STASIS
Software for Ambient Semantic Interoperable Services

Deliverable D8.8
European-China Cooperation Report

Workpackage WP 8 – Discussion, Impact and Dissemination
Task T8.8 – European-China Cooperation

Abstract

STASIS (SoFware for Ambient Semantic Interoperateable Services) is a Research and Development project sponsored under the Europeans Commission’s 6th Framework programme as well as its project members – www.stasis-project.net. Its objective is for Research, Development and Validation of open, webServices based, distributed semantic services for SME empowerment within the Automotive, Furniture and other sectors. It commenced September 1st 2006 and lasts for 3 years until August 2009 with a total budget of €4M. 12 Partners are involved including Commercial Companies (TIE, iSoft) Academics (Universities of Sunderland, Oldenburg, Modena & Reggio Emilia, Tsinghua) and User Organisations (AIDIMA, Mariner, Shanghai Sunline, Foton, TANET, ZF Friedrichshafen AG) and these are led by the managing partner TIE. Partners are spread across Europe and China.

This deliverable is a summary of the European-China cooperation. It describes the successful parts of the cooperation as well as the deficiencies. The reasons why problems appeared are analyzed in this document as well as providing some ideas for how to avoid negatives in future cooperation. Therefore all partners were asked to fill a questionnaire whose results are summarized in this document and analysed to find the reasons of problems. Finally there will are provided some recommendations for a successful cooperation.

Authors

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Executive Summary

This deliverable describes the cooperation between Chinese and European partners in STASIS. The purpose of this deliverable is to provide information about the cooperation experiences in general and to show typical problems and ways to solve them or avoid them completely.

At first the management structure of the project, the utilized communication instruments and the cooperation in general will be described. Then the individual experiences of the project partners shown. To gather these experiences a questionnaire was designed and sent out to all partners. A similar questionnaire was used to gather feedback from project external people, in order to compare the partners’ experiences with an external view.

This deliverable also contains recommendations, which are derived from the summarized feedback and the experiences made during the project. Most of these recommendations have already been applied in the course of the project and proven to be very successful. It is believed that they can serve as guidelines for other projects with Europe-China cooperations and help to facilitate the mutual understanding of the cultures.
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1 Background

The purpose of this section is to introduce the:

- STASIS Project
- Purpose, scope and context of this deliverable
- Intended audience for the deliverable
- Document Structure
- External References

1.1 STASIS Project

STASIS (Softwate for Ambient Semantic Interoperable Services) is a Research and Development project sponsored under the Europeans Commission’s 6th Framework programme as well as its projects members – www.stasis-project.net. Its objective is for Research, Development and Validation of open, webServices based, distributed semantic services for SME empowerment within the Automotive, Furniture and other sectors. It commenced September 1st 2006 and lasts for 3 years until August 2009 with a total budget of €4M. 12 Partners are involved including Commercial Companies (TIE, iSOFT) Academics (Universities of Sunderland, Oldenburg, Modena & Reggio Emilia, Tsinghua) and User Organisations (AIDIMA, Mariner, Shanghai Sunline, Foton, TANET, ZF Friedrichshafen AG) and these are led by the managing partner TIE. Partners are spread across Europe and China.

1.2 Deliverable purpose, scope and context

The purpose of this deliverable is to describe the Chinese / European cooperation within STASIS as an exemplar for others for handling intercultural differences, for finding entrance to new emerging markets and issues related to the differing maturity re the IT infrastructure.

This document shows the experiences made when dealing with cultural differences in a RTD project. The joint research aims at establishing a working platform of cooperation and gives references for future and new cooperation within the Chinese 863 programme (the National High Technology Research and Development Program of China ) and the EC in other research areas. It is helpful for the future exchange of information, ideas, people and resources between China and EU. These results will also be valuable to the European Commission to analyse the practicalities of such exercises, even if it was not the central focus of STASIS.

Vice versa the Chinese partners can use their experiences in new partnerships and projects with European companies, as well as in new research projects with European partners and present this document to interested parties.

1.3 Audience

The intended audience includes:
• STASIS partners so they can also benefit also from the individual experiences of the other partners
• The European Commission to get an impression of cooperation with China and so to improve the general conditions for European companies to cooperate with Chinese companies
• Other projects, both EU/RTD and commercial projects, involving European-China Cooperation in order to reuse and benefit from experiences in STASIS-project and to avoid the similar problems.

1.4 Document Structure
This document is structured as follows:
• Section 1: Introduction
  This is a generic introduction to the Europe-China Cooperation
• Section 2: STASIS project
  This section describes the cooperation between Europe and China in the STASIS project
• Section 3: Project specific experiences
  This section describes the experiences made during the course of the project and project partner experiences gathered using a questionnaire
• Section 4: External experiences
  This section describes the experiences of non-project companies and researches. These were also gathered using a questionnaire
• Section 5: Recommendations
  In this section the conclusion of the different experiences is given and the recommendations will be summarized
• Annex A: Partner specific feedback on the questionnaires
  This section contains the questionnaires and feedback of all STASIS project partners

1.5 References
This document is dependent on the following primary references:
• STASIS:
  • STASIS DOW
  • D1.2 Project Manual
2 Introduction

Partners in the STASIS project are from all over Europe and China. They are technology and service providers, user organizations and academics. Naturally challenges in cooperation arise in such a heterogeneous team. The following table illustrates heterogeneity by giving the relative weights of the different partner profiles in the project by:

- Organisation Nature
- Organisation Types
- Location

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organisation Nature (SME/Non SME)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMEs</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non SMEs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academics</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organisation Type</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partners that are technology or service providers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partners that are user organisations/associations</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partners that are academic</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK (UK)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Netherlands (NL)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany (DE)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy (IT)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain (ES)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate Countries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria (BG)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China (CN)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One obstacle for cooperation is the geographical dispersion of project partner. The following figures illustrate the locations of the partners in their respective continent. The first one (Figure 1) shows the European Union, while Figure 2 shows the locations of the Chinese project partners.
Figure 1: STASIS Partners in Europe

Figure 2 shows the Chinese partners of STASIS located in the major cities of Beijing and Shanghai. Furthermore it shows their connections to other major cities in China through the related parties of the involved companies, which results in a good spreading all over China.

Figure 2: STASIS Partners in China

This worldwide dispersion of the project partners causes additional problems beyond those typically associated with cooperation within Europe. For example, while face-to-face meetings are possible with minor effort within one continent, meetings involving partners from almost different ends of the world require more effort, time and budget.
In addition to the geographical obstacles, the project partners faced cultural differences in STASIS, and obviously the most challenging and informative aspect of the cooperation was between the European and Chinese partners. This can be easily shown by a simple example. Figure 3 shows a map of the world as it is common in China. For Europeans the China-centred perspective is unusual, vice versa the euro-centred map depicted in Figure 4 looks odd to the Chinese.

![Figure 3: STASIS worldwide from a Chinese point of view](image1)

From example described above regarding the different focussed world maps, one can learn that it is not only important to know where your partners are, but
also who they are and what their point of view is. In intercultural communication the devil is in the detail and small differences can lead to misunderstandings.

Therefore, this deliverable focuses on the challenges encountered and the solutions developed during the project. It describes the experiences in a generalized field report and gives recommendations for other projects with Europe-China cooperation.
3 STASIS project

This section provides a short overview about the European-China cooperation in the EU project STASIS.

3.1 Project description

The goal of the STASIS project is to enable stakeholders, particularly SMEs to participate in the eEconomy within Europe, as well as worldwide. Therefore research in the fields of semantic interoperability within an eBusiness context was performed and an application was developed, which enables the companies to participate in this world. The software facilitates the electronic trading with both, larger companies and peer SMEs.

The aim of the developed software is to support the exchange of business messages. The biggest problem in this area is the mapping process of different formats used by companies. Therefore STASIS developed a solution to support the automatic creation of mapping suggestions based on different approaches like structural comparison and semantic reasoning.

Since the Chinese market is gaining more and more importance, and Chinese companies take part in worldwide supply chains, the cooperation with China is a special focus of the project and two Chinese companies, one from the furniture sector and one from the automotive sector, are part of the project consortium as user partners. Furthermore Tsinghua University represents the research and development expertise of China.

