



China in Europe Research Network (CHERN) - CA 18215

## **Chinese Infrastructure FDIs and spatial planning procedures in South East Europe (CHERN WG1)**

### Basics

**Host Organization:** Department of Land Economy, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK

**Host Organizations's representative:** Dr Franziska Sielker

**Representative's contact:** [fs421@cam.ac.uk](mailto:fs421@cam.ac.uk)

**The tentative length of the STSM:** 21 days between June and September 2021

### Call's description and objectives

Capital infrastructure investment projects led by Chinese companies and branded as a part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) underway in the markets of southeastern European (SEE) markets, have drawn attention of numerous stakeholders throughout Europe. Their underperformance, inefficiency, uncommon business development practice and state-led centralized decision making on the one hand give reason for concerns on how the outcome might affect the market which is on its political course of joining the European Union (EU). On the other hand China's decisiveness, state financial support backing, "soft power" application and unwillingness to adjust to European standards related to investments of this kind, result in a need to analyze the issue in a detailed manner so as to understand the past and present, in order to prepare for the future.

Most scientific research concerning BRI related megaprojects focuses on evaluating their impact on the economy (Chen and Yang, 2015) and trade and investment (Yang and Liu, 2015; Liu et al., 2016; Ehizuelen, 2017; Ndzendze and Monyae, 2019). On the other hand empirical studies and evaluations from the perspective of infrastructure construction are rare, as the assessment of the managerial and spatial planning dimension of these projects has not gained much traction in the scientific community

so far. However, in practice many projects focus on transport and infrastructure development, thereby having considerable impact on spatial development. These projects often depend on their implementation on spatial planning procedures.

In the overall global volatile narrative related to China and its investments in Europe, a data driven, fact-based, unbiased and inclusive research brings benefit to all sides involved in the project. Analysing the implementation of the projects through the lens of planning allows to contribute to an overall analysis of the nature of Chinese investments in Europe fact-checking to what extent the anxieties towards Chinese investments in overruling existing regulations hold up.

This project aims to understand the potential impacts of the Chinese-SEE cooperation for the future relationship between the SEE countries, the EU and China. These will be path dependent from today's development, with a not to be underestimated role of public perceptions of the geopolitical context. For the purpose of both sustainable and progressive, as well as democratic and peaceful future, analyzing how to bring Europe closer to China will result in benefits for all sides involved throughout the layers of all societies. The SEE market can serve as a testing ground for both - Europeans to learn how to work with Chinese, and Chinese to learn how to adapt to Europeans.

The STSM is aimed at a collaborative effort between the host and the visiting researcher for the purpose of:

- Setting up a project proposal to assess root causes of inefficiency and unconformity of BRI related capital infrastructure projects against EU regulatory framework related to environment protection, spatial planning and urbanism, in the SEE markets;
- Defining the structure of the problem and accordingly its cause-effect internal structure breakdown;
- Identifying all stakeholders relevant to BRI related capital infrastructure investment projects' efficiency and performance;
- Developing a methodological framework for future research;
- Identifying stakeholders from China, Europe and UK, interested to further engage in and contribute to this research.

### Call's specific requirements

In addition to COST rules (see section "Who is eligible to be an STSM Applicant" in the [STSM BASIC FACTS](#)), the applicant should have:

- Good knowledge of Chinese capital infrastructure foreign direct investments in SEE countries;
- Knowledge of SEE market's need for capital infrastructure projects development or upgrading, in the context of EU integrations' requirements;
- Good knowledge of SEE countries, and basic understanding of spatial planning procedures or the relationship to investment projects in SEE;
- Knowledge of the policy aspects of the SEE countries' EU accession process;
- Knowledge of quantitative and qualitative methods.

## Results

- Selection of 1-2 case studies in SEE;
- Summary of planning procedures and contexts related to these case studies;
- Outlining and interlinking roots of the inefficiency and underperformance of BRI related capital infrastructure investments, within the Project Owner's decision-making system;
- Outlining key phases in the project lifecycle in which decisions that affect the future inefficiency and underperformance of BRI related capital infrastructure investments.

The applicant will also produce a blog article and a short summary of the results at the end of the stay (the requirements by COST Organization or CHERN Action (for details see section »How does it work?« in the [STSM BASIC FACTS](#))). This short findings' report incorporates information on the efficiency and performance rating of BRI related capital infrastructure investments in the SEE market with proposals on how to improve the efficiency and performance in the upcoming period.

The host institution foresees a joint drafting of a proposal for a joint research that would focus on further dealing with the outlined roots of the problem.

## Practical details

All applicants must carefully read the [STSM instructions](#) on the CHERN website before applying.

Pandemic restrictions would mean that initial meetings and activities would be done remotely. Duration will be approximately 21 days and will take place between July and September 2021. It is possible to organize the mission in 2 stays. Depending on the COVID-19 measures applied in that period, exact dates will be defined together with the selected applicant.

## Deadlines

Deadline for applications to be submitted: **June 5, 2021**

Notification of application outcome: June 20, 2021

Period of STSM: 21 days between July and September 2021 (exact days to be defined together with the Host institution)

Submitting the reports: **within 30 days from the end date**

Accepting/ rejecting the reports: **within 2 weeks** after submission of the report

Execution of the payment of the grant: **within 4 weeks** after submission of the report.

## More information

For more information please contact STSM Coordinator Martina Bofulin ([martina.bofulin@zrc-sazu.si](mailto:martina.bofulin@zrc-sazu.si)).