

CHINA - CEE RELATIONS, IN-DEPTH ANALYSES OF 16+1 MECHANISM WITHIN OBOR INITIATIVE

LEONID NAKOV^a
VLADO DIMOVSKI^b
IGOR IVANOVSKI^a

^aSs. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, North Macedonia

^bUniversity of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Abstract

Principally, the One Belt One Road (OBOR) Initiative was officially announced in October, 2013, in compliance with the strategy for sustainable development of the President of the P.R. of China, Xi Jinping, prescribing the potential to initially integrate and closely connect over 60 countries from continents such as Asia -and the Middle East, in particular- Europe and Africa, which currently, under the 17+1 mechanism, include 138 countries. The fundamental objective of OBOR is to pave the way for closer economic, infrastructural, environmental, as well as socio-economic cooperation and transfer of experiences in the context of the 16+1 mechanism between China and CEE countries, especially having in mind various economic and business environments, strategic developmental goals and advanced economic sectors of CEE countries. In increasing the capacity for harmonizing the main sustainability pillars, i.e. economic, social and environmental, aiming at circular economy, business modelling, ethical compliance, etc., the role of transferring the Chinese, and eastern experiences and practices in general, while solving sustainability challenges, should be perceived as being of increased importance in our days.

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Corresponding Author: **Leonid NAKOV**, Faculty of Economics - Skopje, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, Blvd. Goce Delchev 9V, 1000 Skopje, North Macedonia.

E-mail: lnakov@eccf.ukim.edu.mk

Vlado DIMOVSKI, School of Economics and Business, University of Ljubljana, Kardeljeva ploščad 17, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia. E-mail: vlado.dimovski@ef.uni-lj.si

Igor IVANOVSKI, Faculty of Economics - Skopje, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, Blvd. Goce Delchev 9V, 1000 Skopje, North Macedonia.

E-mail: igor.ivanovski@eccf.ukim.edu.mk

Introduction

The thorough analyses of implementable aspects of knowledge, skills, abilities and expertise that derive from immense historical and cooperative influence among, initially, more than 60 national economies, currently under the 17+1 mechanism including 138 countries, that constitute the modern Maritime Silk Road, conceptualized as the OBOR initiative, in *creating and developing a managerial sustainability, while integrating and cooperating system* that, to a great extent, is focused on behavioural synergies and symbiosis of organizations and institutions involved from member countries. The core research theme of this paper refers to the *16+1 China - CEE member countries*, illustrated in Figure 1:

Figure 1. Member countries of the 16+1 Cooperating China – CEE mechanism¹



The necessity of sustainable national development is initially perceived as implementing the *key pillars of sustainability* (Schiehlé & Wallin, 2014):

- 1) *The United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development Theme Indicator Framework discerns four dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social, environmental, institutional in 15 themes and 38 sub-themes;*
- 2) *GRI Framework, which focuses on social, environmental and economic areas;*
- 3) *Wuppertal Sustainable Development Indicator Framework is based on four dimensions and integrating their connectivity;*
- 4) *Accountability Standards;*
- 5) *United Nations Global Compact Agreement (UNGC).*

1. European Council on Foreign Relations, 2015, at <http://ecfr.eu>.

The primary scientific-research focal point in this paper is unifying, in an integrative model, the key challenges and techniques for intensive and predictive development in China – CEE countries relations, through harmonizing the following *main section analyzes*:

1. *Identifying the best applicable environment for creating and managing current and future cooperative actions within the OBOR Initiative, aiming at eradicating national differences that could potentially obstruct the sustainable changes planned for China – CEE relations.* It is evident that each of the 3 levels of cooperation is linked to creatively increasing the expectations from a cooperative potential point of view, which by far exceeds economic one, and imposes future changes on the overall national development model of CEE countries;
2. *Introducing key complementary changes and further managing implications, predominantly focusing on nature and pillars for sustaining the complementary character underlying the joint cooperative perspective.* In this context, each and every change is linked to multi-functional implications related to the increased level of competitiveness of particular national industries, while, at the same time, enabling the attempt to reach an optimal level for the sustainability pillars referred to above, and,
3. *Benchmarking the most prominent best practices deriving from the effective readiness of mutual inter-disciplinary cooperation in China – CEE countries relations, as well as clearing up the potential of the 16+1 mechanism in the light of future structural changes in the majority of CEE countries.* It is a contemporary strive for each CEE country to increase its domestic capacity for intensive and efficient transfer of best practices, particularly in industries that are part of the national competitive environment, as an indicator of the national potential for broadening the scope and nature of cooperation with China, within the OBOR Initiative.

