja sama kaalu. Noh, antud juhul muidugi, Hiina kahtlemata väga oluline kaubanduspartner EL-e. Ma ei teagi, kui suur osakaal EL kui terviku väliskaubandust langeb Hiinale.

Ta on teisel kohal. Kui Hiina oli EL esimesel kohal kaubanduspartner, siis EL-le Hiina on teisel kohal.

Kui suur see osakaal oli?

Seda võib vaadata ka teistpidi. Hiina jaoks kui suur EL osakaal? Ja kui balansis ta on või pigem disbalansis, see kaubandusdefitsiit jne. Siis näiteks USA puhul on see selle hullumeelse presidendi jaoks on olnud just see ajend, mis viis selle kaubandussõjani, ja tollitariifideni ja sanktsioonideni ja nii et.

Noh, seal võib olla. On nagu näha, see must on see balanss, mis on 2016-17-18 on ikka väga negatiivne EL jaoks. Need on siis import 352 – 375 pea 400 mld eur importi Hiinast, eksporti 210 ja balance -195, peaaegu -50%. Siin ei ole täpselt, kui suur osakaal on.

Siin ongi, EU-China trade in service almost more than 10% EUs export services. Noh jah, päris suur osakaal. Aga ilmselt proportsionaalselt Hiina on Eesti väliskaubanduses alla selle EL keskmise. Seda peab mees pidama ja tegelikult ma arvan, et see oleks hea idee Teil vaadata üle kõiki neid riike, keda Hiina on kaasanud seal ja võrrelda nende kaubanduse mahtu Hiinaga oma väliskaubanduses ja ka välisinvesteeringuid ja võrrelda neid EL keskmisega. Ja ma ei imestaks, kui enamik nendest riikidest on

alla selle keskmise. Ja võib olla see ongi Hiina jaoks see formaat, mille kaudu neid julgustada tõsta see, see võib olla üks väga oluline motivaator nagu Hiinale. Sest Hiina jaoks ei ole siin poliitilised aspektid primaarsed. Nad saavad aru, kui kaugel nad on Euroopast ja nende mõju tuleb läbi majanduse ja kaubanduse, nii et ..

Siis pigem Hiinat juhib ikkagi majanduslik huvi.

Absoluutselt.

Ja kas poliitiline huvi käib kaasas?

Üks asi on, et just nimelt luua soodsad tingimused kaupade eksportimiseks Euroopasse. See on, eksport on ju Hiina majanduse mootor. Ma arvan, et majandus hakkab nendel natukene jahtuma, kui kasv läks, aasta SKP kasv läks alla 7%, siis kõik tõmbasid häirekella. Siis kui Euroopas läks alla 2%, siis polnud probleemi, aga kui Hiinal see juhtus, kõik hakkasid: oo, jahtub maha. Aga et ja selle jaoks on vaja kaubateid jne ja nendel on oma strateegia et kontrollida kaupade vedu läbi kogu infra kuni tarbijani välja. Aga seda on näha, kuidas see pörkab kokku Euroopa Liidu poliitikaga. Venemaa üritas samamoodi võtta kontrolli alla kõik torujuhtmed, värgid, Gazpromilt kuni tarbijani välja. EL ütles „no way“, ja nii et siin hakkavad EL, ma arvan, EL ja Hiina huvid pörkuma, kui nad katsuvad omandada transpordi infrastruktuuri Euroopas. Eks ole näha.

Ja siis viimane küsimus, natukene rääkisime juba sellest alguses, kas selline initsiatiiv soodustab koostööd EL ja Hiina vahel?

