



# Guide to Trade Fairs in China

**2025 REPORT**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

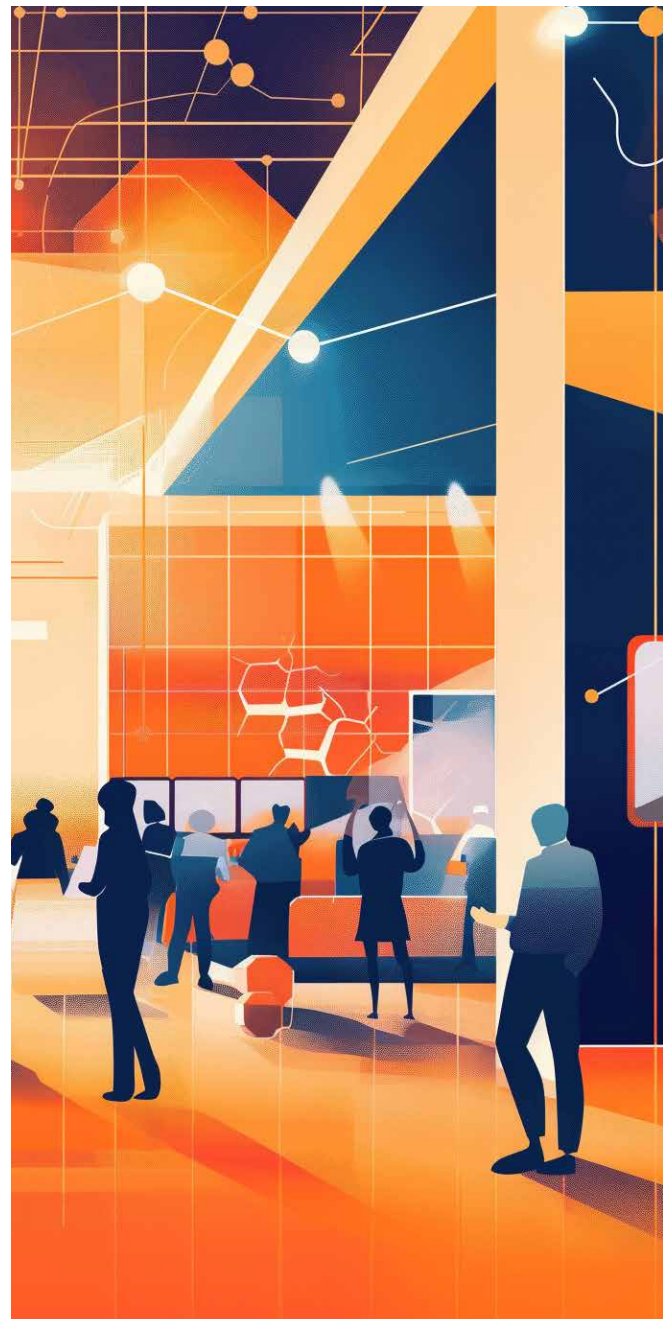
Without local resources operating on the ground in China, **participating in trade fairs in China remains an effective approach for EU SMEs to meet potential Chinese business partners**. However, without full preparation and a tailored strategy, the mere participation in a trade fair is unlikely to bring significant benefits to exhibitors in the short term. Besides, exhibitors may choose to participate in a trade fair for different reasons, including marketing and branding. Even the choice of the trade fair is a fundamental aspect that requires careful analysis and evaluation.

This report aims to provide EU SMEs with a comprehensive, up-to-date and practical overview of how to get fully prepared and maximise the benefits of participating in Chinese trade fairs. Specifically:

- The first chapter provides an **overview of China's exhibition industry**, especially its evolution since it was severely affected by the pandemic, as well as the main actors involved. A notable difference between China and the EU is the higher concentration of government actors among the midstream sector. Statistics on the number, sector and location of China's trade fairs are also provided.
- The second chapter provides **practical guidance for EU SMEs** on how to define goals and devise a strategy tailored for a specific trade fair. It also offers a series of tips for identifying the most appropriate Chinese trade fair, based on the different characteristics of each fair. Finally, it includes a series of **good practices** to follow before, during and after the trade fair, as well as concrete examples from EU SMEs.
- The third chapter, too, provides practical guidance for EU SMEs, but it does so **exclusively from the perspective of intellectual property**. In fact, trade fairs expose exhibitors to competitors and even entities with potentially malicious intent. This chapter, therefore, provides an overview of the main principles of China's IP protection system, common issues faced by EU SMEs, as well as **good practices for IP protection** to follow before, during and after the trade fair. A concrete example from an EU SME is also provided.

- Finally, the fourth chapter provides an **overview of major trade fairs in China** which are relevant for and popular among EU SMEs, in different sectors and locations.

All in all, trade fairs are a useful platform – but they should be seen as just one component of the broader China market entry strategy on the medium/long-term. Assessing the value of trade fairs participation merely on short-term economic indicators, without considering their contribution to branding and visibility, is not a suitable approach.



## 1. INTRODUCTION: CHINA'S CONVENTION AND EXHIBITION INDUSTRY

China's convention and exhibition industry has shown a steady growth over the years and a number of major Chinese trade fairs have gained global recognition, attracting every year thousands of overseas exhibitors and visitors.

The industry was severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, like elsewhere, but has now largely recovered. We however note a lower participation from foreign companies than before, although their presence is growing again.

### 1.1 CHINESE TRADE FAIRS: MAIN ACTORS, SECTORS AND REGIONS

Similar to other countries, China's exhibition industry is made out of **a range of actors and participants from downstream, midstream and upstream sectors**. Downstream actors are generally the exhibiting companies as well as exhibition agents. Midstream actors include the host of the event and the organisers. Upstream actors include service providers such as booth design and construction companies, equipment rental, logistics providers, etc.

**One of the main differences between China and the EU is the higher concentration of government actors among the midstream.** Generally, fair organisers are government departments (central government for high-level fairs or local government; often, both are involved). Their aim is for the fair to promote priority sectors among relevant players – private and public, domestic and foreign alike. They entrust a certain contractor, often (but not always) a state-owned company, to take care of the specific organisation of activities, but they **maintain a high degree of supervision and involvement**, e.g. in deciding which exhibitors can be allowed to join or in which exhibiting area they can be present. They also directly organise events featuring the participation of government representatives and foreign guests, such as conferences but also VIP tours of exhibitors. Therefore, identifying such players and understanding the influence they play on the entire fair will be extremely beneficial for foreign exhibitors, particularly those exhibiting innovative products.



European companies from any sectors will be able to find a number of relevant trade fairs in China. According to a list of 1,370 fairs taking place in China in 2023, formulated by CCPIT,<sup>1</sup> the largest number of trade fairs involve **machinery, equipment and tools** – including industrial machinery, agri-food machinery, pumps and valves, heating and cooling, etc). Following are **food and beverage** and **IT, communication equipment and electronics**.

In addition to sectoral trade fairs, there are a number of fairs which do not have a sector-specific focus. Rather, these focus on specific elements (e.g. imported products), broader product categories (e.g. consumer goods), multiple sectors (e.g. industry) or horizontal issues (e.g. trade in services). These are **usually large, national-level fairs organised by central government entities, and thus enjoy a strong reputation both domestically and overseas**. Prominent examples are the China International Import Expo (CIIE) taking place in Shanghai; the China (Beijing) International Fair for Trade in Services (CIFTIS); the China Import and Export Fair (Canton Fair); the China International Consumer Goods Expo taking place in Hainan; the China International Industry Fair (CIIF) taking place in Shanghai; the Western China International Fair taking place in Chengdu; etc. Some of these major fairs will be illustrated in detail in chapter 4 of this report.

According to a 2023 report from CCPIT, the **most active regions in terms of number of fairs hosted and organised** are Shanghai, Guangdong (half of which are in Shenzhen) and Beijing. Provincial capitals usually play a key role in each respective region. Some of them are gaining particular influence on the exhibition scene, such as Wuhan (60 fairs), Xi'an (47 fairs), Chengdu (44), Nanjing (41), and Shenyang (35). Two exceptions are Qingdao and Xiamen, which lead in their respective regions without being provincial capitals.

Such a large and diverse number of trade fairs may **make it hard for European companies to find the most appropriate trade fair to attend**. The next chapter will help European companies navigate the complex landscape of trade fairs in China.

***Did you know?***

There are also a number of **international fairs organisers active on the Chinese exhibition scene**. Through their China-based subsidiaries, these regularly host a number of trade fairs in the country, often consisting of local editions of globally renowned fairs. Examples are Messe Frankfurt, Messe Koeln, Messe Düsseldorf, Landesmesse Stuttgart, Hannover Milano Fairs, Bologna Fiere, France Comexposium Group, RAI Amsterdam, etc.

**DOWNSTREAM**

Exhibiting companies  
Exhibition agents  
...

**MIDSTREAM**

Event organiser  
Contractors  
Supporting units  
Fundors and sponsors

**UPSTREAM**

Service providers  
Booth design and construction  
Logistics providers  
...

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ccpit.org/image/1466402629390217218/e2d01f18b0cd46579f7b38bd99c2740a.pdf> (accessed: 27 Sept. 2025). For this report, the sectors included on the report have been adjusted and grouped by the EU SME Centre.

## 2. GET READY FOR THE SHOW

The choice of which Chinese trade fair to attend does not depend merely on the sector or the location of the event. Other key factors such as types of companies exhibiting (e.g. competitors? Partners? Manufacturers? etc.) and visitors attending (e.g. professional visitors? Government representatives? etc.) must be taken into account. At the end, **it all comes down to the exhibitor's goals and expectations.** This section provides a series of tips and outlines a set of good practices for European companies before, during and after participating to a trade fair in China.

### 2.1 DEFINE CLEAR GOALS AND A TAILORED STRATEGY

Participating in trade fairs in China remains an **effective approach for European companies expanding their business into the country.** This is true whether a company already has commercial activities on the ground or not, and regardless of the size of the company – SME or large multinational. Through trade fairs, companies may meet potential new customers as well as existing ones. They may develop a clear sense of the state of play of the market and their competitive advantage, by studying the types of products displayed by others and talking to visitors. They may also enhance their branding and company image by showcasing new products and organising ad hoc events, while engaging with media and public relations.

However, **merely participating in a trade fair is unlikely to bring significant tangible benefits to exhibitors in the short term.** For European SMEs, it is essential to take action and prepare a detailed plan in advance. The first step is to **set clear objectives and performance indicators** for the participation. Common ones include the following – often a combination of two or more is pursued:

#### OBJECTIVES

Meet potential new clients  
 Strengthen customer relations  
 Enhance networking activities  
 Gain market insights  
 Increase visibility, branding and PR  
 Sell products

#### KPIs

No. of effective leads obtained and followed up; agreements concluded within X months after the fair

No. of existing clients/consumers engaged; No. of contacts established with other exhibiting companies, fair organisers or government reps.