The prevalent contribution of the paper is fundamentally focused on the following methodological – empirical dimensions of importance:

Integrating methodological and expert oriented thought in the field of the potential and perspectives of the OBOR Initiative, from the view point of environmental, structural and multi-functional, especially economical, developmental implications. As such, it attempts to discuss that not all varieties of cooperative mechanisms are sustainable for all CEE countries' national development, particularly due to apparent diversities in their national models and priorities, as well as,

Clarifying current cooperative and sustainable prospects in China – CEE relations, predominantly by thoroughly linking existing cooperative modalities among various CEE countries, regarding their relations to quality changes crucial for increased and competitive cooperation. This contribution is particularly focused on the increasing expert challenge for proving that measuring and evaluating implications, rather than only nominal readiness, in regard to cooperation within the OBOR Initiative is crucial for the future cooperation prospects in all CEE countries.

Methodological Overview

Contemporary managerial analyses focused on relationships in economic, cultural, scientific, etc. fields related to the comprehensive social development, between regional economic, cultural and political groups, such as the CEE countries (comprising, in 16+1, of 11 EU member states and 5 Balkan non-EU member states, whereas, in 17+1, of 34 OBOR countries from Europe and Asia, including 18 EU member states). These groups include national economies of various structures, with a varying degree of current and potential prosperity -especially economic ones- and integrative capacity, particularly concerning the transfer of professional experiences from other economic regions, such as the Middle East, North Europe, etc. It is evident that their eager intention to strive and catch up with the pace of far more advanced economies from the European Union would not be entirely harmonized, if all long-term change management dimensions did not pay intensive attention to the following *CEE developmental challenges*:

- Each business or institutional change initiative is expected to have a place in *the overall framework of integration of complementary changes, especially due to*:
 - *the lack of sufficient resources in the majority of CEE countries, on the one hand, and,*
 - *diversified capabilities in the majority of the population for comprehensive and intensified social and environmental development, on the other.*
- The sustainability orientation of the internal CEE initiative should be entirely supported by *a broader external manifestation of regional and supra-regional cooperating initiatives, among which the OBOR -One Belt One Road Initiative- has intensive absorptive capacity, mostly in the fields of*:
 - *modality for economic changes and transformations, as cornerstone for a latter advancements in the fields of*
 - *education and science,*
 - *culture,*
 - *environmental challenges, etc.*

Within the global sustainability framework, known as *Agenda for sustainable development 2030* -articulated through the *Millennium development goals (MDG)* as the broadest developmental pathway for each modality of inter-regional, inter-national cooperation and integration- and with the application of the *Strategy for Education and Training of the European Union, known as Strategy 2020* -consisting of the prevailing indicators for crucial developmental approaches in the most advanced European economies for the most important success factor, i.e. their human capital- the tendency for increasing the significance and applicative effects within the OBOR – CEE countries should be recognised as a potential solution for the *CEE cooperative sustainability challenges*:

- Developmental models of countries involved in the OBOR Initiative, especially the economic one, may be altered by transferring management sustainability systems from the initiator of the OBOR Initiative, i.e. China, towards the CEE countries, especially the Western Balkan countries. As such, this is expected to produce *sustainable economic changes in the fields of*:
 - prevalent management model,
 - leadership development and team performances,
 - analysing success indicators, etc.
- There may be strategic shifts regarding educational, research and environmental aspects to implement *sustainable social practices* largely relying on *the cooperative model of higher benefits due to increased human capital value*, and
- There may be cultural attempts to validate the contemporary necessity of *increasing trust, respect and confidence among culturally diversified environments*, as well as to reshape cultural modalities for developing joint developmental programmes primarily on a supra-national basis.

Nevertheless, harmonised development of the integrative challenges presented above could be effectively implemented by:

- determining *the most applicable complementary changes*, on the one hand, and,
- *training and coaching for the abilities to behave like a sustainable, responsible organisation or institution within a rapidly changing environment*, not only nationally, but also regionally and internationally, on the other.