Noh, ma juba vastasin, selles mõttes, et ta võib, seda ei saa välistada, ta võib soodustada, aga ainult siis, kui nendel EL liikmetel, kes on sellesse formaati kaasatud, on seal midagi positiivset sealt viia EL laua taga ja näidata, et me oleme seal selles formaadis, panime tähele seda, seda ja seda, et võiks niimoodi teha Hiinaga. Aga kui seal sellest formaadist ei ole mitte midagi tuua, mitte midagi uut, põnevat positiivset, siis ei olegi. Siis ei anna seda, nagu ma enim ütlesin lisaväärtust sellele, mida me niikuinii juba teeme EL raames Hiinaga. Ja teisest küljest, ma ei näe ka võimalust ilma järelmiteta, et need EL liikmed, kes Hiinaga seal laulavad ja tantsivad selles teises formaadis ei järgiks seda, mis on Brüsselis kokku lepitud. EL liikmetena nad peavad seda respekteerima, neid kokkuleppeid ja EL poliitikaid. Kui me seda ei tee, siis tekivad probleemid juba EL sees, siis niikuinii it doesn't work. Eks Hiina loomulikult peab ka arvestama selles mängus, et tal on teatud piirid ja tal on mänguruumi rohkem nende riikidega, kes ei ole EL. Tal on, noh, me oleme näinud Hiina poliitikat, mis on teinud ettevaatlikuks. Kuidas teatud riikides antakse suurt laenu ja vot, ehitame siin sadamat, ja siis sellel riigil ei ole enam raha, et laenu tagasi maksta. Projekt läheb ühel, teisel, kolmandal põhjusel läheb untsu ja siis, andke meile seda 99 aastaks. EL riigid ei ole nii vaesed ja nii raha näljas, et nad peaksid õnge minema sellise skeemiga. Selles mõttes Hiina ei saa läheneda EL riikidele nagu Sri Lankale või Tansaaniale, ta peab midagi uut ja põnevat, motiveerivat välja mõtlema. Ja ma ei mõtle siin mingit salakavalat skeemi, lihtsalt suhtumine ja see mudel peab olema teine. Aga ma rohkem ei oska midagi muud lisada, ma loodan et ma Teile mõningaid mõtteid siiski andsin.

Interviewee 2

Tere. Suur aitäh Teile, et olite nõus minuga kohtuma. Olen Angelina, käin Tallinna Tehnika Ülikoolis ja hetkel kirjutan magistritööd ja Peeter Mürsepp on minu juhendaja.

Minu teemaks on Euroopa Liidu ja Hiina vahelised suhted 17+1 initsiatiivi raames.

Oma töös ma väidan, et praegu Hiina ja EL peavad rohkem tegema koostööd üks teisega. Hiina initsieeris sellist projekti, nagu 17+1. Kuna seal on hästi palju EL riike kaasatud, see võiks olla heaks võimaluseks nende omavahelise koostöö arendamiseks ja edendamiseks. Kuidas Teie arvate, kas praegusel hetkel on piisavalt koostööd EL ja Hiina vahel?

Kui Te mõtlete nüüd Euroopa Liitu tervikuna, siis mulle tundub, et EL ja Hiina suhted on suht jahedad, et Hiina eelistabki eriti majanduskoostöös ja investeerimises niimoodi võtta Euroopa riike üks haaval, aga seal on väga suured erinevused, minu meelest. Nendel tugevatel tööstusriikidel siamaani on ikkagi teatud tehniliste ja lahenduste ja kaupade müümise embargo Hiinale. Jälle ma üksikasju ei tea, mida Hiina võib kasutada militaarsüsteemide väljaehitamises ja see on minu meelest väga, väga õige. Hiina režiim on ikkagi selline, et seda usaldada ei saa. See on näha. Tööstus spionaaž on ju sellise majanduselu või poliitilise elu lahutamata osa, millega siis Ameerika Ühendriigid rohkem, aga Euroopa riigid on ka hädas, et Hiinaga ei saagi niimoodi ühepoolset praegusel hetkel kuidagi mingeid häid suhteid luua, sest et Hiina on nii nagu Eesti vana sõna ütleb, annad kuradile sõrme, ta võtab terve käe. Et selles mõttes ma kiidan heaks, et tervikuna EL -u poliitika Hiina suhtes on piisavalt vaoshoitud, ettevaatlik ja äraootav.

Kuidas Te arvate, et kuigi 17+1 initsiatiiv ei ole otseselt EL-ga loodud, ei ole Hiina ja Euroopa Liidu vahel, aga Hiina ja Ida-ja Kesk-Euroopa riikide vahel, kuidas Te ise arvate, kas selline initsiatiiv on vajalik EL-le? Kas EL on huvitatud antud koostöö formaadist?

