

EPP Presidency Statement

Chinese Disinformation and the Situation in Hong Kong

11 June 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed several crucial issues for the European Union, among them the vulnerability of vital supply chains, especially those sourced in China. Equally important and increasingly apparent is the extent to which China's economic as well as political leverage, including vis-à-vis the EU, has grown. These issues raise important questions.

As the European Commission clarified in Spring 2019, China is simultaneously a cooperation and negotiating partner, an economic competitor and a systemic rival to the European Union. The EU has a major role to play in setting the values and standards of the 21st-century world — now a world struggling to overcome a public health as well as an economic crisis. Guided by our values — above all the rights and freedoms inherent to democracy — we must act with strategic vision, boldness and unity in putting forward a uniquely European model of global cooperation.

In recent months, we have become increasingly aware and particularly concerned by the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) aggressive effort to spread propaganda and to pressure critics, including even by censoring EU political messages. The CCP has pushed disinformation aimed to deflect legitimate criticism of its handling of the pandemic, and to undermine Western political values.

Therefore, together with our stakeholders, the EPP commits to intensifying our efforts to coordinate our political family in countering the ongoing threats to our democratic principles. We cannot thwart or refute every attack of fake news; but this reinforced coordination will help in developing more effective strategies and implementing more effective action plans: to strengthen democracy and our European project.

Equally alarming is the CCP's renewed and intensified attempt to bring Hong Kong under more direct central control. Following mass protests last summer and autumn — garnering broad international support and resulting ultimately in Beijing's withdrawal of an infamous extradition law — the Hong Kong police in April arrested a number of democratic activists and the CCP in late May 2020 bypassed Hong Kong's legislature and unilaterally introduced a pending national security law threatening to end free expression and undermine the democratic representation protected under the Joint Declaration and the Hong Kong Basic Law. This jeopardises the very existence of Hong Kong's rule-of-law framework and calls into question the legitimacy of its autonomous status as per the agreed 'One Country, Two Systems' principle.

As we stated strongly in our October 2019 ['Resolution in response to the ongoing protests in Hong Kong'](#), the EPP is committed to basic values of human dignity and human rights, freedom and responsibility, democracy, solidarity, justice and the rule of law. We join with the European Union, with the EPP Group in the European Parliament, with the International Democrat Union, with the governments of the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and the United States and with others in expressing deep concern over the current situation. We condemn the CCP's suppression of guaranteed freedoms in Hong Kong, in violation of its own stated international agreements and contrary to the spirit of commitments made to citizens. We reiterate our strong EPP support for the 'One Country, Two Systems' principle and for all the rights therein enshrined for the citizens of Hong Kong in accordance with the Basic Law.

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**If you have any question
you would like to ask
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