The other partners are located all-over the European Union and (at the beginning of the project) one candidate country, which now is part of the EU. The European partners had international connections previous to the project, but most of them within Europe. Therefore all involved partners were looking forward to the intercultural learning experience of the project which in turn could be useful to their own organisations.
### 3.2 Project partners

This section introduces the partners of the project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Name / Nature</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1 | **AIDIMA**  
Spain  
Industry  
User/Association | AIDIMA, the technological institute for furniture, wood, packaging and related, is a non-profit scientific, research and educational organisation that is active throughout Europe and particularly in Spain. The main aim of AIDIMA is the transfer of RTD and technological innovation to the Spanish wood and furniture sector to enhance competitiveness in the global market. AIDIMA was created due to an initiative of the private companies in the wood and furniture sector and established in 1984 with the initial support of the Valencian Government, the Spanish Ministry of Industry and the European Union. Today, AIDIMA is the scientific umbrella organisation for almost 650 associated companies throughout Spain. |
| 2 | **BEIQI FOTON Motor Co., LTD**  
P.R.China  
Industry  
User | BFM is a motor vehicle provider which focuses on the market of business vehicle under 35 tons. Beiqi Foton Motor Co., LTD is a motor vehicle provider. With about 28,000 employees, BFM is developing extremely fast and has 60% of Beijing business car market. It has 5 series of brand which covers light truck, bus and SUV |
| 3 | **University of Sunderland**  
United Kingdom  
Academic  
N/A | University of Sunderland is an academic partner, through the Centre for Internet Technologies (CIT), at the School of Computing and Technology. CIT is the research group of the Internet Technologies group within the School (formerly the Centre for Electronic Commerce Research and Development). |
| 4 | **ISOFT**  
Bulgaria  
Technology Provider  
SME | iSoft started in 2000 by a group of IT experts, who have established several leading software teams. Mission: Developing models, frameworks, components and services for Next Generation Interoperable Applications Domain Areas: Collaborative eBusiness; Technological platforms for effective Expert knowledge utilization |
| 5 | **MARINER**  
Spain  
Industry  
SME | Mariner is one of the most innovative Spanish furniture manufacturers. Mariner was founded in 1893, and since then, the creativity has been present in all the stages of the business activities. Their products are self-designed and adapt the current fashion trends and innovations. The worldwide experience of Mariner has been forged since 1915, when Mariner started to sell its products in various European countries and the Americas. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Name / Nature</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 6  | **Sunline**        | **P.R.China** Industry SME  
Sunline is a Chinese furniture manufacturer that provides also raw material for external furniture manufacturers such as Mariner.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 7  | **TANet**          | **U.K.** Business Improvement Enabler.  
TANet is a Network of co-operating Technology Centres providing comprehensive support for the introduction of new technology in engineering and manufacturing in the UK. TANet provides the gateway for industry and especially SMEs to resources and solutions to innovation, change management, and the implementation of new technology. Members include technology transfer units based in both Universities and regionally-supported Organisations, and Sectoral Groupings of SMEs. In particular inclusion of the Welsh Automotive forum will offer many benefits connected with requirements and validation. |
| 8  | **TIE Netherlands B.V.** | **Netherlands** Technology Provider SME  
TIE is an international indigenously European B2B eCommerce software company. Its focus is trading enablement, transformation and semantic synchronisation, data management and integration. TIE chairs the European Standards Institute's (CEN) Interoperability Forum (eBIF) and is also chair of the United Nations eBusiness forum (United nations/CEFACT) and has been the largest European contributor and leader within ebXML. |
| 9  | **Tsinghua University** | **P.R.China** Academic University  
Tsinghua University is an academic partner, through National Engineering Research Centre for Computer Integrated Manufacturing Systems (CIMS ERC), at Department of Automation. Their research area focuses on theories and technologies to provide comprehensive solutions to modern manufacturing applications. They combine information technologies, management science and manufacturing technology. |
| 10 | **University of Modena** | **Italy** Academic University  
The University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, by means of its Department of Information Engineering, brings sound competencies in study and development of semantic web and agent technologies, SEEM concept and its implementation for small companies, and enterprise networking in general, with special attention to collaboration within SME networks. |
| 11 | **University of Oldenburg** | **Germany** Academic N/A  
The Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg has more than 12,000 students and 800 scientists. The working group Business Informatics focuses on research in the areas semantics and interoperability product development and production. They cover supply chain integration, product information management and manufacturing control. In these work upcoming technologies like Semantic Web, Peer to Peer architectures and Web Services are used to improve the business processes. |
3.3 Cooperation within the project

The project management took the heterogeneity into account from the very beginning, which is illustrated by the following quote from the project manual:

“Since STASIS involves various project partners from different countries inside and outside the European Union, it is crucial to carefully monitor all activities and to provide a structured way of managing the collaboration between partners.”

The management structures are illustrated in Error! Reference source not found.. In the focus of this deliverable we will only consider the operational management, which consists of:

- The Executive committee (EXEC)
- The Research and Development Committee (RDC)
- The Project manager (PM)
- The Workpackage Leads (WPL)
- The Task Leads
- Partner Leads
All project work was broken down into work packages, which in turn were broken down into tasks. Each work package had a partner assigned as lead, which coordinated all tasks and performed intrinsic management. Likewise, each task was led by a designated partner coordinating with other partners contributing.

The specification phase of the project aimed at a separation of concerns; making the components as independent as possible and connect them via interfaces. This ensured that components could be assigned to one partner, and reduced the communication workload for specifying the interfaces. To facilitate communication during the project, different instruments were used:

- Plenary meeting every six months with all project partners where held for consortium management and high-level operational management tasks.
- Developer meeting where held when necessary. These meetings included subsets of partners involved in one development task, e.g., specifying interfaces between components or working on a shared model.
- Weekly telephone conferences where held to update all partners on the current status and discuss the current development.
Despite the precautionary measures, after around a year of the project, partners encountered big difficulties caused by differences in culture, language, and even different ways of describing and arranging tasks between European partners and Chinese partners.

In the beginning of the project the partners divided the tasks and their fields of research. These were relatively differing areas with minor overlap, so there were no relevant problems in the research phase.

In the development phase all partners, including Chinese partners, realized that discussions and problem solving through face-to-face contact was much more efficient than just using email and telephone conferences.

The six-monthly plenary meetings were not sufficient, as the six month cycle was simply too long. To remedy this problem a European representative from TIE went to Beijing and worked with the Chinese development partner THU (Most significant Chinese partner), from May 2008 to June 2008. This proved highly effective and definitely benefited the project and is described in more detail later.
4 Project specific experiences

This chapter describes the experiences with the cooperation in STASIS. First an individual field report about the cooperation is described; afterwards the feedback from the project partners on a questionnaire is summarized. The individual feedbacks and the questionnaire are shown in the appendix.

4.1 Individual experience report

In STASIS the initial primary tasks covered the individual research interests of the partners and were mostly independent. After a few months of development the problem of different understandings in the development process between the European and the Chinese partners became apparent. To close this gap and to bring the resulting history of hassle to an end, a developer from TIE went to China to find a common understanding of the further development process. The next paragraphs will describe his experiences.

Hamzeh went to China end of May 2008 for a period of 3 weeks. The first thing he noticed and probably all partners did, is the lack of communication the European partners had with China. This had basically to do with several reasons: time zone difference, English language, mail server issues, too few conference calls and few face-to-face meetings.

The time difference of +7 hours from the Central European Time is nearly a full working day, so the contact between European and Chinese Partners is only possible in a small timeslot. Also using the English language as a common language is difficult for both the not native English-speaking Europeans, as well as for the Chinese. Especially in conference calls this issue can be problematic, since the partners cannot interpret the facial expressions of each other to detect understanding or confusion, resulting in a risk of misunderstanding on both sides.

In Hamzeh’s personal experience the communication gap is the main issue. The main reason to stay there for three weeks was to get a better personal contact to the Chinese partners, as well as a better understanding. This experience can be condensed into a single sentence: “If the communication is better, the work is better”. The presence of a European representative improved the direct communication in China. Beyond that point all partners amended their communication and a significant raise of the work-quality entailed. All project partners could observe this advancement quickly in a better performance of the development process.

In STASIS it was first tried to bridge the communication gap by other means in piece-meal fashion. The lesson learned for future projects is to recognise the greatness of the problem more quickly and the fact that some times more drastic action is better than incremental approaches – in this case sending a representative directly in the beginning, to get in personal contact with the Chinese partners.
Hamzeh also suggested that if a European partner is a leader in the project, then there should be someone from this EU partner appointed as a contact person, who coordinates everything with the Chinese. This should be enacted from the first start, so this person will function as an open link with China and would take full responsibility about the progress and problems of the Chinese partners. In STASIS this issue was tackled very late, but not behind time, since there was great overall progress after improving the communication.

Based on these experiences Hamzeh’s suggestions to the leading partner of future projects are as follows:

- Encourage weekly or at least monthly conference calls without time restrictions, to allow intensive discussions
- Every 3 months organise a face-to-face meeting for at least several days alternating between the partners and also locations
- Provide the Chinese partners with all the descriptions needed for the tasks they have to accomplish, these will give them clear guidelines. As an example, TIE as leading partner wrote a document with THU regarding the STASIS Purifier Server (the Chinese part of the project) and it turned out, that with this common understanding of the task an excellent further development started
- Encourage academic partners from China and Europe to write academic papers together and attend conferences in China and Europe
- Give the Chinese partners a couple of days seminar to educate them about the styles, formats and standards which are used in the documents and in the implementation since communication in English/Western styling can be difficult for them. This might be also a good idea for European partners!