Ma ütlen ausalt, et ma ei tea. Minuni ei ole igatahes jõudnud. Ma olen natuke rohkem, kui tavalugeja, kes ajakirjandusest ja mujalt jälgib neid asju, aga ma ei ole tähele pannud, kindlasti on mingeid väljendusi või poliitilisi avaldusi Euroopa Liidu poolt tervikuna 17+1 initsiatiivi suhtes, aga ma jällegi ei tea, et oleks suuri ja jõulisi huvi ülesnäitamisi, sellest oleks ikkagi rohkem kuulda. Ja ma saan väga hästi aru, miks EL seda ei tee, sellepärast see jällegi võib olla selline võimendatud minu poolt praegu ja ühekülgne lähenemine, aga Hiina on läinud teadlikult selle peale välja, et 16 või 17 riiki Ida-Euroopast, kes on tegelikult nõrgemini integreeritud EL-u, nad astusid palju hiljem. Nende majandused on mahajäänud, on teatud pinged EL-ga ka, eriti siin Balkani või Poola, Ungari, Tsehhi jne. Rahulolematust on võib olla natuke rohkem. Hiina kasutab seda just ära, et saada käpp sisse üks haaval nende suhteliselt nõrkade Ida-Euroopa riikidesse, sinna investeerides. Investeerides noh, olen ka kuulnud, et neid Hiina tingimusi. Laenutingimused on palju karmimad, kui Euroopa pankade investeerimine, see tähendab seda kui majandusobjekt/haru läheb Hiina käpa alla. Mina näen igatahes, et see on Hiina teadlik tee nüüd Ida-Euroopa kaudu üks haaval, noh tegelikult

nõrgestada EL-u integratsiooni ja üldse majandusliku, eriti majandusliku integratsiooni aga ka poliitilise integratsiooni, saada enda mõjusfääri neid.

Siis pigem Hiina teeb seda pigem poliitiliste kaalutluste pärast?

Ma arvan, ma julgeks öelda, et poliitilised kaalutlused on siin juhtivad. Kasutada ära kõiki võimalusi oma mõju suurendamiseks kogu maailmas ja Euroopa ja Ida Euroopa need 16, need on suhteliselt, selline hea pinnas, kuigi mitte ühtemoodi hea, noh, me teame, et Serbias ja endistes Jugoslaavia riikides on ja mitmel pool mujal ka Hiina investeringuid on väga lahkelt vastu võetud, võib olla siin Baltikumis ja Poolas natukene vähem. Loomulikult, Hiina saab oma majanduslikku kasu ka. Tal on ju tohutud valuutareservid, mida on vaja tööle panna. Seda ju ka analüütikud on öelnud, et neid seal on triljon või pluss dollarit seisab pankades, et iga päev mis nad seisavad ja toovad tohutud kahju, neid on vaja investeerida. Hiina endale ei jõua neid investeerida palju ja ta otsib teisi turge. Ta ostab mitte ainult Ida-Euroopast, kuid ka Lääne Euroopast, Ameerikast tootmisüksusi, mitte ühe tehase haaval, aga tervete harude kaupa. Hiinal on loomulikult see majandushuvi ka, aga poliitiline huvi, noh ma ei oska öelda, mitu % on üks või teine, aga need on väga tugevad.

Kuidas Te arvate, mis on EL riikide eesmärgid, just need riigid, mis osalevad selles projektis? Miks nad osalevad seal?

Eeskätt need 16+1 või 17+1?