Sustainable management of crucial pre-conditions for intensive cooperation within the 16+1 mechanism – changes required, and outcomes expected

1. Creating a sustainable environment through the OBOR Initiative for an enhanced cooperative development model between China and CEE countries

Undoubtedly, every systematised and holistic management effort for stimulating and benefitting from the fundamental, inter-regional cooperative 16+1 mechanisms should follow *the fundamental Cooperative Development China – CEE expectations*, illustrated in the following Table 1.

The potential for more intensified and diverse cooperation in China – EU relationships in general, particularly with CEE countries, is of *multi-dimensional and inter-functional significance*, and, therefore, should be analysed through its *developmental and cooperative capacity*, using a holistic, analytical and research framework and respecting the main sustainability features distinctive of the OBOR Initiative.

Table 1. Levels of Cooperative Development China – CEE expectations²

<i>First level</i>	<i>Second level</i>	<i>Third level</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Increasing the potential for acquiring and implementing new or renewed methods and techniques for determining and implementing most important economic, cultural, social and environmental segments for cooperation, in order to achieve sustainable joint interests through the cooperation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Incorporating in the framework key success factors to constitute the cooperative developmental model for planning and implementing joint projects in various fields of integrated development, i.e., additional to economic, social, and environmental segments educational, cultural, infrastructure and other potential cooperative segments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Attempting to integrate the prevailing developmental determination that the overall fulfillment of sustainability goals is not possible without sufficient and efficient regional, as well as supra-regional forms of cooperation, in which the potential of the mechanism for China – CEE countries enhances broader domestic, as well as international positions and perspectives for the majority of the developing countries involved

The process of creating a sustainable environment for business and institutional forms of cooperation should substantially relate to the prevalent *integrative potential for more intensified and sustained China – CEE relations*, predominantly determined through the following indicative features:

1. *The obvious Chinese tendency for behaving on a global basis, should be accompanied by enhanced regional cooperative mechanisms*; in other words, the cooperative model would not achieve its sustainability goals if it entails, in the majority of projects, only direct cooperative forms between China and specific developing countries, but would result in higher developmental influence if accompanied by several China regional country partners, mostly due to the mechanisms for balanced and adjusted transfer of skills and experiences leading to urgent and faster adoption of EU criteria through sustained and multi-dimensional Chinese practices. This leads to *more prosperous and sustained regional CEE development*,
2. *The precise spheres for cooperation would largely differ between the corpus of CEE countries*, in both intensity and depth for sustained cooperative modalities, indicating that CEE countries that are also EU member states should pay serious attention to regional and supra-regional developmental needs, especially considering that *the developmental experience is expected to spread faster among Balkan non – EU member states*, in order to establish a broader zone for increased regional cooperation and further EU integration,

2. Data-source: Authors' analytical framework of the 16+1 Cooperative mechanism.

3. Following the developmental approaches within the OBOR Initiative member countries, *it is perceived that national economies of CEE countries possessing more experience in project management models, particularly concerning infrastructure, energy, transportation, communication, finance, etc., as, for instance, China, which is actively present at the moment in the majority of Western Balkan countries and dominates infrastructure investments, would be the leaders of integrating cooperative tendencies, especially in regard to transfer of know-how, new business models, restructuring the portfolio of products or services, raising public awareness and enhancing responsibility in public-private sector cooperation, etc.*

While developing a sustainable environment for increased cooperative potential, when analysing individually and regionally all fundamental country members of the 16+1 Initiative, it is useful to emphasize *the most necessary business and institutional practices deriving from the China – CEE countries relationship, that serve as a pre-requisite condition for every aspect of sustainable development*; these practices are best illustrated by the *expected deliverables from the China – CEE cooperative developmental model proposed*:

- *Establishing a clear relationship between the cooperative objectives and the cooperative outcomes*: It is quite recommendable for each cooperating country to understand and apply such cooperative techniques, skills and experiences that would best enable and increase the level of their capacity for a multi-dimensional evaluation of all effects derived from cooperative activities between CEE countries and China;
- *Developing an experiential cooperative model*: Each advanced sustainability modality is expected to focus on several cooperative outcomes, which means that the combination of applied techniques and skills should incorporate not only transfer of contemporary methodologies, but also immense applicative business and institutional developmental concepts and models, realised through a separate cooperative approach between CEE countries and China, especially on a regional basis;
- *A systematic approach for analysing, creating and evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of all sustainability programmes for cooperation*: as such, this enables all cooperating countries to develop improved change processes and behaviour for their existing activities in order to establish continuous implementation of complementary changes. The approach should possess multiple and inter-dependent sustained implications in at least 2 of the 3 sustainability pillars (2/3 success rule), i.e. economic, social or environmental;
- *Increasing mutual inter-sector developmental influence from advancements in distinctive investment fields*: The continuing character and implications of majority infrastructure, sector-based projects are aligned with potential advancement in the social and environmental spheres, particularly

because the enhanced cooperative OBOR mechanism between China and CEE countries influences the quality of life and the stability of systems in all partner countries involved;

- *Building sustained cooperative network partners*: One important success criterion for current and future implications from the OBOR Initiative, as a whole is related to enabling a sustainable cooperative network of specific businesses or institutions that undertake, on a continuous basis, managerial actions that encompass a long-term cooperative perspective, predominantly aiming at increasing the scope and quality of competitive economic sectors at all CEE partner countries involved;

- *Acquiring focused and competitive intra-sector skills and experience*: This is recommended and quite useful for the process of designing and developing long-term sustainable cooperative programmes within the China – CEE countries mechanism, as well as for advancing the leadership profiles of business and institutional managers; it also makes it possible to select and develop focused intra-sector competences, skills and analytical frameworks, particularly in complementary economic sectors, in order to support the value- chain system creation and further development, mostly in the sectors that constitute the essence of a country's national competitive economic infrastructure.

Principally, the Sustainable Development Goals UN Framework clearly stipulates that the process of trying to increase competitiveness and sustainability *will include mobilization of financial resources as well as capacity-building and transfer of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries on favourable terms, including concessional and preferential ones, as mutually agreed. Public finance, both domestic and international, will play a vital role in providing essential services and public goods and in catalysing other sources of finance (UN, 2015).*

In this concept, while managing developmental national challenges, it is inevitable that, *by relying greatly on the might of its growing economy, the entrepreneurial spirit of Chinese business people and the attractiveness of its adjustable and scalable development model, China is now ready to offer the developing world a new kind of unit based on the new rules for political and economic globalization it is currently seeking to set (Mikhalev, M., 2017).*

The prevalent model for advancing the development of CEE countries using the Chinese experience has been predominantly determined as harmonized on a regional and international basis. Therefore, it is widely perceived that *economic studies have attested the importance of infrastructure investment in reducing poverty, as infrastructure investment can improve economic productivity, boost economic growth, and accelerate mobility of labour from low-productive sector to high-productive sectors, leading to increase in employment and earnings to the poor. Infrastructure investment*

can also improve the opportunity of the poor to have access to health and education, thus enhancing human development (Hong, P., 2016).

It should be emphasised that regardless of the framework for enabling intensified partnership within the 16+1 mechanism, internal national change capabilities of CEE countries still remain as one of the limiting factors for intensive and cooperative development, especially on a short term basis. This prevalent opinion is manifested through the fundamental developmental premise that *national regulations or self-regulatory measures will improve environmental performance to some extent, but, in the absence of significant change of expectations from the initiative, the thrust and pull under the governance arrangements framework remain weak, and there is still room for strengthening the small-scale 'green' norms supported by institutional norms and incentive* (Solmecke U., 2016).

Nevertheless, the potential for stimulating cooperation between CEE partner countries and China lies, to a great extent, in *creating and sustaining a developmental model for managing complementary changes*, in order to unify, as much as possible, the developmental cooperative implications in sustainable sectors and the employees involved.

2. Managerial implications from complementary changes in China-CEE countries relations

In order to enable a sustainable basis for developing a model of *complementary business and institutional changes*, the initial prerequisite condition is, in fact, *managerial determination to introduce an organic, rather than mechanistic relationship between CEE countries and China*, aimed at *identifying and analysing the potential of the real-not only nominal- sources for the competitive capacities and advantages aspired by CEE countries*.