Business strategy / product optimised

No. of media representatives engaged; No. of new followers on social media; No. of engagement of social media posts; No. of attendees to event organised; etc.

Once the objectives and relevant indicators are identified, EU SMEs should **carefully plan their action plan and tailor their strategy for the specific fair.** Experience gained by the EU SME Centre shows that many exhibiting EU SMEs do not do so before the event, nor carefully tailor their strategy for the occasion. This encompasses all aspects from budgeting to human resources, products showcased and logistics, as well as marketing activities, IT support and protection of intellectual property rights. Key aspects to consider are, for instance:

- **Budgeting:** What is the budget available? Do you have enough resources and/or flexibility to cope with unexpected, last-minute changes? Are there any funding support available from your country and/or the European Union?
- **Human resources:** How many and which company representatives will attend (e.g. business development, sales manager and/or management)? Are local resources needed (e.g. hostesses, translators, technicians, etc.)?
- **Products:** Which products will you display? Is it the product with the highest potential in the Chinese market? Is it already available in China or does it need to be shipped from abroad? Are you aware of logistics and customs clearance procedures? Do you need technical support to transport or install it on

the premises? Does it need to use electricity? Do you need to use websites or applications based on servers hosted abroad? Does it expose your trade secrets?

- **Participation:** Are you participating as an individual exhibitor, designing and building your own booth (with a professional service provider or in-house resources)? Or are you joining a national pavilion organised by your country's representations?
- **Marketing:** Do you already have marketing materials tailored to the Chinese audience, do you need to transport them from abroad or can you print them locally? Do you already have accounts on popular Chinese social media and messaging platforms?
- **Organisation of events:** Do you plan to organise or participate in any events, such as workshops, tasting event, demonstrations, etc.? Do you already have the contacts to help you with the organisation, participation and dissemination?
- **Intellectual property protection:** Is your trademark registered in China? Are you aware of intellectual property risks associated to trade fair participation? (more details on IP rights protection will be provided in chapter 3 of this report).

Once the strategy is crafted, the next step is to implement it thoroughly during all the phases of the trade fairs – from preparation to the post-event follow up. Before that, however, **it is vital to ensure that the trade fair selected for participation is appropriate for reaching the objectives:** even the right strategy will fail in the wrong place.

## 2.2 SELECTING THE RIGHT TRADE FAIR

**Selecting the right trade fair to attend in China can be an arduous task**, especially for EU SMEs without a presence and knowledge of the market. Resource constraints and high costs of participation further exert pressure on SMEs to carefully select the trade fairs that best match their objectives. Based on the experience of the EU SME Centre in participating or promoting SME participation in Chinese trade fairs, here are some aspects to consider during the selection process.

### ELEMENTS TO CONSIDER FOR SELECTING TRADE FAIRS IN CHINA

#### 1. Nature: global vs local trade fair

A number of renowned global trade fairs in many sectors regularly host local editions in China. These normally attract higher-quality and more international trade-oriented participants and visitors.

*Examples are SIAL China (F&B, hosted in Shanghai and Shenzhen); Aquatech China (water, hosted in Shanghai); Automechanika Shanghai (automotive); bauma China (construction, hosted in Shanghai)...*

#### 2. Appeal: domestic vs international

Local trade fairs might have different appeals within China, e.g. targeting predominantly domestic exhibitors, or also international ones. The latter, usually, can be easily identified by the presence of wording such as 'international', 'global', 'world' etc in the name of the fair – *but even if so, this is not a guarantee of international audience!* Also consider if the organiser is a local firm or an international one.

#### 3. Influence and importance within China

Some trade fairs in China are widely considered as a must to attend by many exhibitors and visitors, and attract large crowds. Such fairs can be identified by looking at the numbers of editions organised / years of history; co-organisation by government departments and/or influential industry associations; keynotes delivered by VIPs; promotional activities in China and especially abroad; etc.

#### 4. Location and geographical scope

The most important trade fairs are usually held in first-tier cities or provincial capitals; they might attract exhibitors visitors from all over the country or predominantly from the neighbouring areas.

Sometimes, smaller trade fairs with a more focused geographical scope may be ideal for those



EU companies eyeing that particular Chinese region.

*Examples are fairs in Sichuan (not only Chengdu) and Chongqing which are gateways for China's Southwestern region; Shenyang for China's Northeast; and Xi'an for China's Northwest.*

### 5. National representation and experience

Many EU Member States (and other countries) regularly organise participation in certain trade fairs in China, through official country pavilions. Joining these initiatives may increase visibility and weight while reducing costs – *EU or national-level funding may even be available for SMEs.*

### 6. Figures from past editions

Reputable trade fairs have official websites in English, disclosing figures from past editions such as number and names of exhibitors (are there international companies, leading players, competitors?), numbers and types of visitors (professional visitors vs random visitors, from which sector/region?), net exhibiting areas, level of satisfaction of visitors and exhibitors, etc.

*These figures are useful to assess if the type of exhibitors and visitors are aligned with your strategy and your target audience.*

### 7. Talk to people!

It is wise to reach out to professionals who have attended the fair in the past, to gain better insights and actual feedback. Success stories are often showcased on the trade fair's website.

Consider reaching out informally during networking events or even social media – *but beware of competitors potentially dissuading you to attend.* At the same time, even without an official national representation, it is still recommended to contact your country's embassy / chamber of commerce in China.

### 8. Side events and support services

Are there side events, meetings, conferences hosted during the fair, and is it possible to participate? Such events increase visibility and awareness. At the same time, does the trade fair organiser offer support services such as visa, translation, business matchmaking, logistics, sponsorship? *These can be valuable (though costly) especially for exhibitors without contacts on the ground.*

### 9. Timing

The time of the year of the exhibition is also an important factor. Are there other major commitments taking up your resources? Does the fair precede or follow major holidays during which handling logistics might be more challenging?

### 10. Political considerations

It is not uncommon that exhibitors from a certain country/region are particularly welcome (or unwelcome) following developments at the political level with China (e.g. new cooperation agreement signed, etc).

*Leveraging these developments is recommended as more favourable treatment and visibility opportunities can be obtained.*

More specifically regarding **national representations / country pavilions**, EU SMEs may benefit from organisational support from their home countries by joining official business delegations or country pavilions at trade fairs. Exhibitors are provided with booth planning and design "under one roof" (e.g. made in Italy, made in Germany, Good Idea Slovakia, etc.) as well as with extra services at convenient rates, such as translation, business matchmaking, logistics, organisation/participation in side events etc. In some cases, **direct financial support may also be offered by the EU Member State** as part of its business internationalisation activities.

It is essential to remember that **the above elements are highly subjective for each exhibitor**. Some may prefer large-scale, national-level trade fairs; others might find these too dispersive and not ideal for small brands as they are likely to be shadowed by large multinational companies attending. Some companies might opt exclusively for sector-specific trade fairs as the relevance of exhibitors and visitors is high; others might prefer general / cross-sector fairs as they give more visibility. Some companies might prefer to join official country pavilions as they get more support; others might not find it ideal as they will be grouped together with competitors from the same country. Therefore, **the choice of the right trade fair depends entirely on the specific objectives and the strategy of the exhibitor**.

The European Union itself might also provide funding support or co-funding. The most prominent example is the EU's Research Executive Agency (REA) which provides **funding for agri-food promotional activities in non-EU countries**. A detailed introduction of this funding scheme, including beneficiaries, application process and requirements, is included as part of a recent report on wine produced by the EU SME Centre: <https://www.eusmecentre.org.cn/publications/chinas-wine-markets-drivers-technical-requirements-and-opportunities-for-eu-producers/>.

**Other EU-funded initiatives might also promote the participation of EU SMEs in trade fairs in China.** Support provided usually covers organisational, logistics and promotion aspects – though direct funding is generally not provided. Examples of such initiatives are the **EU SME Centre**, as well as the **China IP SME Helpdesk**, the EU-China Energy Cooperation Platform, the China-Europe Water Platform, etc.

## 2.3 GOOD PRACTICES

### BEFORE THE EVENT

Do your homework and come fully prepared:

- Prepare / update your company information
- Communicate on your participation
- Plan the logistics
- Understand the market entry requirements
- Familiarise yourself with Chinese business etiquette

### DURING THE EVENT

Ensure that you are professionally represented:

- Train staff and supporting resources
- Treat visitors respectfully
- Showcase products, organise events
- Prepare small gifts for visitors and leads
- Visit other booths

### AFTER THE EVENT

Follow up and treasure feedback received:

- Follow up on potential leads
- Communicate on your participation
- Improve your product / China strategy!

## BEFORE THE EVENT – Do your homework and come fully prepared

At this stage, preparation and communication are fundamental. The goal is to attract and interest as many qualified visitors and potential/existing partners as possible. The sooner the process starts, the better – but ideally you should start at least two months before the event. Good practices at this stage include:

- **Reach out to regular customers and prospective clients.** Inform them that you are attending the trade fair, clearly specifying the exact position and number of your booth. Use this occasion to inform them about the products showcased and initiatives organised (e.g. product demonstration organised, tasting, small gifts, etc). Ways to do so include social media activity, website update, newsletters, as well as direct mailing – the most important thing is be creative and effective! It is also recommended to inform your embassy / national chamber of commerce in China for potential support or even leads.



**To make your booth more appealing,** give-aways can be very effective in raising curiosity – especially if used in combination, e.g. one half of the gift sent via email before the event, another part to be collected in person at your booth, another part given as a prize for further action (e.g. following the exhibitor’s social media account), etc.

- **Learn market entry requirements in advance.** A common mistake done by EU SMEs attending a trade fair in China is to go without knowing in detail the requirements for their product to be sold in China. Many products – especially certain food categories, health food, cosmetics, but also medical devices and industrial products – may require prior registration/approval with relevant Chinese authorities before they can be sold in the Chinese market. The process may be costly and time-consuming, sometimes even exceeding 1 year!



**Knowing market entry requirements,** and having already initiated (or, even better, completed) such procedures, will show to Chinese visitors your commitment to the Chinese market. In this case they will be more willing to discuss cooperation potential!

- **Create / update website and social media accounts** – better still, in Chinese. Your company’s website and social media channels are the business cards of your company. Before going to a trade fair, all the information regarding your company, projects, clients, awards and certification obtained, as well as products displayed in the fair, must be updated and translated in Chinese. The same applies to social media channels. However, EU SMEs must keep firmly in mind that, in China, navigating websites is not very popular; using Chinese social media channels is. For newcomers, the immediate step is to **create a company account on WeChat**, and transpose content from the website or other social media. Other platforms such as Xiaohongshu and Douyin are also recommended, although WeChat is the one to be prioritised.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, however, you should be aware of the **risks of disclosing too much sensitive information** (more details on this aspect are provided in chapter 3 of this report).