Miks nad osalevad?! Nad vajavad investeringuid. Vajavad investeringuid ja nad loodavad, et Hiinalt saab neid kergemini ja see aitab nende majanduse järjele, kodumaise tööstuse järjele ja noh, võib olla ei mõtle nii väga selle peale, mis tulevik võib tuua. Kuigi hoiatavad neid Aasias, neid on küll ja küll, nõrgemad Aasia maad, mis on võtnud laenu ja ei suutnud laenu tagasi maksta Sri Lanka jne ja siis lähevad terved sadamad sealt Hiinale nagu võlakatteks, nii öelda. Et see võib juhtuda väga kergesti Euroopas. Aga praegu on see, et lühike eesmärk on saada raha oma majanduskäive panna, millega võib olla tõstab SKP-d ja elatustaset ja kõik, ja nagu me teame, paljude asjade taga on sisepoliitilised ambitsioonid, et valitsevad koalitsioonid ja presidendid ja peaministrid, kui nad suudavad lühikese ajaga Hiina rahaga midagi korda saata, siis valitakse neid tagasi, paraku poliitika selline on. Kes on võimul, tahavad võimul püsida.

Aga kuidas Eesti, kas Eestis ajendab ka majanduslik huvi selles initsiatiivis osaleda või mitte? Kas osalemine antud projektis vastab Eesti riigi huvidele?

Eks, Eestil nagu huvi on olnud. Kui on olnud siin Ida-Euroopas neid nii öelda tippkohtumisi, siis Eesti on ka peaministri tasemel osa võtnud. Aga Eestis, ma nagu õndselt suurt huvi ei näe. Ma ei teagi eriti, mis ettevõtted, mis oleksid Hiina rahaga siin püsti pandud. Nii et Eesti on pigem selline ettevaatlik või ta ei ole leidnud seda, millega hiinlasi siia juurde meelitada, kui aga vaadata ikkagi päris viimasel ajal paari aasta jooksul avalikku arvamust majandusanalüütikute kirjutisi, siis Eesti on pigem selline ratsionalistlik ja näeb nagu läbi neid, noh vähemalt osa neid Hiina võimalikke ambitsioone. Eks me teame, et Hiina on ikkagi juba ka 17 Ida-Euroopamaad ja Põhjamaades siin Rootsisis Soomes on kokku otnud, investeerinud Soome

metsatööstusesse väga palju. Ja Eesti on ettevaatlik, ja mina arvan, et see on pigem õige poliitika, et olla ettevaatlik just Hiinast tulenevate investeeringute ja laenude osas. Mida Eesti võiks teha kindlasti paremini ja efektiivsemalt, on ise Hiinasse müüa ja olla nii öelda sinna turu suunas aktiivne, oma tooteid arendada, noh seda kuigi palju on tehtud, aga see on ikkagi pisikene, siin on see kaugus ja kultuuride erinevus. Eestlased ei tunne Hiinat ja ettevõtjad ei löö seal läbi. Siin on juba ka riiklik poliitika, et meil Hiina spetsialiste eriti ei valmistata ette, noh keeli küll õpetatakse, aga keelte õpetamine ka selline, jõuame sinna soft poweri juurde, et noh selle tulemused võivad olla ka teistsugused. Mis meie riigi huvides nagu majanduskoostöös Hiinaga võiks ikkagi olla on just see, et valmistada vaikselt ette Hiinat tundvaid inimesi, kes oskavad paremat nõu anda ja noh, ma jällegi ei ole asjatundja, mis meetmeid peab rakendama selleks, et meie saaksime oma toodetega Hiina turule minna. See ei ole ka muidugi nii, et me lähme kogu Hiina turule, seda on ikkagi räägitud ja rõhutatud, et kui me Hiinas mingit provintsi, mingit maakonna saame heaks partneriks ja sel müüme. Maakond võib olla sama suur kui Eesti ja võrdväärne, aga noh mingi Šanghai börs või Šanghai turg, see on juba Eesti jaoks isegi juba liiga suur. Noh, selleks peab jah, seda Hiinat paremini tundma. Mida on Eesti kontekstis viimasel ajal räägitud, et Hiinlased on lubanud raha Tallinna-Helsingi tunneli jaoks, 15 mlrd. Esiteks, see hea mees kes lubabki, aga noh, eks on siin arvamusi jällegi seinast sein, ja minu isiklik arvamus on nagu see, et ma jälgin ka seda teemat, et kogu see tunnel ei ole eriti vajalik. Eesti ja Soome vahel on ikkagi nii väikesed maad, siin ei ole neid, liiklust ei ole selles tunnelis. Ehitame 100km tunneli, kus liiklust on vähe, Kas kaubarongid hakkavad kunagi mere alt käima, selleks ajaks on juba vaja veel kallimat taristut. 15 mlrd-ga mingit tunnelit ei ehitata. Kui läheb nii, et hakatakse ehitama ja Hiina raha sinna tuleb, siis süüdistagu iseennast. Siin oleme Hiinale lõa otsas lihtsalt. Ega see Hiina ei ole ka, ta võib paista suur ja võimas ja stabiilne, aga kui seal midagi juhtub, seal on pinged suured. See investering jääb näiteks pooleli, poole tunneli pealt, noh mis siis saab?!