But in the cooperation it will save a good deal of the time, since STASIS partners had this issue before and had to send the documents again to the Chinese partners for style changes and of course content improvements, which are sometimes difficult to explain in written form.

Although there were some problems in the beginning of the project, there were many positive aspects. A very positive point is that the Chinese personnel were very polite and educated people, and this fact in turn allowed a great working atmosphere. For example, in THU there are four people working on the STASIS project, one of them is a Post-Doc and the rest are PhD Candidates. The good education level of the Chinese partners really contributed to the project which was perhaps a surprise to some partners. Another positive aspect is that when Europeans and Chinese work on the same task, the progress is faster, so it’s recommendable to work together in one task, even if there is a time difference. This also can help the task leader to keep a good track on work and progress of disparate partners.
As a general recommendation people working with Chinese partners in the same task, should know more about the working culture in China as well as about the Chinese people. Of course this applies vice versa too.

Furthermore, the project partners need to make sure, that they all have the right technology infrastructure. This includes servers, email, wiki, intranet accounts. For example our representative developer noticed that most of the Chinese do not have an account on their intranet and they have big issues with their mail server, since it seems that all the mails are “filtered” before they receive them. This takes between 24-48hours, which means two days of time wasted. A way to solve this problem might be to use personal email accounts or provide them with email accounts like name@project.eu to avoid the time-consuming filtering.

The final suggestion can be consolidated as follows. The Europeans need to be patient with the Chinese partners and provide them all the help they need, because when things are clear, good results are guaranteed.

4.2 The questionnaire

To gather the experiences of all project partners in a formalized way a questionnaire was developed and sent out to all partners. The questionnaire consists of 11 questions and was done in two versions, one English version for the European partners and a second version enhanced with a Chinese translation to avoid misunderstandings. Both the English and Chinese version asked for experiences made before and within the STASIS project related to European-China cooperations. They asked for problems actually encountered during the cooperation, for example problems caused by different languages, different laws, different cultures and long distances. The questionnaire also provided additional space for partners to describe their good or bad experiences and recommendations for further projects. The full questionnaire is included in annex A.1.

The questionnaire was sent out to every European and Chinese partner of the project near to the end of STASIS project. Every partner provided an answer describing their company specific experiences. The questionnaire and the individual feedback of every partner with his personal experiences are also included in annex A.1.

The next two sections contain the consolidated results and experiences of the European and Chinese partners.

4.2.1 The perspective from Europe to China

In the following paragraphs the different experiences of the partners in Europe are summarised and clustered by partner type. The full feedback received from the partners can also be found in the annex A.2. The evaluation is ordered by the different partner types: academic, development and user partners.

- Research partners
Timing proved to be the most difficult difference for CIT. For example, Europeans are usually on holiday around Christmas, while the Chinese are on holiday for nearly one full month just after the Chinese New Year festivities. This was not just a problem of the holiday itself but also the lack of expectation of such a holiday in that period and also such a long holiday since the European expectation is that Chinese have few holidays and work around the clock. Another difference perceived was working practices, since in Chinese culture things are generally not discussed until they are completed, instead of collaborating and exchanging intermediate steps.

UoM responded, that the conference calls were difficult to organise, since they are forced to be held early in the morning for Europeans, while it was already late afternoon in China. A very positive experience was the great availability and engagement of the Chinese academic partner since partners had different backgrounds and the Chinese partner was very keen on overcoming these problems and bringing the workpackage / project to success.

The third research partner UoO mentioned, that the main problems for them were based on time-zone differences and language barriers. As a research and development partner, UoO was mostly involved with only the Chinese R&D-partners. Because of the time-zone differences, only very small time slots were available for meetings, which proved to be a major problem for resolving problems in an easy way and delayed activity several times. The cooperation was a great experience for the people involved, since the university already has some other connections with China. Another chair will provide a master’s programme “China – Economy and Language” in winter semester 2009/2010. The STASIS project provided the opportunity for a great exchange of experiences, particularly because the involved people of the chairs didn’t know each other before the project.

- Development partners

For ISOFT the most interesting and impressive thing was the way to create a successful cooperation with partners from totally different cultures. This was especially seen in the cases when tasks were divided; the Chinese partners always seemed to be willing to do a task even if it wasn’t in their expertise. Since they are very polite, declining a request is uncommon in their appreciation, in opposition to the Europeans who are quick to say no to a task they don’t want to do.

Another problem to mention for the Europeans was the difficulty to distinguish between the Chinese people and also to remember and pronounce their names correctly. Regular face-to-face meetings and longer visits for two weeks or even more proved to be helpful for solving the naming problem and to reduce the cultural gap. Another important point to improve the cooperation is to try to understand the Chinese culture and specifics in
order to understand their way to work. But it also is very important to try to explain and show the European way of working. This was a common task, but easy to realize, since the Chinese people were very interested to learn more about the Europeans, and were also very happy to introduce the Europeans to the Chinese culture.

**TIE** as development partner and project leader received a lot of experiences in the project, since they sent a developer to China for several weeks. His experience is already described in previous chapter. Other experiences were based mainly on verbal problems and to the different ways of working. But these were easy to solve, just by using written form and taking the time to make sure, each one understood each other.

- **User partners**

  **AIDIMA** mentioned in cooperation with **Mariner**, that they anticipated only small problems, basically based on the language barriers. This might be based on the experiences Mariner already has with their existing connection to Sunline, which is one of the Chinese partners. The main point they mentioned was that a close connection and regular meetings are very important for successful cooperation.

  The second user partner **TANet** expected similar problems to the other partners. Their biggest concerns were the language barriers and the long distance flights, since it takes more than half a day to recover from jetlag. Another point is to be mindful of political sensitivities in China. For good experiences they mentioned the very friendly people, very good hospitality, cultural enrichment as well as the broadened view on global affairs all partners received through the cooperation. For establishing a successful cooperation it’s essential to have regular face-to-face meetings and short milestones with constantly engaged partners. Skype proved to be an excellent teleconferencing software to realize this recommendation in an economic way. This also helped to extend the narrow time slots, since many Chinese partners were available via Skype even at home, where they sometimes continued working.

  Last but not least **ZF** also responded with the long distance and the language barriers being the main problems. Their recommendation to solve these problems is to make one-week face-to-face meetings with the partners. Especially at the beginning of the project and at the beginning of each new work-package real face-to-face meetings are very efficient to clarify the tasks.

  The cultural problem is probably the most important issue to resolve. First and foremost everybody has to be aware that cultural differences exist. Things a partner takes for granted might be handled completely different in another culture. Therefore it is important to prepare well in advance of a new cooperation project. In addition to providing information about different cultures
to all participants at the start of the cooperation even if such a ‘lesson’ seems ‘childish’, real face-to-face meetings at the beginning of the project are important to get a common understanding. This is the most important recommendation of the European partners, since their experiences of real meetings with all partners from both Europe and China were very helpful and productive.

4.2.2 The perspective from China to Europe

The partners from China include Tsinghua University (THU), Sunline and BFM which located in Beijing and Shanghai city.

- THU responded as a research partner

For THU, the extraordinarily impressive thing is the strict project management. It is the most important reason for the project’s success. As soon as the plan and conventions are determined, every tiny thing in the project should submit to the project rules. It is also a benefit to communicate in time when a question arises. Every problem should be taken seriously.

There are some problems encountered in the cooperation process caused by various reasons. Because the partners are distributed over Europe and China, it is difficult to have meetings and face to face discussions. This makes the communication difficult. This kind of problem could be resolved by hosting meetings in different areas, hosting tele-conferences frequently, and exchanging more emails.

Secondly, in order to deal with the problem of language difference, various kinds of communication methods were tried in the cooperation. If someone could not speak English very well or had problems with understanding, the partners changed from verbal communication to email before the weekly conference. With written communication all partners read carefully and wrote everything very detailed.

Thirdly, the problems which were caused by cultural differences are the most difficult ones. European and Chinese partners usually take different ways to describe the same thing, often taking things implicitly for granted and thus forgetting to explicitly mention it. European partners mostly express everything directly, but Chinese partners express most things indirectly. The different cultural background often hinders comprehension and easily leads to words being misunderstood. Partners also may think differently about the same thing. Sometimes things that are simple for European partners must be described very detailed for Chinese partners, but also vice-versa.

- BFM and Sunline answered as users

Sunline mentioned that they had to use translation tables to solve the problem of product names and descriptions caused by language misunderstandings. Based on this project, they got a chance to establish
strong relationships with European industries and have an enjoyable collaboration.

BFM points out that it is a pleasant experience to have joined STASIS, especially the WP6 plenary held in Beijing. It is a good process to understand the difference between user and designer. Every partner was able to describe their own thought and project situation in order to find a way to combine together.
5 Project-external experiences

This chapter provides a summary of the questionnaires targeted at companies outside the STASIS project, which are involved in EU-China-cooperations.