**Localisation, not just translation.** Solely translating your information into Chinese might be enough for local visitors to understand your company – however, it will not impress them! It is recommended to work with localisation professionals to fully align with the different tastes, ways to read contents and express concepts popular among Chinese people.

- **Arrange the best organisation for your booth,** in terms of visuals (attractive booth design, leveraging on visual material such as videos, images, as well as technology such as virtual reality and augmented reality) and products showcased (Chinese visitors

<sup>2</sup> For an overview of China’s popular platforms, especially for e-commerce or marketing purposes, see a report published by the EU SME Centre in March 2023: <https://www.eusmecentre.org.cn/publications/selling-to-china-via-cross-border-e-commerce/>.

like to see physical products, prototypes or even small-scale models; just having leaflets hardly works. But beware of IP risks!). Personnel is also a key aspect: senior representatives and management are preferred as it gives “face”, ideally supported by Chinese language speakers; other auxiliary staff such as technicians will also be needed in case of bigger booths and product demonstrations.



**Consider logistics requirements for displaying your products.** Shipping a product from the EU to China involves several steps, including customs clearance as well as storage and transportation to the fair. If mistakes are done, the risk is that the product(s) will not arrive on time for the fair. At the same time, if products have specific requirements (e.g. temperature, humidity, electricity, internet access, etc), this should be arranged in advance as such facilities might not be available on the spot).

- **Consider advertising options.** Consider promoting your attendance at the trade fair on various internet platforms or websites, journals, trade magazines, newspapers, etc. It is essential to remember that many internet platforms commonly used in the EU are not popular or even banned in China, therefore the right website or platform used in China in that sector must be identified.



**Trade fairs organisers usually offer paid advertising or sponsorship options** for exhibitors, granting them increased visibility options for a fee. This include better location of the booth, visit by VIPs, company logo and description featured on the trade fair’s website, social media and official catalogue, etc.

- **Familiarise yourself with Chinese business etiquette.** Like many other countries around the world, Chinese culture has its own business etiquette. Basically every aspect of social interactions in the Chinese business context must follow certain rules and procedures. Although it is generally understood that

foreigners can make mistakes, following such rules is always appreciated by Chinese visitors and will certainly help you to make a good impression.<sup>3</sup>

### **DURING THE EVENT - Ensure that you are professionally represented**

The day of the show finally arrives. You have to put in practice all the preparatory work done, professionally and consistently throughout the days of the fair. Good practices at this stage include:

- **Train your staff.** The people present on the ground in your booth are the face and voice of your company. You should train all the staff present, including supporting resources such as translators or hostesses, on the objectives set for the exhibition and the strategy devised to reach them. Explain also the values of your brand as well as the technical features and strengths of your product, what to say in what circumstances. Ensure alignment with both Western and Chinese business etiquette. This will ensure that information on your company and products is effectively and professionally conveyed. Be ready to provide support when dealing with potential leads.



**Do not leave the booth unattended.** Always leave at least one person in the booth, especially if you are showcasing technological products, to prevent potential IP rights infringements. Ideally, staff in the booth should be able to speak Chinese. Take turns to go the restroom and eat meals.

- **Take every visitor seriously and professionally.** You never know who you are dealing with: your interlocutor may know other contacts that could be potentially interested in your products. Sometimes, they might be just collecting information materials on behalf of others. If possible, prepare small gifts for visitors – at least for relevant ones.

<sup>3</sup> Some aspects of Chinese business etiquette are available in a dedicated EU SME Centre report: <https://www.eusmecentre.org.cn/publications/negotiating-and-dealing-with-chinese-business-partners/>.



Be aware that **many visitors will not yield worthwhile results**. For instance, in the case of curious visitors only interested in product tasting or gifts; in the case of competitors to learn about your products; or in the case of visitors with potentially malicious intentions involving IP rights (more details in chapter 3).

- **Ask visitors to follow your company's (Chinese) social media accounts, and exchange WeChat on the spot - but take notes.** When engaging with visitors, kindly ask them to follow your company's social media accounts to get more information, access promotions or simply stay connected. For potential leads, you should go one step beyond and directly add the visitor's WeChat account to establish a more direct and personal relationship.



Consider using **small gifts** as an incentive for visitors to follow your social media account. When exchanging business cards or adding WeChat, it is strongly advised to write down **notes/comments** on the visitor; otherwise you might just forget the visitor or find it difficult later to retrieve contact information.

- **Organise events at your booth to attract attention**, both from visitors and media representatives. These are the most effective approaches to gain attention and generate social media buzz. Such events must be widely publicised before and during the fair to maximise attendance, for instance on social media, by distributing ad hoc leaflets or inviting visitors to attend, or in coordination with the fair organisers.



Examples include the launch of new products, cooking classes, product testing or demonstration, or participating in thematic discussions or technical workshops hosted during the fair. In most cases, you will **need support (and approval) from the fair organisers**.

- **Take as many pictures and videos as possible**, especially if one of the objectives of your trade fair participation relates to marketing and branding. You will need pictures of key moments to be published on social media both during and after the fair, e.g. organisation of product tasting or demonstration, delivery of keynotes, handshakes with visitors, etc.
- **Visit the fair and the other booths.** Trade fairs are the perfect place to gain a detailed picture of the competitive landscape from your sector. Review the exhibition catalogue and prepare to stroll the fair in advance.



Try also to meet in person the **organisers of the fair and give a gift** – possibly of higher value compared to the gifts given to others. Organisers are very concerned with receiving positive feedback, and are often keen to facilitate connections with other contacts!

#### **AFTER THE EVENT - Follow up and treasure feedback received**

Participating to trade fairs does not end with the closure of the event. In fact, the real business begins only at this stage. There are at least four fundamental actions to do at this stage:

- **Follow up on potential leads met during the fair.** Respond professionally to questions received, send a thank you card possibly with a product sample, schedule follow-up meetings (ideally lunch or dinner) or company visits, both in China and in your home country (but beware of IP risks. see chapter 3 of this report). At the same time, act quickly: leads might forget you or lose interest.



Remember that visitors might have engaged with dozens of exhibitors and **might not immediately remember you**. Try to highlight something particular or even personal that emerged during the conversation.

- **Respond politely and professionally also to visitors that do not immediately look as potential leads.** Although time-consuming,

this will make a good impression on them. You never know who you are dealing with. The person might know other contacts that could be potentially interested in your products. In China, word of mouth is extremely important and effective!

- **Communicate your successful participation on social media.** Prepare clips or pictures to disseminate on social media, especially highlighting key moments of the event such as products launched, events organised, potential clients met, etc. Highlight positive aspects, thank all the visitors, and include a general invitation to meet you at your next planned event, such as another trade fair or conference in China or in another country. This should be done both on international social media as well as Chinese social media (in Chinese language).
- **Treasure the feedback received and optimise your China strategy.** Last, but certainly not least, trade fairs offer precious insights on the opportunities and challenges for your product in the Chinese market. The most valuable result is to analyse and incorporate the feedback received by visitors engaged, or observed from other booths, into your product and/or overall China strategy. For instance, adjustments to the product should be considered (e.g. its composition, as well as design and packaging); market entry approaches reassessed (e.g. focus on a specific region or retail channel, general trade vs cross-border e-commerce; etc). You should also improve your communication messaging and enhance the attractiveness of your promotion in Chinese.

## 2.4 EXAMPLES FROM EU SMES

This section provides a number of recent mistakes from EU SMEs that have negatively affected their participation in a trade fair. These **could have been avoided** had the good practices listed above been followed.

### SETTING GOALS AND KPIs

Unrealistic expectations from participating in a trade fair

In 2023, an EU SME participated in a business mission in China organised by its national business support organisation. The representative of the SME who participated was instructed to “absolutely come back with a business deal concluded”. They failed.

**Problem:** The representative received positive feedback on the product’s prospect in the Chinese market, but they “only” managed to obtain a number of qualified leads – nothing tangible as instructed. This might impact how the SME evaluates its participation in the trade fair, and more in general their commitment to the Chinese market.

**Explanation:** Participating to trade fairs in China is a useful approach for EU SMEs to enter the Chinese market. But, alone, this is not enough: continuous efforts and investment are required. Additionally, business collaborations in China normally take longer to grow: a mid- to long-term perspective is required!

### LOGISTICS CONSIDERATIONS

Permission for temporary import of products into China

At least two EU SMEs have recently participated in a trade fair in China, one in the industrial sector and the other in the F&B sector. However, both encountered issues during customs clearance once the product samples arrived in China, which were not solved on time for the trade fair.

**Problem:** In the first case, the product had not obtained the China Compulsory Certification\* mandatory for that product. Eventually, the producer managed to get the product cleared (against a deposit and a promise to re-export it out of China within six months), but it was delivered only at the end the trade fair. In the second case, the product had not

completed the mandatory CIFER registration\*\* for imported F&B products. Even though it was clearly marked as “sample”, the customs did not proceed to clearance and the product was ultimately destroyed.

**Explanation:** Importing into China foreign products (even samples) not already available in the market must follow specific requirements and procedures and might require longer to be cleared. Prior coordination with the trade fair organiser is fundamental as they normally assist with such services. Furthermore, especially for F&B products, even samples, successful completion of GACC/CIFER registration is frequently requested.

\* Detailed guidelines on compliance requirements for industrial products and consumer goods were produced by the EU SME Centre, see: <https://www.eusmecentre.org.cn/publications/china-market-access-and-compliance-requirements-for-consumer-goods-2022-update/>.

\*\* Detailed guidelines on China's mandatory GACC/CIFER registration for imported F&B products were produced by the EU SME Centre, see: <https://www.eusmecentre.org.cn/publications/guidelines-on-gacc-cifer-registration-for-european-fb-establishments-2024-update/>.

## UNDERSTANDING MARKET ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

### Prior completion of GACC registration for F&B products

In 2023, an EU milk producer attended one of China's popular trade fairs in the F&B sector. However, it had not completed – and only recently initiated – the mandatory GACC/CIFER registration for its product.

**Problem:** Although it managed to get the product temporarily imported into China for display and tasting at the trade fair, the milk producer was not able to find qualified leads of Chinese importers. The most frequent feedback received was that they needed to complete the GACC/CIFER registration before any concrete discussion on collaboration could begin.

**Explanation:** GACC/CIFER registration for dairy products (and other 18 categories of so-called “high-risk” F&B products) requires several months to be completed. At the same time, there are many uncertainties in the process which might even lead to rejection. This is a risk that most Chinese importers are not willing to take.



## 3. SECURE YOUR INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

Trade fairs provide companies with the unique opportunity of showcasing their latest products and innovations to a vast audience of local and international visitors, agents, and potential clients. However, **exposure to competitors and entities with malicious intent is also substantial**, potentially leading to intellectual property (IP) risks or even loss of IP, especially when the SMEs have not yet taken any steps to protect their IP in China. **Developing an IP strategy for attending trade fairs is therefore crucial.** Through precise steps to take before, during, and after the event, SMEs can successfully manage to minimise their exposure to possible IP-related risks and effectively secure their own key intangible assets.

