

## The evolution of Chinese labour conditions

Is China entering a new stage of socio-economic development?

The Brussels China Forum, Chinaworks.be, the European Institute for Asian Studies and the Egmont Institute invite you to an expert conference on the evolution of China's labour conditions. This is an event not to miss: three of the world's leading experts will share their insights. Dr. Anita Chan will present a pointed evolution of China's labour environment. Prof. Chang Kai takes a look behind the scene of policy making and traces the motivations and consequences of the new labour contract law. The influence of external actors will be explained by Mr Brendan Smith. Finally, Mr. James Moran will discuss the implications on the EU's China-policy.

China's initial economic formula was simple: opening its enormous labour force to the international market. Numerous companies found their way to the country to make use of the cheap and unprotected labour. Nowadays, this situation appears to be changing. Wages are increasing steadily. Troops of deprived labourers in the coastal cities take the street to demand better conditions on the work floor. The Chinese government pays more and more attention to 'harmonious growth' and social security. Are we on the verge of a new stage of development in which naked capitalism is changed for a more equitable growth? This question touches the fundamentals of China's further development perspectives. It is also relevant to evaluate the success of the EU's conditional engagement policy towards the PRC.

This conference specifies China's socio-economic transition to the issue of labour conditions. It will give an overview of the key problems faced by China's workers and the ways in which frustrations are ventilated. Attention will also be spent to the reaction of the government. How is it adapting its labour legislation? Are the national guidelines implemented by local administrations? What impact can external actors have? Finally, an assessment is made of the EU's policy on labour rights in China. How is Brussels addressing the issue? Does the EU perceive to have a positive impact? What are the future options?

The Brussels China Forum is a leading discussion platform that addresses pertinent issues relating to China's transition. The emphasis of the meetings is both on profound and innovative insights. The forum is an initiative of the Brussels Institute of Contemporary China Studies (BICCS) and is joined by several prominent Brussels-based organisations. More information: [www.vub.ac.be/biccs/chinaforum](http://www.vub.ac.be/biccs/chinaforum).



The different backgrounds of the key-note speakers guarantee that the issue will be addressed from various perspectives. Anita Chan is doing research at the Australian National University and published widely on Chinese workers' conditions, the Chinese trade union and labour rights issues. She is author of several widely cited works among which her latest book *China's Workers Under Assault: The Exploitation of Labour in a Globalizing Economy*. She carried out pioneering field research in numerous companies. Brendan Smith is a legal expert specializing in national and international labour law and policy. He is currently co-director of Global Labour Strategies and the UCLA Law School Globalization and Labour Standards Project. He recently co-authored two reports on China's draft Labour Contract Law: *Undue Influence and behind the Great Wall*, each covered by the New York Times, Washington Post and other media outlets. Chang Kai is professor at the Renmin University in Beijing and was the chief-editor of China's new *Labour Contract Law* (2007). He has been closely involved in national policymaking on labour-related issues.

You are welcome on June 22<sup>th</sup> in the Egmont Palace (Petit Sablon 8, Brussels). You can register until June 16<sup>th</sup> by sending an e-mail to [chinaforum@vub.ac.be](mailto:chinaforum@vub.ac.be), containing your name, organization, function, address.

### **Program**

08.40h: Registration

09.00h: Welcome

09.10h: Anita Chan (Australian National University): An overview of China's labour environment

10.20h: Coffee break

10.50h: Session chaired by Xavier Nuttin (Policy Department, European Parliament)

. Chang Kai (Renmin University Beijing): The new labour contract law

. Brendan Smith (Global Labour Strategies): China's labour environment in an international setting

12.15h - 12.30h: James Moran (Director Asia, DG RELEX, European Commission): closing remarks

12.30h: end of meeting

Each presentation will be followed by a discussion round. More information on the key-note speakers and their articles and reports: [www.chinaworks.be](http://www.chinaworks.be).

The Brussels China Forum is formed by the following partners:



The Brussels China Forum is part of the **EU-China Academic Network (ECAN)**, supported by the European Commission. More information: [www.ec-an.eu](http://www.ec-an.eu).