5.1 The perspective from Europe to China

The following sections describe the questionnaire that was sent out to various enterprises and summarizes the feedback that was gathered.

5.1.1 The questionnaire

The questionnaire is very similar to the internal one. This ensures that the feedback gathered from external companies can be easily compared to the feedback provided by the project partners. The first six questions are different. In the internal questionnaire they address experiences made with Europe-cooperations in other projects, while the external questionnaires only address project independent experiences. The questionnaire can be found in appendix A.4.1.

5.1.2 Resulting experiences

In this section the feedback of the companies is described. Contrary to the internal feedback on the questionnaire, the external feedback is not attached in the annex, since some of the companies didn’t want to publish their answers.

Most of the European companies with connections to China answered similar to our project internal experiences. The biggest challenges are based on language barriers, time differences and the long distance. Another important fact is the difference in working cultures, resulting in problems because of different expectations; This includes ways to solve problems, reactions to emerging problems, and timeliness.

Different cost structures in combination with different expectations also pose challenges. In China manual labour is often cheaper than using machinery. Therefore Chinese factories employ more workers compared to plants in Western Europe. With a high fluctuation of employees a company has to train many more people and more often than European partners would expect.

5.2 The perspective from China to Europe

The following sections describe the questionnaire that was sent out to various enterprises and research institutes not involved in STASIS, and summarizes the feedback that was gathered.

5.2.1 The questionnaire

As in section 5.1.1 the questionnaire is similar to the one used in the project internally and can be found in annex A.4.2.
5.2.2 Resulting experiences

Five responses were returned from enterprises and an academic research centre. Many problems were mentioned and listed in the following.

- **Problems caused by cultural differences and corresponding countermeasures:**
  Most of the responses mentioned the problem of culture. All organizations had spent time to find the best way of communication, in order to counteract the influence of cultural differences. It is always the most important way for all partners to focus on the main topic during discussions and ask for requirements directly and not to worry about sharing new ideas.

  Furthermore it is better for all partners to know the native culture of every partner at a high level and pay enough respect to it. It’s also important to know the do’s and don’ts of different cultures. Everybody should remember that enough respect can bring trust and good communication to the whole cooperation.

- **Problems caused by language difference and corresponding countermeasures:**
  Problems due to language differences occurred frequently in all cooperation projects. Every country has their native languages and Chinese is totally different from English. Most Chinese do not master spoken English as well as the written form. Therefore a good way to communicate is through email when the problems are too complex to be described via telephone.

  The language difference may also lead to problems from a technical point of view. If comprehensive and descriptive documents are not provided, it is difficult for partners to understand each other correctly. In order to ensure a correct understanding, detailed technical documents and instructions should be available for communication.

- **Problems caused by long distance and corresponding countermeasures:**
  All partners try to build communication using various methods, such as email, telephone, instant messaging and VoIP. Obviously, the most useful method is to have a face-to-face meeting which should be held frequently in Europe and China.

- **Problems caused by time zone difference and corresponding countermeasures:**
  Time difference is an impersonal facet and the only way to solve it, is to manage the working rhythm of all partners. China is seven hours earlier than most of the European countries and therefore Chinese partners do their work in their usual office-time earlier than the Europeans.

Beside these major points, all responses mentioned that the involved Chinese companies had a better understanding of European culture and software solutions than before their cooperation. This better understanding will also be very useful for new cooperation in the future, since they know to interpret the behavior of European companies.
6 Recommendations

The previous section summarizes the project internal and external experiences of Europe-China cooperations. It will provide recommendations to other projects and companies, which have existing cooperations, as well as companies, which want to start new cooperations. Furthermore this chapter provides some ideas to the European Commission to reduce the barriers for cooperations between European and Chinese companies.

This section is again divided into two perspectives: the Europe-to-China perspective and vice versa.

6.1 The perspective from Europe to China

From a European point of view, the Chinese working culture is totally different. Bearing in mind, this is the major reason for problems in the cooperation, cooperations between European and Chinese partners need regular face-to-face meetings as well as frequent conferences at least via telephone.

The following list enumerates the most important recommendations distilled from the experiences made and the feedback gathered:

- Partners need to communicate with each other on a regular basis in order to avoid misunderstandings and see the process going on the correct way
- Regular face-to-face meetings are essential for success
- Respect for the different culture and interest to learn about it
- Strict milestones and monitoring
- Available and detailed documents
- Getting to know the other partners early

To counteract the above, the following methods proved successful in improving the cooperation:

- Provide a detailed cooperation agreement all partners avoid misunderstandings and hassle previous to the start of the project. The cooperation agreement should also include specifications of the different tasks and the involved partners.
- A general time schedule for the whole project is necessary before a project starts and previous to every detailed task a time schedule for the task needs to be created. Furthermore the task leader needs to control the timing and must be able to penalise the partners, if they don’t keep the timelines.
- During the project several face-to-face meetings are necessary, since the communication gets easier and better, if the involved people have a personal connection to the other partners.
- If regular meetings are insufficient to keep all partners on track, sending a representative to that partner for some weeks is very helpful.
6.2 The perspective from China to Europe

During the three years of the STASIS project, there was a pleasant and successful cooperation and this increased as the project progressed. In the process of carrying out the project, all partners from Europe and China met challenges caused by different culture, different language, and even different ways of describing and arranging tasks. In the duration of STASIS some good ideas and strategies were developed to improve cooperation. The following list will give a deeper impression:

- Regular conferences to solve problems due to the long distance between involved partners. Since there is a long distance between Europe and China, which caused problems in communication when a task was started. VOIP Conferences proved to be effective and need to be kept regular.
- Use document management systems like “Knowledge Tree” to update and version shared documents. There are many partners in STASIS. When many partners work on one task and want to update the same documents, it's necessary to guarantee a uniform version. But it is important to declare the way of using “Knowledge Tree” in detail to all partners before the first step is started.
- Arrange face-to-face meetings after each work package. There are many work packages in STASIS and usually they are plenary meetings to finalize the work package. The face-to-face meetings give a chance to discuss problems directly one-to-one and solve them quickly. It is also a chance for the partners to learn more about each other.
- Managing the project in a strict way. It has proven to be essential and fundamental for international cooperation.

6.3 Conclusion

The experiences and recommendations of Chinese and European partners were very similar, as was the gathered external feedback. Distilled from the previous sections are the Top 5 recommendations for future projects:

1. Regular communication via telephone-conferences
2. Regular face-to-face meetings
3. Strict project management and monitoring of milestones
4. Respect for the other culture
5. Staff exchange between the Chinese and European partners
APPENDIX A Questionnaire Feedback

The following sections contain the questionnaires and examples of feedback. The external feedback is provided in anonymous form.

A.1 The project internal questionnaire

The following questionnaire was sent to all partners in the STASIS project. There are two translations; one in English and one in Chinese.

A.1.1 European version

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Abstract

STASIS (SoFware for Ambient Semantic Interoperable Services) is a Research and Development project sponsored under the Europeans Commission’s 6th Framework programme as well as its projects members – www.stasis-project.net. Its objective is for Research, Development and Validation of open, webServices based, distributed semantic services for SME empowerment within the Automotive, Furniture and other sectors. It commenced September 1st 2006 and lasts for 3 years until August 2009 with a total budget of €4M. 13 Partners are involved including Commercial Companies (TIE, Porthus, iSoft) Academics (Universities of Sunderland, Oldenburg, Modena & Reggio Emilia, Tsinghua) and User Organisations (AIDIMA, Mariner, Shanghai Sunline, Foton, TANET, ZF Friedrichshafen AG) and these are led by the managing partner TIE. Partners are spread across Europe and China.

This questionnaire should be spread among all partners of the STASIS project and also to some additional companies, which have cooperation with china. It exists two versions of this questionnaire - 1 for European companies (where the questions refer to cooperating with Chinese companies) and 1 for Chinese companies (where the questions refer to cooperating with Euro companies).

Authors

STASIS Consortium (www.stasis-project.net)

Responsible Editors: Matthias Reinelt and Thomas Suding (University of Oldenburg)

1. Name of your company

2. Where are your headquarters located in Europe?

3. Have you any experience beside STASIS to cooperate with partners from China? (E.g. EU project, private project, etc.)
a. What is the nature of the cooperation? (E.g. do you have a joint venture, developer partner, etc.)

b. What is the role of your company in the project?

c. What are the roles of the other project partners?