### 3.1 MAIN PRINCIPLES AND CONSIDERATIONS OF IP PROTECTION IN CHINA

SMEs should regard IP as their main business asset and take steps to protect it by registering it when internationalising their business to China. IP protection in target markets is important because:

- **Securing IP provides SMEs with exclusive rights to exploit their inventions/innovative ideas in China.** By protecting IP through registration in China, the owner will obtain exclusive rights to commercialising their innovative ideas/products in the Chinese market – while forbidding others from doing so. For example, patents can be requested for new inventions (e.g. a product or a process), granting the exclusive right for 20 years to produce and sell that invention in China, forbidding any competitors from doing so. Similarly, a trademark right allows exclusive branding of products while forbidding others from using the same brand for the same or similar products and thereby taking advantage of your investments into branding.
- **IP attracts partners and investors.** IP increases the attractiveness of a company to partners/investors in China, because it increases value. Partners/investors are more likely to invest in a company with IP ownership, as the company has the exclusive right to producing and selling the product/invention in China, while taking actions if others try to copy it. As Chinese enterprises are becoming increasingly IP-aware, many would not risk investing in companies that have not taken steps to securing their IP rights in China as they could reasonably expect many issues ahead.
- **IP helps monetising products and ideas.** Once IP rights in China are secured, the owner will have more options for monetising the product/idea. For example, patents, trademarks and design rights may be sold or licensed to other companies for a royalty fee. Licensing is only possible once IP is effectively registered in China. Furthermore, many Chinese distributors require companies to have a registered trademark or patent because of the risks involved with unprotected IP.
- **Securing IP rights allows owners to take action against infringements.** An IP owner may discover that their product has been copied in China and sold at a lower price, thus losing market share. As a patent or a trademark owner, companies can take action against the infringer by either suing them in court and be compensated for losses, or by initiating administrative actions against them to stop the infringement. However, such actions are possible only if the IP has been effectively registered in China.
- **Securing IP rights in China prevents bad faith IP registrations by others.** While the Chinese authorities have taken numerous measures to fight bad faith IP registrations in China, these unfortunately remain relatively commonplace. Malicious entities in China may register the trademark of a foreign company with the intention of selling it back to the original rights holder at an inflated price. China functions under the first-to-file system (more details below): the first person filing an application to register a trademark in China is granted rights to that mark. **It is very easy for the Chinese entities to be the first ones to register a trademark in China.** Trademarks registered in bad faith might significantly complicate a company's market entry in China, as the first step will be to fight against that bad faith registration – which is costly and time consuming, while



positive results not always guaranteed. It is thus extremely important that IP rights are registered in China as soon as a possible future market entry is being planned.

Understanding the below **fundamental principles of IP** can help you devise your IP strategy for China market entry, including participation at trade fairs.

### TERRITORIALITY

IP is territorial: the types of IP registered by a company abroad or in the EU (EU trademark or EU patent) will not automatically be valid in China. **You will need to register your IP in China in order to have it protected there.**

Entering the China market without proper IP protection, unfortunately, is a guarantee for failure since IP theft, counterfeiting and bad faith registrations are still commonplace in China.

### REGISTRATION

Patents, trademarks and industrial designs **must be registered in China to receive full protection.** Unregistered IPs do not receive protection and are thus free for everyone to use.\* For copyright, although it arises automatically, in practice Chinese authorities still require a copyright registration certificate to commence enforcement proceedings in case of a dispute. Trade secrets are the only form of IP in China that do not require registration.

*\* While well-known trademarks that are unregistered do receive protection, it is extremely complicated for an SME to reach the status of a well-known trademark in China.*

### FIRST-TO-FILE

The first person to file an application to register a piece of IP in China will be granted rights to that piece of IP. **This can lead to bad faith IP registrations by Chinese entities.**

While this mostly concerns trademarks, it is not uncommon to see bad faith patents (abnormal patent applications), industrial designs or copyright registrations. Prompt IP registration by the rights holder can prevent bad faith IP registrations.

### LOCAL PECULIARITIES

While China is a signatory to most international IP conventions, **there are some important local principles to consider to avoid the risk of inadequate protection.**

For example, in case of trademarks, China further divides the international Nice classification into sub-classes: it is essential to register a trademark in the correct subclass in China. Another example is that China does not provide protection for unregistered designs: design patents function under the rule of absolute novelty.

It is thus recommended to consult with IP professionals knowledgeable in China's laws and regulations to avoid the risk of insufficient coverage of protection. Further information about the differences between the Chinese IP system and the European IP System can be obtained from a **dedicated guide produced by the China IP SME Helpdesk.**<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/0a06be6b-ca5f-11eb-84ce-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-214492875>.

## 3.2 COMMON ISSUES FACED BY EU SMES AT TRADE FAIRS

Below are some common scenarios of IP issues that EU SMEs may face when attending trade fairs in China.

### BAD FAITH TRADEMARK REGISTRATION after attending a trade fair in China

Trade fairs allow companies to test the Chinese market to assess the potential of their product. However, many EU SMEs attending trade fairs in China do not yet have a tailored China market entry strategy and simply wish to better understand the market for their products, so they end up attending trade fairs without having registered their trademark in China.

**Problem:** At some point in the future, an EU company might be ready to enter the Chinese market, but their efforts are blocked as someone has already registered their trademark in China. In the worst-case scenario, the SME may find itself being sued for trademark infringement by the Chinese entity that had pre-empted the trademark registration; or in another scenario, the products of the SME might be detained by the China Customs because the SME is not actually the owner of the trademark in China.

**Consequences:** While there are ways to overcome bad faith trademark registrations (e.g. administrative actions including opposition; three-year non-use cancellation and invalidation; buying back the mark from the Chinese entity; rebranding, etc), these are costly.

### IP INFRINGEMENTS spotted during a trade fair

It is not uncommon for SMEs to encounter IP infringements at trade fairs, where malicious entities have copied their products and sometimes selling counterfeits bearing the SMEs' trademarks.

**Problem:** In an often encountered scenario, the SME is in the process of patenting an invention previously only displayed in Europe – yet it discovers copies of that same invention being displayed at a trade fair

in China. Design infringements are another common issue: infringers either copy the whole product design or only key elements, to benefit from the association with the original product and thus confusing consumers. In some cases, infringers may even display the product catalogues, instruction manuals or pictures of SMEs' products, trying to create associations with high-quality European brands and confuse the consumers. Finally, finding infringing products on the target market after the trade fair is another common issue, especially for SMEs that had not yet registered their IP in the target market.

**Consequences:** Leaving infringements unaddressed will only encourage further infringements as well as damage your company's market share, profits or reputation amongst the consumers. It is thus recommended to address the IP infringements discovered during or after the trade fair, even if you only start collecting evidence for future legal actions.

### LOSS OF NOVELTY for patenting new technologies

During trade fairs, companies are often displaying prototypes and new cutting-edge technology that is under development, for attracting more potential partners or simply for marketing purposes. Some of that technology may have not yet been patented.

**Problem:** Displaying a new technology in such a way that its innovative elements are clearly visible and have been documented in some manner (such as photos) may lead to a loss of novelty, and ultimately prevent the SME from obtaining a patent for that product in China due to strict novelty rules in the country. Even if the patent is obtained, it may subsequently be vulnerable to invalidation, especially by competitors.

**Consequences:** China's patent law offers a six-month grace period after the invention has been displayed at a trade fair, within which novelty is still ensured and thus patent applications may still be submitted. However, it is essential that SMEs carefully review and consider the materials displayed and distributed at a trade fair.

## LOSS OF TRADE SECRETS when negotiating with potential clients

Trade fairs increase the risk of potential disclosures of trade secrets. A common scenario is the absence of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) prepared in advance, to be signed by partners met at the fair. Fearing to lose a potential business opportunity, the SME may decide to move on with negotiations, thus disclosing information without an NDA in place.

**Problem:** In case the business deal does not materialise, the counterparts met could use the information obtained from the SME in their own benefit, leaving the SME with virtually no recourse. In other cases, untrained sales representatives/employees may inadvertently disclose trade secrets while introducing companies' newest products and projects to possible buyers/business partners.

**Consequences:** While China's Anti-Unfair Competition Law provides remedies for companies whose trade secrets have been maliciously leaked, it is only available if the company has taken steps to protect their trade secrets. Thus, it is vital to sign NDAs with potential business partners and properly instruct your employees to safeguard trade secrets.

**Remember!** Malicious entities often scout trade fairs for companies that might plan to enter the China market. It is strongly recommended to register and secure IP rights in China – along other preventive measures described in the next section – before attending a trade fair to avoid running into issues that will negatively affect your future entry into the market.



### 3.3 GOOD PRACTICES

BEFORE THE EVENT	DURING THE EVENT	AFTER THE EVENT
<p>Ensure that your IP is protected in China:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do an IP audit and devise a protection strategy</li> <li>• Register your IP in China</li> <li>• Examine the IP terms of the exhibitor contract</li> <li>• Be aware of the risks of displaying products</li> <li>• Prepare NDAs and train your staff</li> </ul>	<p>Know your rights and options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit the trade fair during set-up phase to identify potential infringers</li> <li>• Collect any evidence of infringement</li> <li>• Consider filing a complaint onsite</li> <li>• ...</li> </ul>	<p>Keep investigating or monitoring infringements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verify if the infringer ceased its conduct</li> <li>• Bring the evidence to the legal dept. / lawyers</li> <li>• Keep monitoring the market to identify future copycats / infringements</li> </ul>

#### BEFORE THE EVENT – Secure your IP for full protection and enforcement in China

A sound preparation prior to the fair is essential to secure protection of IP rights – as well as their enforcement in case of infringement. It is highly recommended that EU SMEs follow these good practices before attending trade fairs in China:



You may start your IP audit by using the **China IP SME Helpdesk's IP Diagnostic Tool** – it will help you analyse your level of preparedness and knowledge in IP and identify the relevant aspects which you may need further information on!

- **Identify and register your key IP assets before exhibiting at the fair, and devise an IP protection strategy.** An IP audit can help you identify that types of IP assets you own, as well as the measures needed and the gaps for protecting those assets. Registering the IP rights in China is an easy and relatively cheap process. You should also engage with IP professionals knowledgeable in China's IP laws and regulations, to know how to act in case infringements identified at the fair – e.g. take enforcement at the trade fair, or use it as an opportunity to gather evidence and build a case at a later stage.
- **Have all the required documents prepared.** You should ensure that you bring with you all your IP ownership certificates such as trademark, patent, and copyright certificates and your business certificates. It is also advisable to have a notarised and authenticated Power of Attorney (POA) in favour of the person in charge of enforcing your IP rights at the trade fair.<sup>5</sup>
- **Know where the relevant IP enforcement authorities are.** Visit the exhibition's website or directly contact the organiser to verify whether there is a complaint centre in the fair, and where it is located. According to the relevant regulations,<sup>6</sup> trade fairs lasting more

<sup>5</sup> On 7 November, 2023, the Apostille Convention came into force in China, eliminating the requirement of the legalisation of documents through embassies and consulates. However, as the rules for the enforcement institutions accepting the Apostille have not yet been officially released (as of January 2024), it is recommended to check with the relevant Chinese institutions in advance about their specific requirements.