Aga järgmine küsimus on selline, et kui võtta arvesse Hiinat ja EL-u, kas projekt toob mõlemale osapoolle vastastikust kasu? Miks ma seda küsin, sest 7 aastat on juba möödunud selle initsiatiivi väljakuulutamisest. Hästi palju on erinevaid artikleid ja Euroopa uurijad pigem arvavad, et see initsiatiiv toob pigem Hiinale kasu. Hiinlased aga tahavad neid ümber veenda, ja väidavad, et initsiatiiv on kasulik mõlemale. Kuidas Te arvate, kas ta toob mõlemale vastastikkust kasu või see on pigem ühele poole kallutatud?

Minu arvates, ta on ikkagi ühele poole kallutatud. Praeguse seisuga, nii nagu seda praegusel hetkel ajatakse. Loomulikult, Hiinal on sellest suurem kasu saada. Noh, ma jällegi väga konkreetselt ei tea, mis argumente, aga kui Hiina ise toob ja tahab veenda, et tervele EL-le on ta kasulik, see on tema huvides see veenmine. Iga kaupmees vaatab, kust ise kasu saada alates väikemüüjast, ka suurtes riikides ja investeeringutes. Teoreetiliselt see võib olla, kui Hiina rahadega, investeeringutega aidata Ida Euroopa riigid majanduslikult paremale järjele, et nende see elatustase ja majandusvõimekus läheneb Euroopa keskmisele ja jõuaks sinna, siis see oleks tervele EL-le väga kasulik. See oleneb jällegi, kuidas seda asja ajetakse. Kui nende

investeeringutega tegelikult nende laenudega sattuvad Hiinast sõltuvusesse, nn võlaorjusesse, nad võivad tagasi maksta või sundkorras Hiinale müüa neid kaupu jne, kokkuvõttes, noh mul on väga raske näha, et sellisel kujul, nagu praegusel hetkel seda ajetakse, see on pigem pikemas perspektiivis tervikuna EL-le suurt kasu toob.

2013 kui ma ei eksi EL ja Hiina sõlmisid oma vahel strateegilise partnerluse, just strateegilise partnerluse agenda. Kuidas Te arvate, kas see projekt 17+1, kas ta toetab strateegilist partnerlust Hiina ja EL vahel?

No vot, väga raske on minul spekuloida, ma tunnistan, ma ei ole seda strateegilise partnerluse lepingut lugenud. Ma ei tea, mis seal täpselt on. Aga võib arvata, et see on küllaltki üldine, et me ei hakka sõdima omavahel, ja meie ühistes huvides on rahu oleks, et majanduskoostöö õitseks, et turud oleks rohkem avatud ja mis iganes. Noh, see 17+1, teatavas mõttes muidugi, kauplemine on parem, kui sõdimine. Hiinal ja Euroopal on otseses mõttes raske omavahel sõdida, Venemaa on vahel, aga võib ka majandussõda, nagu Ameerika ja Hiina vahel praegu on. Selles osas ma ka väga hästi saan ameeriklastest aru, miks nad seda sõda nii õelda peavad. Hiina on natuke üle pea kasvanud. Nad on lasknud üle pea kasvada. EL-ga vist sellist majandussõda, kaubandussõda veel ei ole. Ühelt poolt see vastastikune investeerimine ja kaubavahetus parem kui sõda, aga kui ta jällegi kallutab liiga ühele poole, ja praegusel hetkel võib olla Hiina poole, siis on raske seda strateegilist lepingut nagu ta on üksikasjalikutes punktides väga toetab Euroopa poolt vaadatuna. Pigem on ikkagi nii, et kui EL näeb tegelikult rikkusi, jõukusi ja poliitiline mõju läheb välja pigem selle kaudu, noh siis see on ilmselt kahjulik.