4. Did you anticipate any problems working with Chinese partners?

5. Please list the main problems you have actually encountered during the project:
   a. Problems caused by language (e.g. verbal and written) and how you solved them
   b. Problems caused by different laws (e.g. legal, financial) and how you solved them
   c. Were any problems due to cultural differences? (If yes, please give an example)
   d. Problems caused by long distances between partners and how you solved them
   e. Other problems and how you solved them

6. Did any funny or unusual problems occur?

7. Please describe your positive experiences of the project

8. What is the greatest lesson you learned from the project?

9. What are possible future benefits of your project? (E.g. contacts, long term cooperation, etc.)
10. Please list your top 5 recommendations for ensuring a successful Euro-China cooperation

11. Would you consider cooperating with Chinese companies in the future? Why or why not?
A.1.2 Chinese version

1. Name of your company 公司名称

2. Where are your headquarters located in China? 公司总部位于中国哪里?

3. Have you any experience beside STASIS to cooperate with partners from Europe? (E.g. EU project, private project, etc.) 除STASIS之外，有过与欧洲合作的经历么？(例如，欧洲项目或私人项目等)
   a. What is the nature of the cooperation? (E.g. do you have a joint venture, developer partner, etc.) 是哪种类型的合作？（如，是否合资或共同开发等）
   b. What is the role of your company in the project? 贵公司在项目中的任务是什么？
   c. What are the roles of the other project partners? 项目中其它单位的任务是什么？

4. Did you anticipate any problems working with Europe partners? 你曾预见与欧洲合作可能出现的问题么？

5. Please list the main problems you have actually encountered during the project. 请列举你在项目过程中遇到的主要问题。
   a. Problems caused by language (e.g. verbal and written) and how you solved them 语言不同带来的问题(口语或书面语)及解决方法
   b. Problems caused by different laws (e.g. legal, financial) and how you solved them 法律不同引发的问题(如法律金融等)及解决方法
   c. Were any problems due to cultural differences? (If yes, please give an example) 是否有因为文化不同引发的问题？(若有，请举例)
   d. Problems caused by long distances between partners and how you solved them 距离远带来的问题及解决方法
   e. Other problems and how you solved them 其他问题及解决方法
6. Did any funny or unusual problems occur? 发生过有趣或不寻常的问题么？

7. Please describe your positive experiences of the project. 请描述项目中好的经历。

8. What is the greatest lesson you learned from the project? 你在项目中最大的教训是什么？

9. What are possible future benefits of your project? (e.g. contacts, long term cooperation, etc.) 项目给你带来那些好处？（如，联系，长期合作等）

10. Please list your top 5 recommendations for ensuring a successful Euro-China cooperation. 请列举确保中欧合作成功的5个建议。

11. Would you consider cooperating with Europe companies in the future? Why or why not? 你考虑将来继续与欧洲合作么？原因？
A.2 European feedback

This section includes all returned feedback on the questionnaire sent to the European project-partners. The following partners responded and their answers can be found in the same order as this alphabetical list:

- AIDIMA (incl. Mariners feedback)
- CIT
- iSoft
- TANet
- TIE
- UoM
- UoO
- ZF
AIDIMA

1. Name of your company
   AIDIMA

2. Where are your headquarters located in Europe?
   Valencia

3. Have you any experience beside STASIS to cooperate with partners from China? (E.g. EU project, private project, etc.)
   No
     a. What is the nature of the cooperation? (E.g. do you have a joint venture, developer partner, etc.)
     b. What is the role of your company in the project?
     c. What are the roles of the other project partners?

4. Did you anticipate any problems working with Chinese partners?
   Basically, language barriers

5. Please list the main problems you have actually encountered during the project:
   a. Problems caused by language (e.g. verbal and written) and how you solved them
      Usage of English as main communication language
   b. Problems caused by different laws (e.g. legal, financial) and how you solved them
      No problems have been suffered in this aspect
   c. Were any problems due to cultural differences? (If yes, please give an example)
      No
   d. Problems caused by long distances between partners and how you solved them
   e. Other problems and how you solved them

6. Did any funny or unusual problems occur?
7. Please describe your positive experiences of the project. 
   It has been a pleasure working with Chinese partners as they are always receptive to cooperate working with a smile in their mouths.

8. What is the greatest lesson you learned from the project? 
   The Consortium has been very cooperative and proactive to cooperation setting the basis for a close cooperation EU-China.

9. What are possible future benefits of your project? (E.g. contacts, long term cooperation, etc.) 
   STASIS has been a kick-off event for collaborating with Chinese partners related to the furniture sector in terms of commercial and business relationships.

10. Please list your top 5 recommendations for ensuring a successful Euro-China cooperation:
   - Establish a cooperation agreement
   - Set-up a set of milestones
   - Define the tasks to be performed by each partner
   - Celebrate regular conference-calls and face-to-face meetings
   - Create a coordinating committee in which a representative of each partner must be present

11. Would you consider cooperating with Chinese companies in the future? Why or why not? 
   Yes, they are very proactive and a key factor in the development and survival of Spanish furniture industry.
CIT

1. Name of your company
   University of Sunderland

2. Where are your headquarters located in Europe?
   Sunderland

3. Have you any experience beside STASIS to cooperate with partners from China? (E.g. EU project, private project, etc.)
   No.

   a. What is the nature of the cooperation? (E.g. do you have a joint venture, developer partner, etc.)
      n/a
   b. What is the role of your company in the project?
      n/a
   c. What are the roles of the other project partners?
      n/a

4. Did you anticipate any problems working with Chinese partners?
   Yes

5. Please list the main problems you have actually encountered during the project:
   a. Problems caused by language (e.g. verbal and written) and how you solved them
      Not so much language problems
   b. Problems caused by different laws (e.g. legal, financial) and how you solved them
      Complex visa requirements, we used a specialist agency in London
   c. Were any problems due to cultural differences? (If yes, please give an example)
      Big differences in holiday timings and habits – China goes on holiday for a month sometimes, and they are usually working at Christmas when most Europeans are on holiday
   d. Problems caused by long distances between partners and how you solved them
      n/a
   e. Other problems and how you solved them
Cultural differences in working practices – Chinese culture is to not discuss things until they are completed, instead of collaborating interactively along the way.

6. Did any funny or unusual problems occur?
Many Chinese are still not used to seeing Westerners, and strangers come up to you wanting to be photographed beside you.

7. Please describe your positive experiences of the project
I enjoyed learning about Chinese culture, and ways of working.

8. What is the greatest lesson you learned from the project?
That China has the richest cultural heritage in the world, and that in the West we don’t learn about it.

9. What are possible future benefits of your project? (E.g. contacts, long term cooperation, etc.)
Good relations with THU, and possible future project options.

10. Please list your top 5 recommendations for ensuring a successful Euro-China cooperation
Lots of communication – more discussion than usual

Have intermediate check points on larger tasks

11. Would you consider cooperating with Chinese companies in the future?
Why or why not?
Yes. It is a really interesting experience, and Chinese companies will have much more trading in Europe in the future.
iSoft

1. Name of your company
   I-SOFT OOD

2. Where are your headquarters located in Europe?
   Sofia, Bulgaria

3. Have you any experience beside STASIS to cooperate with partners from China? (E.g. EU project, private project, etc.)
   No

   a. What is the nature of the cooperation? (E.g. do you have a joint venture, developer partner, etc.)
   
      b. What is the role of your company in the project?
   
      c. What are the roles of the other project partners?

4. Did you anticipate any problems working with Chinese partners?
   Just some communication problems due to the language and cultural differences.

5. Please list the main problems you have actually encountered during the project:

   a. Problems caused by language (e.g. verbal and written) and how you solved them
      Some minor problems to understand each other while talking to the Chinese partners.

   b. Problems caused by different laws (e.g. legal, financial) and how you solved them
      N/A

   c. Were any problems due to cultural differences? (If yes, please give an example)
      The Chinese partners are very polite and responsive. It seems like they are always willing to do certain tasks even when this is not the case. Saying “No” is not very common for them. The European partners are more straightforward.

   d. Problems caused by long distances between partners and how you solved them
We had some problems in synchronising the development work but the problem with the long distance was solved through regular telcos.

e. Other problems and how you solved them
The main problems were due to language and cultural differences but after 2 years of cooperation and working together we managed to “map” to each other and to polish all the issues.

6. Did any funny or unusual problems occur?
The biggest difficulty the European partners had is to remember and to pronounce correctly the names of the Chinese partners. There were some confusions in several occasions and in order to avoid any further mistakes most of the European partners use “Chinese guys” or “THU” as a common name.

7. Please describe your positive experiences of the project
The best thing in the project are the people that work on it. They are a strange collection and mixture of different nations, cultures, characters, peculiarities and spirits and a great team as a whole.

8. What is the greatest lesson you learned from the project?
When there is a positive attitude towards work, mutual tolerance and understanding between the partners (no matter the differences), good coordination and of course great fun together the success of the project is guaranteed.

9. What are possible future benefits of your project? (E.g. contacts, long term cooperation, etc.)
The contacts established with the Chinese partners will be used for further cooperation in research projects.

10. Please list your top 5 recommendations for ensuring a successful Euro-China cooperation
• Regular communication through conference calls, mail, phone.
• Regular face to face meetings.
• Longer visits (2 weeks/1 month)
• Trying to understand Chinese culture and specifics in order to understand their way of work.
• Trying to explain and show European way of working.