<sup>6</sup> See the *Guidelines for the Protection of IPR during Exhibitions*: [https://www.gov.cn/zhengce/zhengceku/2022-07/27/content\\_5703113.htm](https://www.gov.cn/zhengce/zhengceku/2022-07/27/content_5703113.htm) (accessed: 28 Sept. 2025).

than three days are required to provide a complaint centre on the premises. In case the fair is shorter, it is advisable to check if local enforcement authorities, such as the Administration for Market Regulation, the Public Security Bureau, or the Technical Supervision Bureau, will be present at the fair.



Cooperate with other firms, or **contact the embassy or national chamber of commerce of your country in China**, as well as any other relevant entities, in case the fair organisers show little support.

- **Read carefully all the terms of the exhibitor contract relevant to IP protection.** Become familiar with the relevant procedures and do not hesitate to contact the organiser for any further information.
- **Research the list of participants** provided by the organisers and try to identify known, past, or suspected infringers.
- **Be aware of what you display to avoid loss of novelty.** Review and consider what materials you are displaying and distributing, especially if they relate to new technologies or products. Remember, displaying products at trade fairs can – but not in all circumstances – constitute an act of publication, which may affect the novelty value and hence future patentability.



**Any disclosure could destroy novelty**, as the rule is that patentable products need to be kept secret and safe until a patent application for it is officially filed. Check with your lawyer if you are unsure of what constitutes ‘publication’.

- **Prepare non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) and confidentiality agreements** for employees to sign prior to the participation, and effectively train them on what can and what should not be disclosed about sensitive business information in public places during the trade fair. You should also instruct your business negotiators to sign NDAs with potential business partners before disclosing information during the negotiations.



Work closely with your marketing or business development teams to ensure that **no sensitive information is disclosed in written materials or any other channels.**

## DURING THE EVENT – Know your rights and options

Once at the trade fair, it is crucial to maintain a proactive attitude. Good practices at this stage include:

- **Visit the trade fair during the set-up phase** and try to identify those companies whose behaviour appears suspicious. If possible, have one of your employees visit the booths of other exhibitors during the trade fair to identify potential infringements.



**Infringers usually follow common patterns:** they seldom display their products, they have learned to avoid attention, and usually deal with their own customers outside of the fair.

- **Show IP ownership where possible and appropriate**, by marking your products with patent numbers, trademark as well as copyright symbols. Beware that showing ownership of IP rights that have not been registered in China, is considered as misleading and against the law. You should only show IP ownership when you have IP registered in China.



Consider referring to your national representations in China or industry association in case of absence of such provisions. Partnering up with others could increase your influence on the organisers to secure appropriate actions against infringers!

- **Collect any sort of evidence that can help identify suspect infringers**, including business cards, brochures, pictures, and any other materials. If you later want to use the evidence to prove infringement, the evidence needs to be notarised on the spot by a Chinese notary public. It is not uncommon for infringers to provide business cards with different company names but an identical mobile phone number, or to refuse or object

to picture taking. Along with other signs, this evidence might help you identify possible infringers, but only if their authenticity is not questionable.

- **Localise the IP complaint centre as soon as possible, and understand how to file a complaint – if needed.** It is advisable to contact the relevant IP authorities to make yourself known and discuss with them specific issues that may apply to that fair. In the situation that you do not need to conduct further investigation into the infringer, or the infringer is a past infringer (with official decision or judgment to prove), it is recommended to file a complaint with the IP complaint centre.

#### How to file a complaint at a trade fair in China

1. Reach the complaint centre and fill in the related forms (in some cases there could be both a Chinese and an English version).
2. Expose and discuss your case with the IP officer present.
3. The IP officer will then examine your case to ensure the validity of your IP rights and whether the documentation provided is complete.
4. If your complaint is considered valid, the infringer will then be informed at their booth by the IP officer.
5. The alleged infringer will be given a certain amount of time to present their defence, depending on the duration of the fair and the local administrative IP rights department. Filing the complaint as soon as possible is therefore vital (but only if you consider taking action onsite).
6. If the alleged infringers fail in responding to the complaint in the given time, the organiser, in agreement with the IP officer, can proceed in ordering the infringer to remove or cover the infringed product according to the terms contained in the exhibitors' contract.

However, **filing a complaint at a trade fair may not always be the best option for you to enforce your rights**, for instance in the following situations: if your IP rights in China are not entirely in order; if the case of infringement is arguable; if you have not yet persevered the evidence by the notarisation; or the IP claim desks do not have the qualified expertise to make a decision on infringement at the trade fair. Consulting an IP expert before taking enforcement action is always recommended.

#### AFTER THE EVENT – keep investigating or monitoring infringements

Good practices to follow after the trade fair depend on the strategy that was followed during the fair itself. For instance:

- In case action was taken during the trade fair against an infringer, it is necessary to actively follow up with the relevant authorities and conduct further investigation, to assess whether the infringer has actually ceased its conduct.



**Only notarised evidence will meet formal evidentiary requirements** in most of the enforcement actions in China.

In an onsite trade fair, you can consider to appoint a notary public to proceed with the notarisation purchase; if the trade fair is taking place via online channels, use the website notarisation to preserve the evidence.

- If no actions were taken during the event, but evidence of possible cases of infringement was gathered, it should be immediately reported to your legal or IP department, or consult with a lawyer to decide whether and how to proceed in enforcing your IP rights.
- In case no infringements were encountered, it is important to **keep monitoring the market in case new copycats/infringers appear in the coming months**. Sometimes, these may emerge in other trade fairs in the future.

## 3.4 CASE STUDIES FROM EU SMES

### 3.4.1 Trade secret protection

A Spanish SME producing agriculture and farming equipment wanted to attend an agro-industry trade fair in China, i.e. one of the most important events in the sector for whole Asia. The SME had invested millions in developing a new model of tractor, expecting to gain a lot of attention from potential buyers. The tractor not only had a new design; most importantly, substantial improvements had been made to the engine allowing for lower fuel consumption. Thus, the new tractor could increase the working power at a lower cost.

The SME, highly aware of the importance of IP, **had protected most of the tractor's intellectual property rights – except the new engine, for which they had not yet filed an invention patent application.** The engine was the main competitive advantage of the tractor, and the SME did not want to risk losing patent rights due to loss of novelty, as it could be the case after exhibiting unpatented technology or design at an international fair. While China's *Patent Law* provides a grace period of six months for filing patent applications for inventions “exhibited for the first time at an international exhibition sponsored or recognised by the Chinese Government”, the SME was not certain whether at that time the patent was ready to be filed within the grace period.

At the same time, however, **missing the trade fair was not an option** since the SME had made a substantial investment, and the SME was pressured to act quickly in order to stay ahead of competitors catching up.

#### Actions taken

The SME's legal advisor **recommended trade secret protection for the engine during the fair.** Before attending the trade fair, an IP audit was carried out, based on which a comprehensive IP protection strategy for the tractor was drafted.

The IP audit concluded that apart from the engine, the tractor was well protected: the logo and the company name had been protected with trademark registration, the product catalogue was voluntarily registered as copyright in China. The design of the tractor was also protected via a design patent. It was therefore feasible to exhibit the tractor while keeping the engine as a trade secret. While it was

deemed safe to exhibit the tractor, the engine had to remain sealed. **Exhibiting the tractor with the engine hood closed would allow the product to be displayed without exposing new technology and risking losing the novelty required for invention patent applications.** Furthermore, an increased layer of security was added by not shipping at all the engine to China, thus exhibiting the tractor without the engine and its hood closed.

This tactic allowed the SME to illustrate to local businesses the advantages of the new engine, disclosing non-sensitive information on its power, fuel consumption, and the technical services offered – as none of these details would have made it feasible for others to replicate the technology. However, **all the company representatives were clearly instructed not to disclose any details** on the specific working mechanisms and specifications of the engine. A training on trade secret protection in China was also provided by the company's legal advisor to the staff, while all exhibition materials were scrutinised to ensure the protection of the trade secret.

#### Outcome

Thanks to the comprehensive IP strategy and precautions, the company successfully participated in the fair, **achieving the desired commercial and sales agreements, while effectively protecting its IP.** Later, the SME was successfully able to obtain an invention patent in China for the engine.

#### Lessons learnt

- It is not recommended to participate in a trade fair without prior protection of IP rights.
- New technologies that have not yet been protected by patent or utility model registration can still be protected by trade secrets – but only if appropriate measures are taken to avoid exposure to third parties.
- The mere exposition of the advantages that a new technology will have does not mean the loss of novelty in the matter of patents, insofar as the way in which the technical results are achieved is not revealed.
- Early preparation, allowing time for designing a comprehensive IP strategy is the key to a successful trade fair participation.

### 3.4.2 Patent infringement at a trade fair

**Location of headquarters:** Europe

**Industry:** cleaning products for solar panels

**Status in China:** market entrance stage

#### Case Background

The SME is a robotics company that is focused on providing innovative robotic solutions to the solar panel cleaning industry. Their robots are already available in 53 countries on 5 continents. The SME is a technology-intensive company that is using Artificial Intelligence to constantly improve its cleaning products. As a technology-intensive company, they are also focused on protecting their core IP and the company has obtained patents on their main products, including European Patents and US patents, and are currently in the process of applying for patents to their latest technology, which is not yet available on the market. To protect their latest technology, the company has started a PCT application designating various markets where protection will be sought. However, the PCT application has not yet entered the national phase in many countries considered as key markets, including China.

The company recently attended a trade fair in China, where they encountered a copy of their newly developed cleaning robot displayed by a Chinese company. To the SME's surprise, they also discovered that the same Chinese company had copied a range of SME's products and even used the pictures of the SME's products on their banner at the trade fair.

At the advice of the Chamber of Commerce of one of the Member State, the SME contacted the China IP SME Helpdesk for advice on the next steps.

#### Actions taken

The China IP SME Helpdesk IP Business Advisor, at first, checked the background of the Chinese company that was displaying the copies of the SME's products. The copycat was also engaged in the cleaning robots' industry and had recently filed applications for obtaining patents for their technology, allegedly copied from the SME.

As the SME's patent has not yet been granted in China, the SME cannot currently start any patent enforcement proceedings and must wait until their patent has finally been granted which could take years. The good news is that the Chinese company submitted their patent application for the same technology later than the SME, so the SME has prior

patent rights and would be able to block the Chinese company's patent application.