In accordance with the established practice of organising an annual summit of China – CEE countries, at the one organised in Budapest, Hungary, in November 2017, the implementation of 16+1 cooperative mechanism was evaluated as follows: *5 Years have passed and together we have made great achievements in policy consultation, economic cooperation, cultural exchanges, and in many other fields* (Jielong Duan, 2017).

Therefore, the nature of necessary complementary changes would best be illustrated through the *complementary character of changes* needed in the majority of CEE countries:

- *Complementary processes and behaviour originate from the constitution and application of complementary teams of expert individuals*, i.e., a composition of individuals who can have different functional and professional expertise and bring added value to the overall process of determining cooperative challenges, designing the most easily applicable solution, implementing it, all the way to the level of

assessing and evaluating the overall impact, from a regional, national, organisational/ institutional or individual point of view;

- *Complementing the tendencies for external adaptation with ones focused on internal integration*, in accordance with the Adizes change management methodology, which illustrates that each sustainable form of cooperation between China and CEE countries is expected to further orient and accommodate future changes in the legislative framework in a direction that is crucial for sustainable planned and continuous modalities of changes, as a pre-requisite condition for cooperative development between China and CEE countries;

- *Complementary changes in CEE countries should support the cooperative mechanism and they are fundamentally perceived as a managerial attempt to integrate inclusive and sustainable change management techniques, on the one hand, with the imperative of achieving the institutional stability and policy predictive features, on the other*, provided that the actual cooperation within the China–CEE countries relationships adds value to the economic perspectives of all sub-regions within CEE countries, while also overcoming the majority of institutional obstacles to ensure enhanced and supportive sustainable cooperation;

- *Complementary managerial implications of the intended cooperative development lie in the core economic outcomes woven in the overall cooperative capacity of China – CEE countries*; these are illustrated below (Haggai, 2016):

- *Promotion of local manufacturing and nationally distinctive industries, as well as expanding markets* – entailing efficient integration of resources, especially natural and renewable, recycling, and horizontal, vertical and diagonal integration of markets, whether national or, and in particular, newly created regional ones within CEE member countries;

- *Increased economic performance and productivity* – this is closely connected with policy coordination, increased economic dependence, liberation of economic factors, a transparent model for measuring efficiency, especially, productivity of joint cooperative projects between China and CEE partner countries, etc.,

- *Lowered transactional costs, increased employment, particularly of high-skilled employees and enabling the concept of welfare states* - linked to increased application of total quality management techniques, 6 Sigma, lean management, integrated business models of quality of work and life, rebalancing the growth and developmental model in accordance with sectors of the highest degree of cooperative outcomes, in quantity and quality terms, etc.,

- *Increased regional cooperation and connectivity, integrated joint projects, as well as trade facilitation* – i.e., an open, inclusive and balanced management cooperative model, which considers that the majority of MNC's perceive the CEE region as a single market with distinctive national economic features expected to be of a regionally supportive, rather than exclusive, character.

In order to acquire and utilise as many of *complementary change management concepts* above as possible, it is quite recommendable to integrate the *fundamental pillars that are an integral part of the sustainable development model*, as illustrated in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Fundamental pillars of the sustainable developmental model³

<i>Inclusive development</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicating that all cooperative initiatives should focus on collaborative partnerships for better planned and better focused initiatives
<i>Universal development</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having in mind that technological and financial cooperative benchmarking modalities are critical for more prosperous economic results of developing countries; besides, a universal character of development relates to harmonising national policies and programmes with those included in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)
<i>Integrated development</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critically explains the managerial approach in balancing economic harmonisation, inclusive development and environmental sustainability, all of which aiming at advancing rural development, natural resource management and skills development
<i>Locally – focused development</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If we respect the fact that, by 2050, 66% of the total population would be urban citizens, urban investments, innovations and social fields of interest acquire increasing developmental significance
<i>Technology – driven development</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This refers to the potential for implementing advanced technologies, such as Chinese technology, especially in the manufacturing industries in CEE countries; on the other hand, this also leads to local exchange of technologies between developing countries in a rather resourceful manner

The integration of these key sustainable development pillars creates a *stimulating environment for managing complementary changes in a distinctive cooperative model, nationally and regionally*, through persistent and consistent integration of factors crucial for sustainable cooperation success.