11. Would you consider cooperating with Chinese companies in the future? Why or why not?
Yes, we would consider cooperating with Chinese partners, as they are very responsive and hard working.
TANet

1. Name of your company
   TANet

2. Where are your headquarters located in Europe?
   Bridgend, Wales, UK

3. Have you any experience beside STASIS to cooperate with partners from China? (E.g. EU project, private project, etc.)
   No

   a. What is the nature of the cooperation? (E.g. do you have a joint venture, developer partner, etc.)
      N/A

   b. What is the role of your company in the project?
      N/A

   c. What are the roles of the other project partners?
      N/A

4. Did you anticipate any problems working with Chinese partners?
   Anticipated language barrier would be an issue.

5. Please list the main problems you have actually encountered during the project:

   a. Problems caused by language (e.g. verbal and written) and how you solved them
      Both parties communicated in English.

   b. Problems caused by different laws (e.g. legal, financial) and how you solved them
      Was mindful of political sensitivities in the country.

   c. Were any problems due to cultural differences? (If yes, please give an example)
      No.

   d. Problems caused by long distances between partners and how you solved them
      Jet-lag, just spend half a day to recover.

   e. Other problems and how you solved them
      None.

6. Did any funny or unusual problems occur?
No.

7. Please describe your positive experiences of the project
   Very friendly, excellent hospitality. Culturally enriching.

8. What is the greatest lesson you learned from the project?
   Broadened viewpoint on global affairs.

9. What are possible future benefits of your project? (E.g. contacts, long term cooperation, etc.)
   Likelihood of future projects is enhanced due to the positive experience.

10. Please list your top 5 recommendations for ensuring a successful Euro-China cooperation
    1. Face-to-face meetings essential.
    2. Constant engagement required.
    4. Robust collaboration / project management software.
    5. Good use of Skype.

11. Would you consider cooperating with Chinese companies in the future?
    Why or why not?
    Absolutely, great opportunities to enhance business.
TIE

1. Name of your company
   TIE Holding N.V.

2. Where are your headquarters located in Europe?
   Hoofddorp, The Netherlands

3. Have you any experience beside STASIS to cooperate with partners from China? (E.g. EU project, private project, etc.)
   No
     a. What is the nature of the cooperation? (E.g. do you have a joint venture, developer partner, etc.)
        Coordination and development
     b. What is the role of your company in the project?
        Coordinator, Developer
     c. What are the roles of the other project partners?
        N/A

4. Did you anticipate any problems working with Chinese partners?
   Time difference
   Language
   Resistance
   Mentality of the people different

5. Please list the main problems you have actually encountered during the project:
   a. Problems caused by language (e.g. verbal and written) and how you solved them
      • There where mainly verbal problems, for example during teleconferences. The solution was to use written forms such as e-mails and chats.
      • Feeling that something was understood (eg by saying yes) even though it probably wasn’t. We tried to explain and ask questions in different ways to make sure that it was understood and they agreed to the correct question.
   b. Problems caused by different laws (e.g. legal, financial) and how you solved them
      No
   c. Were any problems due to cultural differences? (If yes, please give an example)
• They have a different way of working and organizing their work. In the beginning of the project this gave some problems. The solutions was to send one of our team members to China for a few months to set together with them and get them back on track.
• Chinese people are very polite so don’t speak so bluntly

d. Problems caused by long distances between partners and how you solved them
• The whole STASIS development team was distributed across Europe and Asia. So the solution was the same as for European partners, namely regular teleconferences, intensive emails exchange and physical meetings at least 2 times per year.
• Because of time differences there is only a small time slot where both sides have their working hours. This sometimes gave delays in e-mail exchanges, questions, development work.

e. Other problems and how you solved them
No

6. Did any funny or unusual problems occur?
• The deletion of pages of text in one of the deliverables because of a minor comment from Domenico
• Extreme plagiarism on one of the research deliverables
• Fact it was possible to barter on beer; but then found out that Chinese don’t do this and we taught them. The fact Huiping came here and bartered in a chocolate shop in Brussels and succeeded.

7. Please describe your positive experiences of the project
• Working with a Chinese partner gave us the chance to know many things about China, about the way Chinese work and about their hospitality
• Trips to Beijing. The scale of the city and the perfect taking care of us.
• Team building it created.

8. What is the greatest lesson you learned from the project?
• If this is related to the China-Euro cooperation then I think the best lesson is to give the Chinese the time to understand you and try to be as clear as possible when it comes to tasks and try to use written down documents to clarify things.
• Communication and daily/weekly task oriented control over the development tasks help in handling such large projects performed by many distributed partners.
• China (or Beijing) is a lot more advanced than we thought and moving at an incredible pace.
• China is getting more and more expensive (in Beijing)
• The command economy gets things done
9. What are possible future benefits of your project? (E.g. contacts, long term cooperation, etc.)
   • We already have a great contact with one of our partners in China and we are already together in a new project
   • Thirst for visiting China and Asia

10. Please list your top 5 recommendations for ensuring a successful Euro-China cooperation
   • Make sure to meet face-to-face in China and Europe.
   • Create several documents for the Chinese part in the project.
   • Give the Chinese partner enough time to absorb the tasks and the requests.
   • Don't give the Chinese partner too big a role unless you know them and make the task self contained
   • Don't assume to much
   • Push the Chinese partner to be always in contact with the other partners through teleconferences and meetings.
   • Send one person to China to work with the Chinese partner for a couple of weeks; this will clarify things for them.

11. Would you consider cooperating with Chinese companies in the future? Why or why not?
    Yes, we already have a new project with them and this is for a simple reason:
    1. I think it is good to keep in-touch with the Chinese market and have partners in China.
    2. The future is China.
UOM

1. Name of your company
   **Università degli Studi di Modena e Reggio Emilia** (UOM)

2. Where are your headquarters located in Europe?
   Modena (Italy)

3. Have you any experience beside STASIS to cooperate with partners from China? (E.g. EU project, private project, etc.)
   NO
   a. What is the nature of the cooperation? (E.g. do you have a joint venture, developer partner, etc.)
   b. What is the role of your company in the project?
   c. What are the roles of the other project partners?

4. Did you anticipate any problems working with Chinese partners?
   No, I didn't.

5. Please list the main problems you have actually encountered during the project:
   a. Problems caused by language (e.g. verbal and written) and how you solved them
      None
   b. Problems caused by different laws (e.g. legal, financial) and how you solved them
      None
   c. Were any problems due to cultural differences? (If yes, please give an example)
      None
   d. Problems caused by long distances between partners and how you solved them
      The only problem caused by long distance was related to the organization of conference calls: due to the different Time Zone, these conference calls was forced to be held (early) in the morning (European time)
   e. Other problems and how you solved them
None

6. Did any funny or unusual problems occur?
   None

7. Please describe your positive experiences of the project
   Most of the collaboration among UOM and the Chinese partners was with the Tsinghua University (THU) - an academic partner - in the context of the workpackage 2 of the project, related to the research and specification activities; UOM was the responsible partner for this workpackage. Initially, mainly due to the different background of the two partners, there was some difficulties into the collaboration between UOM and THU. These difficulties were overcome, thanks to the great availability of THU partner to follow some specification/indications - in most case technical and theoretical specification/indications – coming from the coordinator of the workpackage. Moreover, also thanks to the great engagement of the THU partner, this workpackage related to the research and specification activities was fully success. This was the main positive experience with the THU partner.

8. What is the greatest lesson you learned from the project?
   The collaboration with Chinese partners has great potential, either from an Academic and Industrial point of view.

9. What are possible future benefits of your project? (E.g. contacts, long term cooperation, etc.)
   Contacts and cooperation for new jointly proposal of projects.

10. Please list your top 5 recommendations for ensuring a successful Euro-China cooperation
    Misunderstandings between China and foreign partners are possible because of differences in language, background and culture. A successful Euro-China cooperation should pay particular attention to overcome these barriers.

    A successful Euro-China cooperation should clearly highlight and differentiate what are the benefits for either the Chinese and European partners.

    A successful Euro-China cooperation should provide a fully engagement into the project of either Academic and Industrial/User partners coming from China.

    A successful Euro-China cooperation should foresee a fully collaboration among Chinese and European partners, i.e. at the level of single tasks of the cooperation, either Chinese and European partners must be involved.
A successful Euro-China cooperation should pay particular attention to the validation and demonstration of its results for Chinese people and organizations.

11. Would you consider cooperating with Chinese companies in the future? Why or why not? Yes, on the basis of our positive experience of collaboration in the context of the STASIS project, we will consider future collaborations with Chinese partners in the future.
UOO

1. Name of your company
   Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg

2. Where are your headquarters located in Europe?
   Oldenburg

3. Have you any experience beside STASIS to cooperate with partners from China? (E.g. EU project, private project, etc.)
   a. What is the nature of the cooperation? (E.g. do you have a joint venture, developer partner, etc.)
   b. What is the role of your company in the project?
   c. What are the roles of the other project partners?