The Helpdesk IP Business Advisor recommended that SME use this time to properly collect evidence of infringement for possible enforcement actions upon the grant of the patent. Upon the grant of the patent, the SME would have several enforcement avenues available, including alternative dispute resolution, whereby the SME could enter into negotiations with the copycat.

In addition, the IP Business Advisor noticed that the SME had not yet registered their trademark in China. To avoid further issues upon market entry, the IP Business Advisor recommended that the SME register their trademark in China as soon as possible.

As for the copycat using the photos of the SME's products at trade shows, the IP Business Advisor recommended that the SME voluntarily register copyright of their visuals. After copyright registration, the SME could take enforcement actions against the use of their photos at trade fairs.

#### Outcome

Since the SME's patent has not yet been granted, it is not feasible for the SME to take any action during the trade fairs to stop the infringement. Thus, SME decided to focus on the business in China instead of allocating the budget to IP management for the time being. The SME will continue to monitor the Chinese company and see if there is any further infringement after the SME's patent will be granted in China.

#### Lessons learnt

- Trade fairs are a good channel for monitoring IP infringements. When you attend trade fairs in China, make sure to walk around the booths, especially the booths of your competitors.
- To enforce your trademarks or patents at a trade fair, you must have your IP registered in China. If you have just filed an application to have your IP registered, you cannot yet enforce your rights.
- If you discover infringements of your IP while your patent application is still pending, use that time to collect the infringement evidence and build up the case against the infringer.



### 3.4.3 Bad faith trademark registration in Mainland China after attending trade fairs in Hong Kong

**Location of headquarters:** Europe

**Industry:** Designer and producer of perfume

**Status in China:** The SME briefly did business in Mainland China via a few online e-commerce platforms in 2019. To understand the Hong Kong market better, they attended a trade fair in Hong Kong in 2023.

#### Case Background

The value of the perfume market in Mainland China and Hong Kong has been continuously growing. For European perfume companies, attending cosmetics trade fairs in Mainland China or Hong Kong is an essential step in international branding strategy.

To explore the market and promote their brand, the SME attended Cosmoprof Asia in Hong Kong in November 2023. Cosmoprof Asia is the leading international trade fair for beauty products in Asia, attracting thousands of international companies and visitors each year. During the fair, the SME gathered market information and decided to protect their trademark in the target market to facilitate market entry.

A few days after the trade fair, they applied for an international trademark via the Madrid system filing route and designated China as the country where protection was sought. Six months later they received a notice of office action from the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), informing the SME about a similar mark on similar goods having been registered by a Chinese company. The application had been filed just three days earlier than the SME's application. The goods covered by the Chinese trademark also included perfume related products. The Chinese registrant effectively pre-empted other companies from registering the same trademark, which is a typical behaviour of a trademark squatter, someone who registers others' brand names without the intention of actually using the mark.

Several Chinese IP agencies approached the SME and offered services proposing to file an invalidation action against the bad-faith registration and file a review of refusal (re-examination) action to allow the SME to pursue trademark protection in China.

#### Actions taken

To better understand how to pursue trademark rights in China under these circumstances, the SME approached the China IP SME Helpdesk.

Trademark rights in Mainland China are not automatically extended to Hong Kong. Since Hong Kong and Mainland China have different IP systems, protection in one jurisdiction will not apply in another. If the SME wishes to obtain trademark protection in Hong Kong, they should register the trademark there. International filing via the Madrid System does not yet extend to Hong Kong, and therefore the trademark application must be filed directly with the Hong Kong IP Department. After a preliminary check, the Helpdesk confirmed that there had not yet been any similar marks registered in Hong Kong. The Helpdesk IP Business Advisor urged the SME to apply for a trademark there as soon as possible.

Due to the close business relationship between Hong Kong and Mainland China, if one decides to enter the Hong Kong market, IP protection in both Hong Kong and Mainland China may be important, especially if one has future market entry plans also for Mainland China. Therefore, the SME should continue pursuing IP protection in Mainland China as well.

The Helpdesk verified that the Chinese IP agencies that approached the SME were legitimate and confirmed that their recommended actions would be necessary if the SME wishes to have trademark rights in China. Since the trademark has already been registered in Mainland China by a third party, the SME will have to file an invalidation action to clear it. It will take 10-12 months to obtain the results of the invalidation action, and should the result be unfavourable, the SME would have to appeal in the Chinese court, which would take another 7-10 months. Alternatively, the SME could consider filing a non-use cancellation action after three years, if the trademark will not have been used during this period. Generally, the non-use cancellation action is cheaper than the invalidation, but if the Chinese company uses the mark during the 3-year period, this action would no longer be feasible.

The SME wondered whether it would be advisable to purchase the mark back from the Chinese company, to solve the problem in a quicker manner. The Helpdesk IP Business Advisor recommended filing an invalidation action first to use it as a leverage in the negotiations with the Chinese company.

This strategy could potentially lead to a lower purchase price. Furthermore, considering that the Chinese company has copied other brands, it is possible that it has already been blacklisted by the China National Intellectual Property Administration (CNIPA), and the CNIPA would not allow the trademark transfer if purchased because of the bad faith involved. It is therefore necessary to consult IP experts to explore the feasibility of different actions. Alternatively, the SME could consider re-branding just for the China market, to avoid conflicts.

### Outcome

Due to budgetary constraints and long processing times the SME decided against exploring the invalidation option and is considering re-branding for the Mainland China market. They have not yet filed any trademark applications in Hong Kong either because it would make sense to use the same branding in Hong Kong as in Mainland China.

### Lessons learnt

- Registering your trademark before entering international markets, including by attending trade fairs in other countries, will save you time and money that you would otherwise need to fight against bad-faith trademark registrations along the road.
- The IP systems in Mainland China and Hong Kong are different. If you have trademark rights in Mainland China, it does not mean that you have trademark rights in Hong Kong, and vice versa.
- Hong Kong and Mainland China are very closely connected in terms of business relationships. If you only decide to enter the Hong Kong market, it is still worth considering having your IP rights protected in Mainland China, to avoid the common IP risks such as bad-faith IP registrations which could block future market entry, and counterfeiting.
- To clear the bad-faith trademark registration, you may consider opposition, non-use cancellation or invalidation actions. A good IP lawyer can help you choose the most appropriate strategy. Before thinking about purchasing back the trademark, you should run a background search to see if the seller may have registered more trademarks in bad faith and may thus already be blacklisted by the CNIPA.
- If your trademark has been registered by someone else in China, you can also consider rebranding or registering other trademarks such as logo or your trademark in Chinese language, to avoid possible conflicts.

## 4. LIST OF RELEVANT CHINESE TRADE FAIRS FOR EU SMES

This chapter includes a selection of major trade fairs in China relevant for EU SMEs, in different sectors and locations. In most cases, the EU SME Centre and the China IP SME Helpdesk have directly participated with their own booth or visited the premises to meet EU SMEs. However, **the list is far from exhaustive**. In fact, within different sectors, fairs focusing on specific product categories are often organised (e.g. beer within the F&B sector; elderly care with health-care; etc). The information shared on the trade fairs listed in this chapter is the result of personal observations, and thus **must not be seen as an official endorsement**. As clearly explained in this report, the “right” trade fair depends on various factors. Some EU SMEs might find them appropriate, others may find them irrelevant. What is fundamental is to

come fully prepared by following the good practices and examples listed in the previous chapters of this report.

Finally, this list integrates feedback received from EU Member States’ trade support organisations on the participation of their companies, either individually or as part of national pavilions. This **provides an overview of the most popular fairs for SMEs from different Member States and across many industries**. SMEs interested in exhibiting in any fairs, are strongly recommended to get in touch with their national representations in China to enquire about initiatives promoting and supporting their participation.

### GENERAL / CROSS-SECTOR FAIRS

#### 1. China International Import Expo (CIIE)

Location	Shanghai, National Exhibition and Convention Centre
Focus	Imported goods
Organisers	Ministry of Commerce, Shanghai Municipal Government
Scale	Large scale
Next edition	5-10 November 2025, 8 <sup>th</sup> edition
Website	<a href="https://www.ciie.org/zbh/en/">https://www.ciie.org/zbh/en/</a>
EU presence	Strong. National pavilions regularly organised by Member States, including Austria, Czechia, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Spain, and Sweden.
<i>In our opinion</i>	<p><i>CIIE is, arguably, the highest-level fair in China dedicated to international business, and specifically imported products. It was inaugurated by China’s top leadership and each edition is usually opened by top-level officials; as such, it attracts leaders from foreign countries and receives extensive media coverage. CIIE hosts a massive presence of foreign exhibitors, which often participate in national pavilions. These include national support organisations from EU Member States who might provide discounted rates to otherwise high exhibiting fees.</i></p> <p><i>CIIE does not have a sectoral focus, therefore it is not ideal for exhibitors looking for a highly specialised audience. Finally, as CIIE is attended by thousands of exhibitors from all over the world, including large brands, EU SMEs might be in a disadvantaged position in terms of visibility, especially if participating alone.</i></p>

## 2. China International Fair for Trade in Services (CIFTIS)

Location	Beijing, China National Convention Centre (Shougang)
Focus	Import and export of services
Organisers	Ministry of Commerce, Beijing Municipal Government
Scale	Large scale
Next edition	10–14 September 2026, 13 <sup>th</sup> edition
Website	<a href="https://www.ciftis.org/en">https://www.ciftis.org/en</a>
EU presence	Strong. National pavilions regularly organised by Member States, including Austria, Estonia, France, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, and Netherlands.

*In our opinion* CIFTIS was launched as the counterpart of CIIE in the trade in services field. Hosted in Beijing's Shougang complex, CIFTIS sees the participation of top government officials as well as representatives from foreign countries, and as such it receives extensive media coverage. It attracts a solid presence of foreign exhibitors, showcasing their services in the field of commercial and legal services, tourism, education, etc.

*Although focusing on trade in services, the sectors covered are broad. Exhibitors include mainly global brands, rather than SMEs. However, many visitors are not professional visitors, therefore might not be ideal for exhibitors looking for a highly-specialised audience. However, CIFTIS is a good platform for marketing and branding activities.*

## 3. China International Consumer Products Expo (Hainan Expo)

Location	Haikou, Hainan
Focus	Imported consumer goods
Organisers	Ministry of Commerce, Hainan Provincial Government
Scale	Large scale
Next edition	13–18 April 2026, 6 <sup>th</sup> edition
Website	<a href="https://www.hainanexpo.org.cn/">https://www.hainanexpo.org.cn/</a>
EU presence	Strong. National pavilions regularly organised, including: Czechia, France, Ireland, and Italy.

