ENG-GLOBALLY-08-2016-2017 - EU-China cooperation on sustainable urbanisation

a) Cultural and socio-economic aspects of urban issues in China (Research and Innovation Action)

The development of cities in China is taking place at an impressive pace and has affected millions of citizens. Many aspects of city planning and development, such as infrastructures, regulatory regimes, taxation, health, education and culture, have therefore a bearing on the framework conditions within which innovation occurs and which shape living conditions of residents. Joint European-Chinese research taking into consideration these essential elements of city development could contribute to an improved reciprocal knowledge on urbanisation processes between the EU and China. Through the joint format, research will benefit from access to data and expertise from both EU and China, with a view to proposing new models of sustainable urban development adapted to local socio-economic, cultural and political specificities. [[The work carried out by the Joint Programming Initiative Urban Europe (JPI UE) and by the Strategic Forum for International Science and Technology Cooperation (SFIC) should be taken into account when relevant.]]

The Commission considers that proposals requesting a contribution from the EU in the order of EUR 2.5 million would allow this specific challenge to be addressed appropriately. This does not preclude submission and selection of proposals requesting other amounts.

b) EU-China innovation platform on sustainable urbanisation (Coordination and Support Action) [[This activity is directly aimed at supporting the development and implementation of evidence base for R&I policies and supporting various groups of stakeholders. It is excluded from the delegation to Research Executive Agency and will be implemented by the Commission services.]]

Proposals shall establish a platform bringing together policy makers, national authorities, industry, academia and other stakeholders in EU and China in sectors important for sustainable urbanisation. The platform should develop joint strategies, be the 'nursery' of joint projects and a broker of science-industry partnerships between Europe and China. It should mobilise key urbanisation related initiatives such as the European Innovation Partnership on Smart Cities and Communities and the Joint Programming Initiative on Urban Europe. Proposals shall develop, as core element, a joint EU-China strategic R&I agenda on sustainable urbanisation, in consultation with relevant stakeholders (national, regional and municipal public authorities, industry, academia, financiers, city networks etc.). The agenda should contain collaborative research projects and large scale demonstration projects, including joint activities that may be financed partly through coordinated EU-China Calls for proposals. It should allow for seamless integration with initiatives financed by EU Member States and Associated Countries, regional governments in China, or by industry. Framework conditions for cooperative innovation should be addressed as necessary. Finally, the platform should promote linkages between sustainable urbanisation demonstration projects in European and Chinese cities, including by running a competition that will lead to the selection of a small number of demonstration sites in China and in Europe, including also suggesting the network infrastructures (energy, transport, ICT, water, waste management, compact urban development, municipal finances etc.) that would need to be put in place in these
sites and possible financing means, as well as designing demonstration projects with conditions that encourage co-investment by Chinese and EU partners in intelligent solutions for sustainable urbanisation, building as much as possible on existing initiatives.

As such, the platform is expected to contribute to creating the conditions for large scale science-industry cooperation on sustainable urbanisation that can address the challenges China and Europe face in this area. The platform should be open for participation by all stakeholders that can make a contribution to its objectives. On the European side, this should result in broad involvement across Member States and Associated Countries.

A maximum of one proposal will be supported. The Commission considers that a proposal requesting an EU contribution of EUR 1.5 million for a duration of 3 years would allow this specific challenge to be addressed appropriately. This does not preclude submission and selection of proposals requesting other amounts.

Due to the specific challenge of this topic, in addition to the minimum number of participants as set out in the Rules of Participation, proposals shall include at least one participant from China. Under this topic, legal entities established in China are eligible for funding from the Union.

The importance of innovation and socio-economic aspects in sustainable urbanisation has been recognised by the EU and China in their Joint Declaration on the EU-China Partnership on Urbanisation signed in 2012, as well as in the conclusions of the EU-China Innovation Cooperation Dialogue of 2013. This topic therefore covers two specific challenges:

a) In China and elsewhere, the management of an exceptionally rapid urban growth poses considerable challenges to policy-makers and city planners. In such a delicate context, physical city planning cannot be considered in isolation from governance aspects, related for instance to land use and resources for city financing but also to the environmental human and cultural dimensions of cities. Urban infrastructures and public services also call for a balanced and integrated planning so as to minimise or avoid the negative socio-economic, human and environmental impacts on city-dwellers, migrants, and seniors. Cities are also viewed as engines of growth and innovation, often attracting large shares of R&D investments and an innovative service sector.

b) The challenge is to bring together a wide-ranging partnership of stakeholders in Europe and China to create an innovation platform for developing and piloting innovative solutions in sustainable urbanisation that rely on advanced knowledge and technologies, taking into account and adding value to the manifold on-going activities on various aspects of urbanisation. The platform should build on the activities carried out on an intergovernmental level (JPI Urban Europe) and via the EU-funded projects in support of joint funding initiatives (ERA-Net Smart Urban Futures, ERA-Net Smart Cities and Communities) and seek to use events and networks created by projects in support of the policy dialogue.

This topic is expected to provide in-depth insights on EU-China cultural and socio-economic aspects on urbanisation highlighting the common challenges and possible solutions that may apply in both EU and China. Specific impacts are expected in the field of city planning, policy making, regulatory regime, governance and public services. Negative externalities (e.g. environment and public health) should be particularly addressed and exchange of best practices for citizen's well-being should be encouraged. The Coordination action is expected to increase stakeholder awareness, exchanges and synergies between Chinese and European industrial, academic and public players engaged in sustainable urbanisation research, innovation and application. Improved complementarity and coordination between different sustainable urbanisation funding programmes supported by the EU, the EU Member States and China should be achieved. The CSA should ensure a better match between the supply of innovative technological solutions and the needs of city planners and managers in charge of organising services linked to sustainable urbanisation. It is also expected to increase the capacity of industrial actors to develop and provide more effective solutions for the needs of sustainable urbanisation, and of city planners and managers to make informed choices on innovative technologies.