4. Did you anticipate any problems working with Chinese partners?

5. Please list the main problems you have actually encountered during the project:
   a. Problems caused by language (e.g. verbal and written) and how you solved them
      The language barrier is a heavy reason for problems. So Chinese people often say "yes" to show they acoustically understand what somebody said, while Europeans understand the "yes" that the Chinese people understood semantically what the other people said. There it was very effective to explain things more detailed and ask questions, to know what the partner comprehended.
   b. Problems caused by different laws (e.g. legal, financial) and how you solved them
      No
   c. Were any problems due to cultural differences? (If yes, please give an example)
      This is very similar to the language problem, since the agreement saying "yes" for acoustic understanding is also based in cultural differences. When people know a little bit more about the different
cultures, they know about these problems and ask more questions to their dialogue partner.

d. Problems caused by long distances between partners and how you solved them
Some problems are difficult to explain and it would be easier with face-to-face meetings to explain using gestures and so on. This problems were solved by calling the partner by phone very often and regular face-to-face meetings with all partners.

e. Other problems and how you solved them

6. Did any funny or unusual problems occur?
Through the different languages and the different cultures once a hot-key was put on the "r". In China the "r" ist not needed and so they use it as a hot-key, but in Europe it caused some problems, because "r" is a really often used character.

7. Please describe your positive experiences of the project
The experiences with the other partners (especially the chinese) were very great and everybody could learn a lot about the different cultures inside europe as well as the chinese culture. Furthermore the chinese partners were mostly represented by THU, which are really good people, who are very keen on going ahead with the project.

8. What is the greatest lesson you learned from the project?
The Chinese partners are very polite people and while accepting the differences in culture a very good cooperation can be realized.

9. What are possible future benefits of your project? (E.g. contacts, long term cooperation, etc.)
UOO will use their experiences and connections to THU for further cooperation and try do another project in a cooperation. Furthermore the University of Oldenburg has a new professorchip on "China - economy and language" where the experiences of the project can be reused.

10. Please list your top 5 recommendations for ensuring a successful Euro-China cooperation
• face-to-face meetings
• regular and frequently telephone-conferences
• describe tasks precisely
• take time for discussions and explanations
• provide a good and effective management

11. Would you consider cooperating with Chinese companies in the future? Why or why not?
As an academic partner we will cooperate probably not with Companies, but certainly with academic partners like THU.
ZF

1. Name of your company
ZF Friedrichshafen AG

2. Where are your headquarters located in Europe?
Friedrichshafen, Germany

3. Have you any experience beside STASIS to cooperate with partners from China? (E.g. EU project, private project, etc.)
ZF has several production and service locations in China.

   a. What is the nature of the cooperation? (E.g. do you have a joint venture, developer partner, etc.)
      ZF owns several manufacturing companies in China

   b. What is the role of your company in the project?
      parent company

   c. What are the roles of the other project partners?

4. Did you anticipate any problems working with Chinese partners?
No

5. Please list the main problems you have actually encountered during the project:

   a. Problems caused by language (e.g. verbal and written) and how you solved them
      Creating and harmonizing the scenario for every partner in deliverable 6.1 to address all functionalities was difficult, since the responsive of one partner was not able to speak english. The partners relied on THU for translation.

   b. Problems caused by different laws (e.g. legal, financial) and how you solved them
      No

   c. Were any problems due to cultural differences? (If yes, please give an example)
      No

   d. Problems caused by long distances between partners and how you solved them
      Communication was difficult because of the long distance and the time difference. The best solution was the one week face-to-face meeting.
6. Did any funny or unusual problems occur?

7. Please describe your positive experiences of the project
   People in China are very pleasant and have always a smile in their face
   while working with you.

8. What is the greatest lesson you learned from the project?
   The project partners reached a good cooperation to china, which can be
   used as a basis for further EU-China projects and considering some
   guidelines, good work will be assured.

9. What are possible future benefits of your project? (E.g. contacts, long term
   cooperation, etc.)

10. Please list your top 5 recommendations for ensuring a successful Euro-
     China cooperation
     • periodic face-to-face meetings
     • periodic conference-calls
     • consider cultural differences
     • take time to describe tasks precisely
     • for bigger issues make an additional face-to-face meeting

11. Would you consider cooperating with Chinese companies in the future?
    Why or why not?
    ZF already has several production and service locations in China. Due to the
    above-average growth rates of Asian vehicle manufacturer ZF sets a special
    focus on the markets in China, Japan and South Korea.
A.3 Chinese feedback

This section includes all returned feedback on the questionnaire sent to the Chinese project-partners. The following partners responded and their answers can be found in the same order as this alphabetical list:

- THU
- BFM
- Sunline
BFM

1. 公司名称
   北京福建

2. 公司位于中国哪里？
   北京

3. 请用几句话简单描述你们所在的合作项目（2-3句）？
   企业互联网交互平台软件项目

4. 您公司在项目中任务是什么？
   为项目提供所需的数据和必要的数据，并进行应用验证

5. 其他合作伙伴的任务是什么？
   项目实施软件平台

6. 你是怎样开始与欧洲伙伴合作的？（例如，欧盟项目，私有合作项等）
   欧盟项目中作为用户参加

7. 合作情况（例如，是否设立合资企业，开发伙伴等）
   合作企业

8. 是否预见到与欧洲合作可能存在的问题？
   沟通交流不流畅

9. 请列举项目中实际遇到的主要问题：
   a. 语言不同带来的问题（如，口语或书面）？你如何解决？
      直接口语交流有问题，采用电子软件的形式

   b. 法律不同带来的问题（如，法律或财政金融）？你如何解决？
      翻译资料

   c. 文化差异带来的问题？请给出例子。
      管理方式不同，在项目中认真对待每一个小细节

   d. 是否因为合作伙伴距离太远带来的问题？你如何解决？
      距离远的问题都存在，项目组尽量多的采用网络会议、邮件、定期开会等方法克服距离给沟通带来的麻烦

   e. 是否发生其他问题？你如何解决？
      无

10. 有没有发生过奇怪有趣或不正常的问题？
你看问题的角度不同，不过都是为了工作。

11. 请描述你在项目中的好的经验。
   有问题及时沟通，自己想到的问题就尽早提出来。

12. 项目中你最大的教训是什么？
   万事不要拖延，要认真对待，该怎样就怎样。

13. 项目可能带来的长期收益是什么（如，获得联系，长期合作等）？
   长期合作关系。

14. 你认为如何保证中欧合作成功的建议。
   管理细化要严格执行，项目进步要有统一的管理，反应要及时，做事要严格认真，沟通渠道要畅通。

15. 你对将来接触中欧合作怎么看？为什么？
   管理严格，考虑问题要认真仔细，有机会希望继续合作。
1. Name of your company
   Shanghai Sunline

2. Where are your headquarters located in China?
   Shanghai

3. Have you any experience beside STASIS to cooperate with partners from Europe? (E.g. EU project, private project, etc.)
   Yes, we have a commercial relationship with Mariner (a Spanish furniture manufacturer)
   a. What is the nature of the cooperation? (E.g. do you have a joint venture, developer partner, etc.)
      Commercial relationships
   b. What is the role of your company in the project?
      We are raw material and semi-élaborated products providers
   c. What are the roles of the other project partners?
      Mariner is a customer

4. Did you anticipate any problems working with Europe partners?
   No

5. Please list the main problems you have actually encountered during the project:
   a. Problems caused by language (e.g. verbal and written) and how you solved them
      Product names and descriptions. We use translation tables to solve this kind of issues
   b. Problems caused by different laws (e.g. legal, financial) and how you solved them
      No problems has been sought in this field
   c. Were any problems due to cultural differences? (If yes, please give an example)
      Yes, language misunderstandings mainly in the product descriptions
   d. Problems caused by long distances between partners and how you solved them
   e. Other problems and how you solved them

6. Did any funny or unusual problems occur?
7. Please describe your positive experiences of the project.
   We enjoyed a lot the collaboration set up in the project which paved the way for future collaborations.

8. What is the greatest lesson you learned from the project?
   It is possible to understand other companies' languages while they are using their own language.

9. What are possible future benefits of your project? (E.g. contacts, long term cooperation, etc.)
   Establish strong relationships with European industries.

10. Please list your top 5 recommendations for ensuring a successful Euro-China cooperation.
    - Establish a cooperation agreement.
    - Define tasks to be performed by each partner.
    - Celebrate meetings.
    - Create a coordinating committee in which a representative of each partner must be present.
    - Take into account the language misunderstandings that might appear.