II. Developing an applicative pathway for qualitative enhancement of the cooperative potential within the OBOR Initiative in China–CEE countries

3. Benchmarking current successful cooperating developmental practices within the OBOR Initiative

The managerial concept of proper selection and integration of the most influential external and internal factors pre-determining potential success of the fundamental,

3. Data source: Adapted according to the Sustainable Development Solution Network, 2015, at <http://unsdsn.org>.

cooperative mechanism 16+1 between China and CEE countries, crucially relies on the *cooperative sustainability pathways achieved*:

- Having in mind that the initial OBOR Initiative included around 60 countries -it currently numbers 138- and a total of 63% of the world population, as opposed to the initial OBOR contribution amounting to 29% of the world GDP value (Wang, 2014), *each one of the participating CEE partner countries expects that this cooperative mechanism will have a clearly positive impact on raising their overall GDP, while it will also contribute to transferring professional expertise, predominantly in the fields of infrastructure, transport, logistics and investment management*;
- In order for the number and quality of the sectors involved to rise within the cooperating China–CEE countries mechanism, *various types of development channels towards a more sustainable direction will be obviously needed but not easy* (Shu, 2016); far more is dependent on identifying and applying, as much as possible, *measurable and sustainable economic, social and environmental incentives, especially combining a set of regulations, on national, regional and local levels, within the period spanning from the initial to the lasting effects arising from the joint cooperative projects implemented*;
- In accordance with the strong determination of the Chinese creator of the OBOR Initiative, namely, President Xi Jinping, *the principle of the desirable inclusive development is often applied in the form of joint contribution, broad developmental consultation and shared benefits*, particularly referring to the necessity for clear sustainable determination of cooperative objectives, implementing methodologies, as well success indicators;
- While developing the concept of the OBOR initiative, one of the crucial changes has been placed in the Chinese paradigm of ‘going global’. In-depth analyses of the content of this modern economic and business approach identifies that ‘going global’ *was first proposed in 1996; the broader notion of “going global” includes the export of labour services, goods and services, international finance as well as foreign investment and other business. The narrow sense of “going global” refers to enterprises entering global markets through investment and participating in international competition and cooperation* (Yang, K. & Tang, L., 2016);
- In order to identify future prospects for China–CEE countries, it is highly recommendable to pay particular attention to the *4 Pillars of the EU–China Strategic Agenda 2020 presented below*:
 - Foreign and security policy,
 - Cooperation in trade and investments,
 - Connectivity, ICT and innovation,
 - Visa facilitation and increased flows of tourism; student mobility, academia and cultural cooperation (Schweisgut, H. in EU-CHINA, Relations: new directions, new priorities, 2016).

- Establishment of fundamentally new and sustainable financial institutions, such as the *New China-led financial institutions established – the New Development Bank (US \$50-100 bill.), the Contingent Reserve Facility (US \$ 100 bill.), the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank (US \$ 100 bill.) and the New Silk Road Fund (US \$ 40 bill.)*, (Chibber, A., 2017);
- If we conceptually *inter-combine the 5 sustainable pillars of the OBOR Initiative, i.e., policy communication, road connectivity, unimpeded trade, money circulation and cultural understanding, with the 6 sustainability pillars of the 16+1 China–CEE countries mechanisms, i.e. infrastructure, transport, investments, education, science and culture*, we can clearly identify that *in various EU member states of the OBOR initiative, the domestic country potential in the cooperative segments described above varies mainly due to the focal developmental policy tendencies, as well as to the objective obstacles to more intensive project developments that can generate higher added value, predominantly related to human resources potential;*
- If each and every category of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) is analysed from the view point of its national implication, we can identify that *their fundamental influence is in the segment of policy development -from institutional point of view- as well as in the modalities for financing new and advanced technology transfer; this clearly attracts attention to the need for higher and more intensive transfer of modern management, marketing, technology, research, and similar techniques, skills, abilities and expertise from China to CEE countries, in order for the latter to achieve sustainability following the implementation of each particular joint project.*

All of the above cooperative sustainability pathways have been taken into consideration in detailing the OBOR Initiative mechanism, which would be best illustrated through *current best practices for sustainable development*:

