



# Preview: EU's trip to China between April 5-7th

## OVERVIEW

- **European Commission (EC) President von der Leyen (vdL) and French President Macron are scheduled to visit China between April 5th and 7th**, as confirmed by the Chinese Foreign Ministry.
- **This trip follows closely on the heels of Chinese President Xi Jinping's recent three-day visit to Moscow**, where he met with Russian President Putin and the two nations deepened their ties across various sectors, such as military strategic communication and coordination.
- **China's Commerce Minister Wang Wentao plans to visit Brussels in April**, where he is expected to work towards stabilising the somewhat tumultuous China-EU relations, as reported by SCMP sources.

## SCHEDULE (TIMINGS TBC)

- EC President vdL meeting with the EU Chamber of Commerce in China.
- Chinese President Xi and Premier Li are to meet French President Macron.
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- Trilateral summit between Presidents Xi, Macron, and vdL "in the afternoon".
- EC President vdL to hold a bilateral meeting with President Xi.

## EUROPE'S STANCE

**EUROPEAN COMMISSION:** European Commission President VdL outlined the EU's new approach to China in her speech on March 30th.

- **The new strategy aims to safeguard the bloc's interests, values, and citizens while addressing concerns over China's growing proximity to Russia.**
- VdL outlined three main pillars: bolstering economic security, acting more assertively, and selectively cooperating with China, and emphasised the need for a new EU economic security strategy and urged the bolder and faster use of existing tools, including the Foreign Subsidies Regulation and the new anti-coercion instrument.
- **She also proposed developing new defensive tools** to screen exports of dual-use technology to systemic rivals' like China, and reassessing the stalled EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment. FT reported that the "new defensive tools" will be used to monitor technology, including quantum computing, robotics, artificial intelligence, and biotech.
- **The European Commission President also stressed that the bloc's approach is not about decoupling from China**, but rather reducing risks and maintaining cooperation in specific areas.
- **Analysts at RANE said the announcement demonstrates Brussels' intention to take a firmer stance on China while preserving economic and diplomatic relations**, as export controls are currently enforced at the member-state level.
- VdL will reportedly say how China positions itself regarding Russia's invasion of Ukraine will determine EU-China relations in the future.

## FRANCE:

- **Desks suggest President Macron and Chinese President Xi will hold at least three meetings together.**
- It is reported that France is hoping to dissuade China from supporting Russia's invasion of Ukraine "but without alienating a crucial trade and geopolitical player", according to France24 citing an official.
- **Reports also suggest that Macron will take a firm stance towards Chinese President Xi on Ukraine**, while taking "another path" from the directly confrontational tone the US is emanating, the official said.
- **SGH Macro sources suggested Beijing will be meeting France's expectations to give large amounts of trade orders, "exceeding tens of billions of euros"**. The sources added that orders are to involve nuclear power plants, aviation and luxury goods.
- **French President Macron will be travelling with representatives of some 50 companies** including Airbus (AIR FP), Alstom (ALO FP), and EDF (EDF FP).



- Airbus is reportedly discussing a new round of plane orders from China ahead of French President Macron's visit to China, according to Reuters citing sources; China State Planner, after meeting with the Airbus CEO, said China will continue to help Airbus deepen its cultivation in China.

## CHINA'S STANCE

- **SGH Macro suggests President Xi will show his support for the EU's response to Washington's Inflation Reduction Act (IRA).**
- A senior Chinese official cited by the advisors, said "von der Leyen has been the most hostile towards China among EU leaders since the Ukraine crisis began. **We do not expect [her] upcoming trip to improve the relationship between China and the EU, nor...to be conducive to an early truce between Russia and Ukraine.** [She] is also among the EU leaders who most advocates decoupling from China's resources and technology, and implicitly advocates abandoning the Comprehensive Investment Agreement [between China and the EU]."
- The desk also suggested that Chinese officials have approached top EU diplomats regarding the Xinjiang-related sanctions.

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