11. Would you consider cooperating with Europe companies in the future? Why or why not?
    Yes, as we have acquired a lot of knowledge with respect to way of doing businesses in Europe and this knowledge can be applied to our activities.
THU

1. Name of your company
   Tsinghua University

2. Where are your headquarters located in China?
   Beijing

3. Have you any experience beside STASIS to cooperate with partners from Europe? (E.g. EU project, private project, etc.)
   Yes
   a. What is the nature of the cooperation? (E.g. do you have a joint venture, developer partner, etc.)
      Cooperation in R&D
   b. What is the role of your company in the project?
      Academic partner
   c. What are the roles of the other project partners?
      Coordinator, Academic partner, technique support, User

4. Did you anticipate any problems working with Europe partners?
   Yes

5. Please list the main problems you have actually encountered during the project:
   a. Problems caused by language (e.g. verbal and written) and how you solved them
      If we cannot speak or listen well, we can change the verbal communication to Email. And for writing communication, we try to read carefully, and to write anything in detail.
   b. Problems caused by different laws (e.g. legal, financial) and how you solved them
      So far, not encounter such kind of issues
   c. Were any problems due to cultural differences? (If yes, please give an example)
      Yes. In some level, Europe partners express anything directly but China partners express anything relatively indirectly.
   d. Problems caused by long distances between partners and how you solved them
      Yes, this makes lack of communication. This kind of problem could be released by hosting different meetings in different area, hosting teleconference frequently, and more Emails can also make contributes for this.
A.4
External questionnaire

1. Did any funny or unusual problems occur?
Partners have different thoughts for same thing. A same thing that is a simple stuff for Europe partners maybe explained by China partner with large pages. A same thing that means do it right now for China partners maybe planned by Europe partners in very detailed.

2. Please describe your positive experiences of the project.
High efficiency in working and formal management in project.

3. What is the greatest lesson you learned from the project?
Lack of communications in whole process of project.

4. What are possible future benefits of your project? (E.g., contacts, long term cooperation, etc.)
We know all partners in this project well, and trust each other, which is the basement for future cooperation.

5. Please list your top 5 recommendations for ensuring a successful Euro-China cooperation.
    Enough communication, formal management, responsibilities for whole project, keeping the different culture thing in mind, more documents needed to reduce misunderstands.

6. Would you consider cooperating with Europe companies in the future? Why or why not?
Yes, it definitely benefit for each other.
The external questionnaire was sent to enterprises and researchers not involved in the STASIS project, to gather a wider range of experiences. As with the internal questionnaire there were English and Chinese translations available.

A.4.1 European version

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Abstract

STASIS (SofTware for Ambient Semantic Interoperable Services) is a Research and Development project sponsored under the Europeans Commission’s 6th Framework programme as well as its projects members – www.stasis-project.net. Its objective is for Research, Development and Validation of open, webServices based, distributed semantic services for SME empowerment within the Automotive, Furniture and other sectors. It commenced September 1st 2006 and lasts for 3 years until August 2009 with a total budget of €4M. 13 Partners are involved including Commercial Companies (TIE, Porthus, iSoft) Academics (Universities of Sunderland, Oldenburg, Modena & Reggio Emilia, Tsinghua) and User Organisations (AIDIMA, Mariner, Shanghai Sunline, Foton, TANET, ZF Friedrichshafen AG) and these are led by the managing partner TIE. Partners are spread across Europe and China.

This questionnaire should be spread among all partners of the STASIS project and also to some additional companies, which have cooperation with china. It exists two versions of this questionnaire – 1 for European companies (where the questions refer to cooperating with Chinese companies) and 1 for Chinese companies (where the questions refer to cooperating with Euro companies).

Authors

STASIS Consortium (www.stasis-project.net)

Responsible Editors: Matthias Reinelt and Thomas Suding (University of Oldenburg)

1. Name of your company

2. Where are your headquarters located in Europe?

3. Please describe your project in a few sentences (i.e. max. 2 to 3 paragraphs)?

4. What is the role of your company in the project?

5. What are the roles of the other project partners?

6. How did you come to cooperate with partners from China? (E.g. EU project, private project, etc.)
7. What is the nature of the cooperation? (E.g. do you have a joint venture, developer partner, etc.)

8. Did you anticipate any problems working with Chinese partners?

9. Please list the main problems you have actually encountered during the project:
   a. Problems caused by language (e.g. verbal and written) and how you solved them
   b. Problems caused by different laws (e.g. legal, financial) and how you solved them
   c. Were any problems due to cultural differences? (If yes, please give an example)
   d. Problems caused by long distances between partners and how you solved them
   e. Other problems and how you solved them

10. Did any funny or unusual problems occur?

11. Please describe your positive experiences of the project

12. What is the greatest lesson you learned from the project?

13. What are possible future benefits of your project? (E.g. contacts, long term cooperation, etc.)

14. Please list your top 5 recommendations for ensuring a successful Euro-China cooperation

15. Would you consider cooperating with Chinese companies in the future? Why or why not?
A.4.2 Chinese Version

1. Name of your company 公司名称

2. Where are your headquarters located in China? 公司位于中国哪里？

3. Please describe your project in a few sentences (i.e. max. 2 to 3 paragraphs) 请用几句话简单描述你所在的合作项目(2 - 3 句)?

4. What is the role of your company in the project? 你公司在项目中任务是什么？

5. What are the roles of the other project partners? 其他合作伙伴的任务是什么？

6. How did you come to cooperate with partners from Europe? (E.g. EU project, private project, etc.) 你是怎样开始与欧洲伙伴合作的? (例如，欧盟项目，私有项目等)

7. What is the nature of the cooperation? (E.g. do you have a joint venture, developer partner, etc.) 合作情况 (例如，是否有合资企业，开发伙伴等)

8. Did you anticipate any problems working with European partners? 是否预见到了与欧盟合作可能存在的问题？
A.5 External Feedback

There are several feedbacks from Europe and China, which are provided anonymously.

- European feedback: we got 3 feedbacks from 3 enterprises. Since the companies asked not to publish their name and concrete answers the results are aggregated in the previous chapters.

- Chinese feedback: we got 5 feedbacks from 4 enterprises and 1 research centre in China. One example is given here and others are available and saved as attachment.
1. 公司名称
   北京金自天正智能控制股份有限公司

2. 公司位于中国哪里？
   北京

3. 请用几句话简单描述你所在的合作项目(2-3 句)？
   在土耳其冷轧钢厂进行冷轧轧机生产线和冷轧剪切生产线的安装和调试

4. 你公司在项目中任务是什么？
   检测仪表的设计和调试

5. 其他合作伙伴的任务是什么？
   冷轧生产线的机械、液压、传动、自动化系统、报警的安装和调试

6. 你是怎样开始与欧洲伙伴合作的？(例如，欧盟项目, 私有项目等)
   私有项目

7. 合作情况（例如，是否有合资企业，开发伙伴等）
   没有，通过国内中间商介绍

8. 是否预见到与欧盟合作可能存在的问题？
   对你的产品要求很高

9. 请列举项目中实际遇到的主要问题：
   a. 语言不同带来的问题（如，口语或书面）？你如何解决？
      交流复杂的技术问题困难时，可以找翻译或者用图示交流
   b. 法律不同带来的问题（如，法律或财政金融）？你如何解决？
   c. 文化差异带来的问题？请给出例子。
      欧洲人很严谨，喜欢自己动手尝试，你只需在旁边作指导
   d. 是否因为伙伴间距离太远带来的问题？你如何解决？
      交流不方便，特别是技术问题说不清楚，尽量大家在一起讨论时，把问题说清楚，留存书面报告，不能一起交流时，尽量通过书面方式交流。
   e. 是否发生其他问题？你如何解决？
      现场发生纠纷时，如客户不同意你方案时，首先要详细阐述自己的理由以及根据（如合同条款中的技术附件），尽量与他们协商解决。
10. 有没有发生过奇怪有趣或不平常的问题？

土耳其是穆斯林国家，有些保守的地方，家庭聚会时女人是不能见客人的（除10岁以下的儿童），女人是不能进清真寺，女人不能与陌生的男人并排坐在车上。

11. 请描述你在项目中好的经验。

多多与他们交流和沟通，消除双方的不信任和文化背景的差异，共同讨论解决问题。

12. 项目中你最大的教训是什么？

技术方案、说明书、技术文档、图纸（英文版）写得很糟糕，同他们技术人员交流很不方便。

13. 项目可能带来的长期收益是什么（如，获得联系，长期合作等）

长期合作，开拓市场。

14. 请列举5条你认为如何保证中欧合作成功的建议。

1. 保证自己的产品可靠，运行良好，维护方便；
2. 关于客户的要求以及现场可能出现的问题要尽量考虑周全；
3. 提前对自己的产品作好欧洲标准的论证；
4. 技术方案、说明书、技术文档、图纸（英文版）要写得很详细，这样交流很方便，最好有懂技术的外语好的人参与；
5. 尊重他们的思维方式、风俗习惯、生活习惯等。

15. 你考虑将来继续与中国合作么？为什么？

如果有机会当然会继续合作，促进交流，使科学技术为我所用，为大众所用。

赵

2009.4.22