- *Of the 6 economic corridors which form an integral part of the OBOR Initiative, as well as of the contemporary Maritime Silk Road, 2 are related to Europe as a continent, namely the New Eurasia Land Bridge and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, of which the latter featured in the OBOR Initiative as concerning the inclusion of developing Balkan countries;*
- *Over the previous period of implementing the OBOR Initiative, Chinese enterprises, for instance in 2015, signed more than 4,000 project contracts in the 60 partner countries involved, the majority of which on a bilateral basis, amounting to 92.6 billion US\$ (Shah, 2016),*
- *The Chinese strategy concerning the expanding processes throughout Europe coincided with European Union plans to stimulate economy lagging behind in the wake of the global economy and financial crisis; besides, it aspires to deepen the single market with a new investment plan (EU, 2015), which, in fact, is in line with Chinese investment activities within the cooperating mechanism between China and CEE partner countries.*

Finally, it is evident from the entire analysis that *the overall intention of the China–CEE countries mechanism is to create and develop a joint sustainable developmental model for overall closer cooperation, especially through determining sectors of joint economic, social, educational, scientific, cultural, as well as environmental interests.*

Conclusion

Every business or institutional change initiative is expected to be a piece in the overall framework of integration of complementary changes, especially given the lack of sufficient resources in the majority of CEE countries, on the one hand, and the diversified capabilities in all fields of the entire social and environmental development, on the other.

Within the global sustainability framework, known as the Agenda for sustainable development 2030, and specifically articulated, through the Millennium development goals, as the broadest developmental pathway for each modality of inter-regional cooperation and integration and the application of the European Union Strategy for education and training, known as Strategy 2020, and comprising the main indicators for crucial developmental approaches in the most advanced European economies for the most significant success factor, i.e. human capital, the tendency for reinforcing the importance and applicative effects within the OBOR–CEE countries encounters several cooperative sustainability challenges. Some of them are the altered developmental models of the OBOR Initiative countries, especially the economic one, which may strategically shift the educational, research and environmental focus to sustainable practices largely relying on the cooperative model. This model may be highly beneficial due to the increased human capital value and may attempt to culturally validate the current need for increasing trust, respect, and confidence among culturally diversified environments.

The integrative potential for more intensified and sustained China–CEE relations indicates that the apparent Chinese tendency to be an active player on a global basis should be accompanied by enhanced regional cooperative mechanisms; the precise spheres for cooperation would largely differ within the main body of CEE countries, where it is perceived that the national economies have richer experience in project management models, particularly concerning infrastructure, energy, transportation, communication, finance, etc. For example, China is currently actively present in developing countries, dominantly with infrastructure investments, which would lead to several integrating cooperative tendencies, especially in transferring know-how, new business models, restructuring the portfolio of products or services, raising higher public awareness and responsibility in public-private cooperation, etc.

The deliverables expected from the proposed China–CEE cooperative developmental model, principally relate to establishing a clear relationship between the cooperative objectives and the cooperative outcomes, developing an experi-

ential cooperative model, a system approach for analysing, solving and evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of all sustainability programmes of cooperation, increasing mutual inter-sector developmental influence from advancements in distinctive investment fields, building sustained cooperative network partners, acquiring specific, competitive skills and experiences, etc. The overall cooperative capacity of the China-CEE countries mechanism lies in the promotion of local manufacturing industries and expanding markets, increased economic performance and productivity, lowered transactional costs, employment and welfare, regional connectivity, integration, trade facilitation, etc.

Finally, if we conceptually inter-combine the 5 sustainable pillars of the OBOR Initiative concerning policy communication, road connectivity, unimpeded trade, money circulation and cultural understanding, with the 6 sustainability pillars of the 16+1 China-CEE countries mechanism, i.e., infrastructure, transport, investments, education, science and culture, we can clearly identify that, in various EU member states of this initiative, domestic country potential in the cooperative segments described above varies mainly due to focused developmental policy tendencies, as well as to objective obstacles to more intensive project developments that can generate higher added value, predominantly due to human resources potential.

The Chinese strategy concerning the expanding processes throughout Europe coincided with the European Union plans to stimulate the economy lagging behind in the wake of the global economy and financial crisis, while it also aspires to deepen the single market with a new investment plan which, in fact, is in line with Chinese investment activities within the 16+1 mechanism between China and CEE partner countries.

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