Ja siis viimane küsimus, mille vastuseni ma üritangi oma töös jõuda, on kas 17+1 initsiatiiv soodustab koostööd Hiina ja EL vahel või mitte?

Aga see on seesama. Kas soodustab EL ja Hiina koostööd üldse?

Jah. Kas see on üks nendest projektidest, mis on vajalik nende vahele selleks, et edendada koostööd või pigem see takistab?

Jällegi faktoreid on siin nii palju, et ...noh, ma jälle spekuleerin. Mul ei ole sellist väga tugevat ekspertiisi sellel alal, aga me võime näha, et EL poolt vaadatuna. Me võime näha kaudset kasu, kas või sellega, et kui siin Hiina investeerib ja EL näeb, et need 17 kalduvad Hiina poole, EL võib olla, võib nii õelda, seda Ida-Euroopat rohkem kaasata, et ta ei langeks Hiina võrku. See võib olla kasu EL-le ja teiselt poolt siis võib olla ka, kui Hiina ja EL, kui nad suudaksid kokku leppida mingeid investeeringuid koos investeerimiseks Ida-Euroopas. See oleks kasulik, aga ma kardan, et praeguses seisus sellest ei paista küll midagi sellist, kui Hiina näiteks oleks nõus võrdse partnerina mingites suuremates Ida Euroopa projektides EL-ga võrdse partnerina investeerima või kokku leppima, et oleme võrdsed ja siis peaks ikkagi järgima just Euroopa fiskaal seadusi jne, aga ma kardan et Hiina ei tee seda lihtsalt. Selles mõttes on jällegi raske näha, et see üldiselt EL ja Hiina koostööle mingit tugevat sellist impacti annaks.

Interviewee 3

Kas praeguse seisuga on piisavalt koostööd Euroopa Liidu ja Hiina vahel?

Ei ole piisavalt. Kuniks me ei ole suutnud adekvaatseid plaane paika panna kliimasoojenemise vältimiseks, ei saa öelda, et koostöö oleks piisav. Samuti on oht, et USA surve triivib EL Hiinast üha kaugemale.

Kas 17+1 initsiatiiv on vajalik Euroopa Liidule?

Ei, see ei ole EL-u projekt. See võib olla vajalik mõnele EL riigile, aga EL tervikuna see pigem lõhestab.

Miks 17+1 on vajalik Hiinale?

17+1 on pigem bürokratlik tööriist, mis võimaldab koostööd. See on välja kasvanud siseriiklikust tööjaotusest, millele ei maksa otsida otsest poliitmajanduslikku selgitust.

Kas projekt toob mõlemale osapoolle vastastikkust kasu (Hiinale ja Euroopa Liidule)?

EL-le ei too see otseselt mingit kasu. Kui EL suudaks projektiga enam koostööd teha ja kehtestada mingid reeglid 17+1 raames tehtavate tehingute üle, siis võiks kunagi sellest EL-le kasu tõusta, aga seni, kuniks 17+1 ei allu EL reeglitele, ei saa me vastastikkusest kasust rääkida.

Kas 17+1 initsiatiiv toetab strateegilist partnerlust Hiina ja EL vahel?

Ei.

Kas 17+1 initsiatiiv soodustab koostööd Hiina ja EL-u vahel?

Ei, pigem lõhub seda.

Appendix 2. The list of questions for experts.

Please answer the following question and if possible, please justify Your opinion:

- 1) Is there enough cooperation between China and the EU at the current situation?
- 2) Is the 17 + 1 initiative necessary for the European Union? Is the European Union interested in this format of cooperation between China and EU countries?
- 3) What are the goals of the EU countries? Why are they involved in this project?
- 4) Why is 17 + 1 necessary for China? What are China's Goals? What does China want to achieve with this?
- 5) Is the project mutually beneficial for China and the EU (EU countries)?
- 6) Do you think the 17 + 1 initiative supports the strategic partnership between China and the EU?
- 7) Does the 17 + 1 initiative facilitate cooperation between China and the EU?
If so, how?
If not, what are the obstacles?