*In our opinion* The Hainan Expo is another major fair recently inaugurated by China's top leadership to promote the Hainan Free Trade Port. It is strongly supported by the government, and therefore sees strong coverage by media and participation from institutions. Since its launch in 2021, the Hainan Expo has gained popularity: the number of national pavilions organised by foreign countries – including EU Member States – has grown. The Hainan Expo focuses on imported consumer goods, especially fashion, jewellery, cosmetics, luxury, and F&B.

*The Hainan Expo sees the participation of a number of globally-leading brands, which use the platform for marketing activities and branding, often offering discounted prices on the spot and thus attracting most of the visitors. This partly explains high exhibiting fees. At the same time, this makes EU SMEs suffer in terms of visibility and competition from non-EU competitors, although feedback received overall has been positive. The Hainan Expo has the potential of becoming a large influential fair in the wider region.*

#### 4. Western China International Fair (WCIF)

Location	Chengdu, Sichuan
Organisers	National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Science and Technology, Sichuan Provincial Government, etc.
Scale	Mid-scale
Next edition	July 2026, 21 <sup>st</sup> edition
Website	<a href="http://www.wcif.cn/14070/index.shtml">http://www.wcif.cn/14070/index.shtml</a>
EU presence	National pavilions from EU Member States organised in past editions, including from Czechia, Hungary, and Poland.

*In our opinion* The Western China International Fair positions itself as the main show in China's Southwestern region focusing on international business. It is strongly promoted by the government, and therefore sees strong coverage by media and participation from institutions – including foreign countries. It represents an interesting platform for exploring the potential of China's rapidly growing south-western region, although the fair's coverage remains broad and not sector-specific.

### INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC FAIRS (EXCL. FOOD & BEVERAGE)

#### 1. China International Industry Fair (CIIF)

Location	Shanghai, National Exhibition and Convention Centre
Organisers	Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Science and Technology, Shanghai Municipal Government, etc.
Scale	Large scale
Next edition	12-16 October 2026, 26 <sup>th</sup> edition
Website	<a href="https://www.ciif-expo.com/home">https://www.ciif-expo.com/home</a>
EU presence	Strong. National pavilions regularly organised by Italy and Germany.

*In our opinion* CIIF is arguably the most influential fair in China for the industry sector, covering various fields such as software, robotics, automation, ICT, environment technologies, etc. It is strongly supported by the central government and by the Shanghai municipal government, and therefore it receives strong media coverage. It regularly hosts a number of side events and has also an area for academic exhibitors, making it a good platform to explore industry-university collaborations.

CIIF is well attended by companies from countries with strong manufacturing capabilities, especially Germany, Italy, but also Japan and Korea. Most companies are big brands and industry leaders, but there is also relatively solid presence from innovative SMEs.

## 2. China (Tianjin) International Industry Expo (Tianjin CIEX)

Location	Tianjin
Organisers	China Machinery Industry Federation, China Council for the Promotion of International Trade Machinery Sub-Council
Scale	Large scale
Next edition	18–21 March 2026, 22 <sup>nd</sup> edition
Website	<a href="https://tj.ciex-expo.com/en/">https://tj.ciex-expo.com/en/</a>
EU presence	Member States with strong manufacturing industry, especially Germany (national pavilion organised)
<i>In our opinion</i>	<p><i>Tianjin CIEX is, arguably, the second most influential fair in China in the industry sector. Although smaller than CIIF in Shanghai, Tianjin CIEX sees a large amount of exhibitors and visitors, especially representing industrial machinery – for which the city of Tianjin is renowned for.</i></p> <p><i>Tianjin CIEX also sees a solid participation of SMEs, including from foreign countries – especially Germany.</i></p>

## 3. IE expo China

Location	Shanghai; Guangzhou & Shenzhen, Guangdong; Chengdu, Sichuan
Organisers	Messe München
Scale	Large scale
Next edition	13–15 April 2026 (Shanghai); 10–12 June 2026 (Chengdu), September 2026 (Shenzhen)
Website	<a href="https://www.ie-expo.com/">https://www.ie-expo.com/</a> ; <a href="https://cd.ie-expo.com/">https://cd.ie-expo.com/</a> ; <a href="https://sz.ie-expo.com/">https://sz.ie-expo.com/</a>
EU presence	Strong, but mainly for companies participating individually. National pavilions regularly organised by Germany and Netherlands, and in past editions by Austria, Belgium (Flanders).
<i>In our opinion</i>	<p><i>IE Expo claims to be the largest environmental trade show in Asia – certainly is one of the most influential ones in China for environment and climate-related technologies and solutions.</i></p> <p><i>It is organised by an international fair organiser, in different sessions and cities across China, among which the Shanghai session stands out in terms of attention and participation, especially from international exhibitors and visitors. The Shenzhen and especially Chengdu editions are more recent, but already highly popular and growing.</i></p>

#### 4. Aquatech China

Location	Shanghai
Nature	International
Organisers	RAI Amsterdam
Scale	Small scale
Next edition	5–7 November 2025 (Shanghai)
Website	<a href="https://www.aquatechtrade.com/shanghai">https://www.aquatechtrade.com/shanghai</a>
EU presence	Strong, but mainly for companies participating individually. National pavilions organised in past editions by Netherlands and Denmark.

*In our opinion* Aquatech China is a relatively smaller fair, not comparable to national-level, cross-sector fairs organised in China, both in terms of exhibition scale and visitors. However, it is highly-specific for all water-related technologies and services, and therefore highly influential in the sector and in the broader Asia-Pacific region, also thanks to numerous sectoral conferences and events organised.

*It is organised by RAI Amsterdam, which provides strong support to EU exhibitors. Aquatech China also sees a strong participation of SMEs, including from foreign countries.*

#### 5. bauma China

Location	Shanghai
Organisers	Messe München
Scale	Large scale
Next edition	24–27 November 2026
Website	<a href="https://bauma-china.com/en/">https://bauma-china.com/en/</a>
EU presence	Average. National pavilions organised by Austria and Italy.

*In our opinion* bauma China is the most influential fair in China for the construction industry. It is organised by an international fair organiser, every year receiving a large number of professional visitors. Although it is dominated by large, global brands, there is a noteworthy presence of SMEs as well.

#### 6. Electronica China

Location	Shanghai; Shenzhen, Guangdong
Organisers	Messe München
Scale	Mid-scale
Next edition	1–3 July 2026 (Shanghai)
Website	<a href="https://www.electronicachina.com.cn/en-us/">https://www.electronicachina.com.cn/en-us/</a> ;
EU presence	Average. National pavilions organised in past editions by Germany. Participation of individual companies from Austria and Italy.

*In our opinion* Electronica China is one of the most influential fairs in China for electronic components, systems, applications and solutions. The majority of exhibitors are large companies, including domestic industry leaders. Among foreign exhibitors, German and Japanese companies are the most active.

## 7. China International Chemical Industry Fair (ICIF China)

Location	Shanghai
Organisers	China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, China Petroleum and Chemical Industry Federation
Scale	Large scale
Next edition	September 2026, 23 <sup>rd</sup> edition
Website	<a href="http://en.icif.cn/">http://en.icif.cn/</a>
EU presence	Strong, but mainly for companies participating individually.

*In our opinion* ICIF China is the most influential fair in China in the chemical sector, strongly supported by CCPIT as well as industry associations. It receives strong media coverage and sees the participation of numerous exhibitors and visitors. The absolute majority of exhibitors are large companies, therefore the fair represents a good platform for SMEs to connect with large industry players (including global industry leaders as well as Chinese state-owned companies, which dominate the sector in China) as well as research and academic actors. Among foreign exhibitors, German and French companies are the most active.

## 8. China Hi-Tech Fair (CHTF)

Location	Shenzhen, Guangdong province
Organisers	Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Science and Technology, Shenzhen Municipal Government, etc.
Scale	Mid-scale
Next edition	14–16 November 2025, 27 <sup>th</sup> edition
Website	<a href="https://www.chtf.com/english/">https://www.chtf.com/english/</a>
EU presence	Companies from several Member States have participated in previous editions. National pavilions regularly organised by EU Member States, including Austria, Belgium (Flanders), Czechia, Latvia, Poland, Spain.

*In our opinion* CHTF is a renowned fair taking place in China's most innovative city – Shenzhen. It is an influential and rapidly growing fair, for companies exhibiting innovative and high-tech products, especially relating to advanced manufacturing, smart cities, as well as circular economy and clean energy. It hosts a number of conferences and side events, and has an ad hoc international exhibition area. CHTF sees a strong participation of SMEs.

*There are many non-professional visitors (i.e. individuals curious about new technology developments), therefore CHTF also represents a good platform for marketing and branding – also thanks to strong coverage from media and institutions.*



## 9. Intertextile

Location	Shanghai, National Exhibition and Convention Centre; Shenzhen
Organisers	China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (Textile Industry Sub-Council), China Textile Information Center, Messe Frankfurt (HK) Co., Ltd.
Scale	Large scale
Next edition	11–13 March 2026 (Shanghai); 9–11 June 2026 (Shenzhen), August 2026 (Shanghai)
Website	<a href="http://www.intertextile.com.cn/">http://www.intertextile.com.cn/</a>
EU presence	Strong, but mainly for companies participating individually, including from Austria and Germany. National pavilion organised by Italy.
<i>In our opinion</i>	<i>Intertextile is China's leading fair in the textile and apparel sector, including machinery. It is organised three times per year, and it is open to trade visitors and buyers only – making it especially relevant for exhibitors looking for business opportunities.</i>

## 10. Cosmoprof Asia

Location	Hong Kong SAR, Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre
Organisers	BolognaFiere, Informa Markets Asia Ltd
Scale	Large scale
Next edition	12–14 November 2025, 28 <sup>th</sup> edition
Website	<a href="https://www.cosmoprof-asia.com/">https://www.cosmoprof-asia.com/</a>
EU presence	Strong. National pavilions from a few Member States regularly organised, including: France, Latvia, Poland, Spain.
<i>In our opinion</i>	<i>Cosmoprof is the leading fair in Asia in the cosmetics and beauty sector. It is organised every year in Hong Kong, by an international fair organiser. It sees a strong participation of foreign brands – especially from France, Italy and Spain (though less than Korea and Japan, as well as from other competitors from United States, Australia, United Kingdom, Thailand, etc.). Among EU exhibitors, many are SMEs and niche brands.</i>  <i>Cosmoprof sees a massive participation of professional visitors from mainland China as well as the broader Asia-Pacific region, therefore represents a good (but expensive) platform for connecting with businesses from different countries.</i>

