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Leibniz Institute of Ecological Urban and Regional Development

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## Press Release

### **New pathways to sustainable urban development – the EU and China want to learn from one another**

**The TRANS-URBAN-EU-CHINA project, funded by the European Union, was launched at a two-day conference in Dresden at the end of January. Under the leadership of the Leibniz Institute of Ecological Urban and Regional Development (IOER), partners from Europe and China are investigating ways of making cities more sustainable. In this work, the project team is focussing on the role of social integration within processes of sustainable urbanisation.**

In recent years, China has undergone a radical shift from a rural-based farming society to one that is highly urbanised. These processes are still continuing. More and more Chinese are living in rapidly growing – and in some cases entirely new – cities. How can we ensure that aspects of sustainable urban development do not fall by the wayside during this phase of rapid urbanisation? How can we manage China's increasing urbanisation, as well as that of European cities, so that the natural environment is protected from overexploitation while also taking account of social integration and interaction? The TRANS-URBAN-EU-CHINA project will investigate these questions.

Until the end of 2020, a total of six Chinese and eight European partner institutions will investigate the "Transition towards urban sustainability through socially integrative cities in the EU and in China". The project is thus part of an intensive cooperation between the EU and China that has been in existence since 1998. While the focus was initially on cooperation in the field of science and technology, concrete global challenges are increasingly coming to the fore, explained Diego Sammaritano, representative of the European Commission at the project launch in Dresden.

One of these challenges, sustainable urbanisation, will be addressed by the 14 project partners of TRANS-URBAN-EU-CHINA over the next three years. Bernhard Müller, the project's leader as well as Director of the Leibniz Institute of Ecological Urban and Regional Development (IOER), summarised the project aims as follows: "We want to work together to find out how cities can be developed intelligently, sustainably and with a good level of social integration so that all sections of the population can enjoy a positive living environment."

To this end, the first step of the project partners will be to develop a systematic knowledge base on transition experiences in Europe and China in a comparative way. The key results will subsequently be made available to practitioners, the scientific community and students in the form of a book publication.

"One important focus of the project is on participation, namely involving local actors from the field of urban development as well as city residents in our

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work,” explains Bernhard Müller. “For example, we will jointly advance tools and measures to support transition.” These instruments will be tested in two so-called *Living Labs* in Chinese cities in order to gain further practical experience of the processes of urban change.

Last but not least, the extensive knowledge gathered during the project will be used to formulate recommendations for local stakeholders to support transition towards socially integrative cities. “We will repeatedly discuss the steps and results of the project with practitioners in order to forge a link to the realities of Chinese and European cities,” says Bernhard Müller with a view to the future.

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#### Photo:



Rodrigo Martín Galán, European Commission (left); project leader Prof. Bernhard Müller (2<sup>nd</sup> left) and YANG Baojun (right), president of China Academy of Urban Planning and Design (CAUPD), at the project launch in Dresden. (photo: R. Vigh/IOER-Media)



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