Appendix 3. Figure 1.

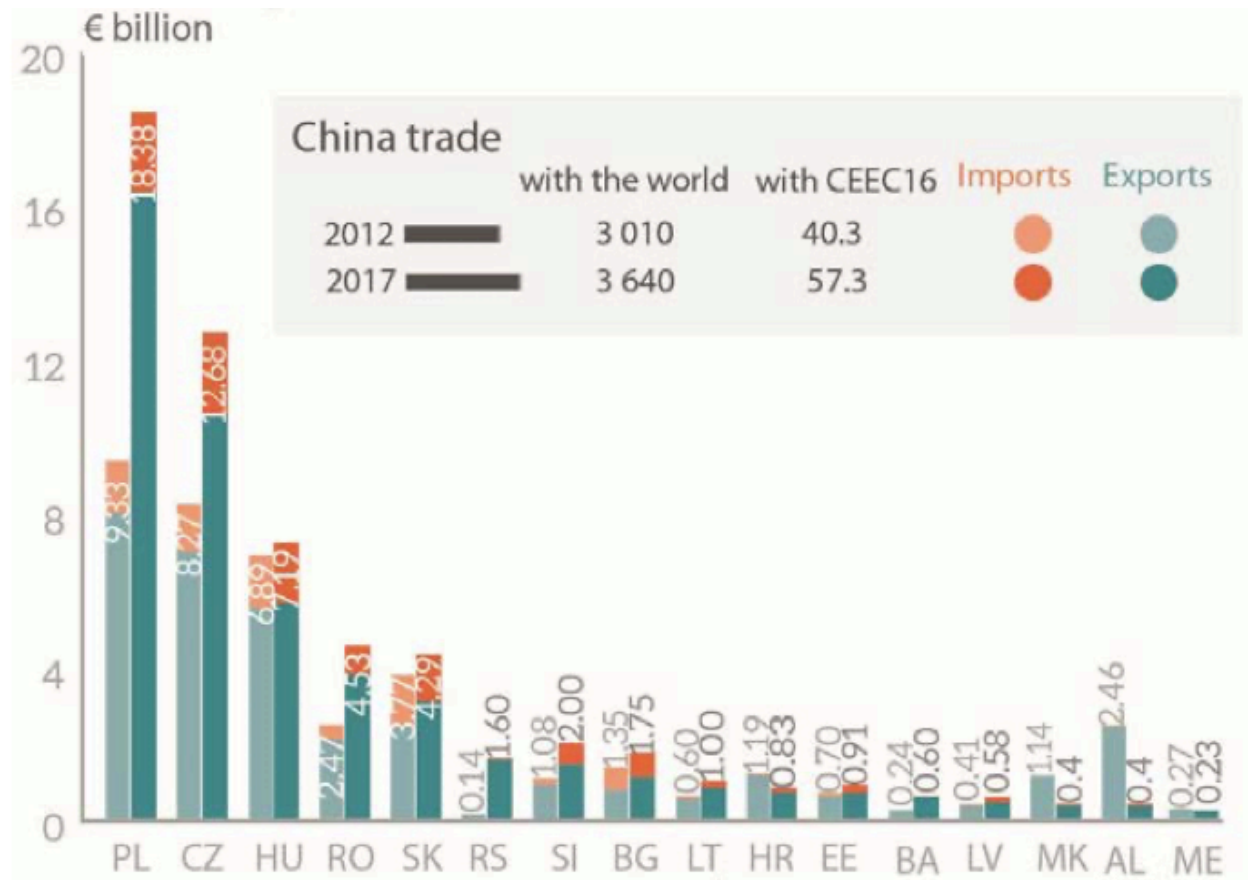


Figure 1. China-CEEC trade in goods in 2012 and 2017
 Source: Grieger (2018, 5)

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