## 11. China International Medical Equipment Fair (CMEF)

Location	Shanghai; Guangzhou
Organisers	Reed Sinopharm Exhibitions Co., Ltd
Scale	Large scale
Next edition	April 2026 (Shanghai); September 2026 (Guangzhou)
Website	<a href="https://www.cmef.com.cn/">https://www.cmef.com.cn/</a>
EU presence	Strong, but mostly for companies participating individually, especially from France, Germany, Italy and Poland.
<i>In our opinion</i>	<p><i>CMEF is China's most influential fair in the medical equipment and medtech sector, already at its 89th edition. It is organised twice a year, in Shanghai and Shenzhen, by one of China's largest pharmaceutical companies (state-owned), and therefore receives strong media coverage and participation from both exhibitors and visitors, including international ones.</i></p> <p><i>CMEF also features a number of connected shows (e.g. in the field of rehabilitation, animal health) and side events such as academic conferences and workshops.</i></p>

## 12. China Beauty Expo

Location	Shanghai; Hangzhou, Zhejiang
Organisers	Informa markets
Scale	Large scale
Next edition	12–14 May 2026 (Shanghai edition), 10–11 September 2026 (Hangzhou edition)
Website	<a href="https://www.chinabeautyexpo.com/">https://www.chinabeautyexpo.com/</a>
EU presence	Strong. National pavilions from a few Member States regularly organised, including from Italy, Germany, France, and Spain.
<i>In our opinion</i>	<p><i>The China Beauty Expo, especially the Shanghai edition, is one of China's leading international B2B fairs for the beauty industry, including cosmetics, professional beauty, as well as beauty supply. Although there are many international exhibitors, most of the exhibitors are Chinese manufacturers.</i></p>

### 13. Design Shanghai

Location	Shanghai
Organisers	Clarion events
Scale	Large scale (especially the Shanghai edition)
Next edition	19–22 March 2026
Website	<a href="https://www.designshanghai.com/">https://www.designshanghai.com/</a>
EU presence	Strong, with national pavilions from a few Member States regularly organised, including Austria, Czechia and Spain
<i>In our opinion</i>	<p><i>Design Shanghai is China's leading show for design, and also one of the biggest in Asia. It focuses on four main segments: (i) furniture and lighting; (ii) kitchen and bathroom; (iii) living and lifestyle; and (iv) new materials and applications.</i></p> <p><i>The show sees a large participation of international firms and brands, and enjoys a strong international reputation thanks to its UK roots. The majority of visitors are architects and designers, The Shanghai edition also normally hosts the Sustainable Design China Summit, as well as a number of workshops and conferences.</i></p>

Other important trade fairs for specific industries/sectors are:

- China CNC Machine Tool Fair, Shanghai
- China International Machine Tool Fair, Beijing
- VIV China Expo
- China Glass
- ProPak China
- Ecomondo China, Chengdu – CDEPE
- ITMA Asia + CITME
- Chinaplas
- Marintec China
- Automechanika Shanghai
- Auto Shanghai
- China International Agricultural Machinery Exhibition
- China Agricultural Hi-Tech Fair
- China Nanjing International Intelligent Agriculture Expo
- China Animal Husbandry Expo
- Horti China Expo
- HortiflorExpo IPM
- Kunming International Flower Expo
- South China Beauty Expo
- Beijing International Hydrogen Technology & Equipment Exhibition
- HICOOL Global Entrepreneur Summit, Beijing
- APLF Leather & Materials Hong Kong
- World Winter Sports Expo (WWSE)
- China International Book Fair
- China Children's Book Fair
- China International Education Expo
- Pet Fair Asia
- ACHEMASIA
- China International Chemistry Industry Fair (ICIF)
- China International Medical Equipment Fair (CMEF)
- China International Fair for Trade and Investment Xiamen

This list is by no means comprehensive. Please [contact us](#) to get information about events in your sector.

## FOOD & BEVERAGE SECTOR

### 1. SIAL China

Location	Shanghai; Shenzhen
Organisers	France Comexposium Group
Scale	Large scale (Shanghai); small scale (Shenzhen)
Next edition	18–20 May 2026 (Shanghai), 31 August – 2 September 2026 (Shenzhen)
Website	<a href="https://www.sialchina.com/">https://www.sialchina.com/</a>
EU presence	Strong. Several national pavilions from EU Member States regularly organised, including: Czechia, Estonia, France, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Netherlands, Poland, Spain, and Sweden.
<i>In our opinion</i>	<p><i>SIAL China is a global flagship event for the F&amp;B industry, certainly the most influential in the country. The Shanghai edition is the older, more influential, while the Shenzhen edition has been inaugurated only in recent years given the strong growth of SIAL China. Every year, it sees the participation of a massive number of exhibitors – from all countries around the world – and visitors, both professional and standard individuals. This makes the fair ideal for both business and marketing purposes.</i></p> <p><i>The number of visitors from the EU, including SMEs, is strong; national pavilions are regularly organised by EU Member States representations. However, competition is extremely fierce, and exhibiting fees high compared to other fairs in the sector.</i></p>

### 2. Anuga Select China (formerly known as ANUFOOD)

Location	Shenzhen, Guangdong
Organisers	Koelnmesse
Scale	Large scale
Next edition	27–29 April 2026
Website	<a href="https://www.anuga-china.com/">https://www.anuga-china.com/</a>
EU presence	Strong, about one-fifth of exhibitors, but mostly participating individually. National pavilions are only occasionally organised by Member States, including: Austria, Belgium (Flanders), Czechia, Poland.
<i>In our opinion</i>	<p><i>Anuga Select China, until recently known as ANUFOOD China, is a key F&amp;B event in southern China. Arguably, it is the second most-renowned and attended fair in the sector in China, after SIAL, but many prefer it due to its lower exhibition fees. Similar to SIAL China, however, Anuga sees every year a large participation from both exhibitors (though less SMEs) and visitors (both professionals and standard visitors).</i></p> <p><i>EU exhibitors generally account for one-fifth of total exhibitors, often thanks to national pavilions organised by Member State representations. Numerous side events organised offer the possibility to interact with a wide range of industry professionals.</i></p>

### 3. China Food and Drinks Fair (CFDF)

Location	Chengdu, Sichuan
Organisers	China Candy Industry and Alcoholic Drinks Group Co., Chengdu Expo Bureau
Scale	Large scale
Next edition	October 2026, 114 <sup>th</sup> edition
Website	<a href="http://www.qgtjh.org.cn/en/index.html">http://www.qgtjh.org.cn/en/index.html</a>
EU presence	Strong. National pavilions are regularly organised by several EU Member States, including: Czechia, France, Poland, Spain. Strong participation also from EU companies participating individually.
<i>In our opinion</i>	<i>The China Food and Drinks Fair is an influential fair in Chengdu. It focuses mostly on wine and sweets products, compared to other F&amp;B categories. Compared to SIAL and Anuga, there is a stronger participation of domestic F&amp;B producers, including large state-owned groups. Therefore, it represents an interesting platform for connecting with local producers, operating at both the national level and locally in China's rapidly growing southwestern region.</i>

### 4. Food & Hospitality China (FHC Shanghai)

Location	Shanghai, New International Expo Centre
Organisers	Informa Markets, Shanghai Cuisine Association, etc.
Scale	Large scale
Next edition	12–14 November 2025, 28 <sup>th</sup> edition
Website	<a href="https://www.fhcchina.com/en">https://www.fhcchina.com/en</a>
EU presence	Strong. National pavilions are regularly organised by several EU Member States, including Austria, Czechia and France.
<i>In our opinion</i>	<i>The Food &amp; Hospitality China Expo is one of the most renowned fairs in China the F&amp;B and hospital sector. Key areas of focus include meat products, dairy products, snacks and confectionery, seasonings and oil, soft drinks, baking products, food supply chain, processing and packaging, pre-cooked food, etc. With a long history, the show every year sees the participation of a large number of foreign exhibitors, including from the EU. A number of summits, fora, conferences as well as competitions regularly take place during the show.</i>

### 5. Interwine China

Location	Guangzhou, Guangdong
Organisers	Ketong International Exhibition
Scale	Small scale
Next edition	May 2026, 26 <sup>th</sup> edition
Website	<a href="http://www.interwine.org/">http://www.interwine.org/</a>
EU presence	Strong, but mainly for companies participating individually, including from Austria and Greece. National pavilion organised in past editions by Austria.
<i>In our opinion</i>	<i>Interwine China is a relatively small fair organised in Guangdong province, focusing exclusively on wine. It is mostly targeted at the B2B channel and therefore offers a good platform for EU wine businesses operating in this area.</i>

Other trade fairs of note in the F&B sector are:

- China Dairy Expo
- China Fisheries and Seafood Expo
- China Fruit Expo
- Asia Fruit Logistica
- China Agricultural Fair
- Guizhou International Alcoholic Beverage Fair
- ProWine Shanghai
- Vinexpo Hong Kong
- TopWine Beijing
- Beijing International Craft Brewing Exhibition – Beijing Brew
- Bakery China Shanghai.

## FURTHER RESOURCES

The EU SME Centre and the China IP SME Helpdesk have a rich database of market access, IP and sectoral reports, guidelines, webinars and case studies. The following may be relevant to you:

### REPORT

- *Intellectual Property systems: China / Europe comparison*  
<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/0a06be6b-ca5f-11eb-84ce-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-214492875>

### WEBINAR RECORDINGS

- Taking Part in Trade Fairs in China: Interviews from the 2023 Hainan Expo  
<https://www.eusmecentre.org.cn/publications/taking-part-in-trade-fairs-in-china-interviews-from-the-2023-hainan-expo/>

# ABOUT THE EU SME CENTRE

The EU SME Centre is an initiative funded by the European Union to assist small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) from EU Member States and countries participating in the Single Market Programme, getting them ready to do business in China.

Our core mission is to facilitate market access and provide a comprehensive range of free first-line services to inform, advise, train, and connect SMEs. The Centre forms partnerships with business support organisations and trade promotion organisations to bring our services and expertise to European SMEs of all sectors.

This initiative created in 2010 is now in Phase V (2025-2028) and is implemented by 4 consortium partners with 2 associated partners, with networks throughout Europe and China.

## Consortium partners



## Associated partners



# ABOUT THE CHINA IP SME HELPDESK

The China IP SME Helpdesk supports European Union (EU) Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) to both protect and enforce their Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) in or relating to Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan through the provision of free information and services. These take the form of jargon-free, first-line, confidential advice on intellectual property and related issues, plus training, materials and online resources.

The China IP SME Helpdesk organises IP training seminars and workshops all over China and Europe. It also provides online webinars on various IP-related topics and organizes one-on-one consultation sessions to help SMEs better understand IP, and how it relates to their products and to doing business in / with China.

The China IP SME Helpdesk project is funded by the European Union and builds on the achievements of a pilot project carried out in 2008-10. As of February 2023, Phase VII commenced expanding China IP SME Helpdesk's services to the SMEs from countries participating in the Single Market Programme (SMP).



## SEND US YOUR QUESTIONS

Ask our experts or book a consultation and receive practical and confidential advice

### EU SME CENTRE

 [www.eusmecentre.org.cn/ask-the-expert/](http://www.eusmecentre.org.cn/ask-the-expert/)

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