

**Deutsche Umwelthilfe e.V., Germany,
NABU - Naturschutzbund Deutschland e.V. and
Lüling (Green Collar) - Tianjin Binhai Environmental Advisory
Service Center**

Report on EU-China NGO Twinning program

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Air pollution is not only a serious issue in China but has an impact on the health of European citizens living in cities as well. It is essential for stakeholders to get together and discuss strategies to solve air quality problems. The DUH, NABU and TL aimed to make a first step by sharing their first-hand experiences, successes and their strategies to meet challenges in reducing air pollution.

Dorothee Saar, DUH - Deutsche Umwelthilfe e.V. and Sönke Diesener, NABU

Dorothee Saar and Sönke Diesener visited the Lüling (Green Collar) - Tianjin Binhai Environmental Advisory Service Center from August 30 to September 20 2015.

Introduction

Our aim was to provide deep and comprehensive insight in the political and environmental protection situation and the working strategies of the exchange partners. In addition, we aimed at providing an impression of collaboration among different actors in China and Germany in order to get a broader understanding as basis for future exchange and mutual support.

The shared topic of our exchange was air pollution and air quality improvement measures. The central tools of our exchange were joined activities and knowledge and information exchange discussions. We primarily focused on air pollution and the public participation and communication work around this topic as well as the legal and regulatory situation regarding air pollution prevention and access to information.

There was a strong focus on health aspects but we also addressed environmental and climate change impacts of the air pollutants. We presented our most recent and current projects to each other to get an impression how work is done in detail and to find collaborative starting points.

There were several in-depth talks on legal action, upcoming future problems and environmental concern as well as on promising or unfavourable developments. Within the

field of air pollution we focused on urban ambient air quality, stationary factory emissions and shipping and harbour emissions as topics for further communication. While there was very little overlap within our working methodology we identified public awareness raising and legal action as most promising issues for further exchange of experience. In advance we developed a work plan that included exchange talks on our activities and presentations about structure, topics and approach of our organisations. We planned side visits and situ air pollution measurements. For the last week in China we planned to visit other NGOs that deal with our common topics.

Getting to know each other; making and changing of plans

After arrival and the first talks we decided to make some slight adaptations of our work plan and schedule to the current local situation. There had been a huge explosion event within the port of Tianjin shortly before our arrival which raised discussions about safety questions and forced us to reschedule some of our plans regarding the topic clean air in ports.

Excursus: Just two weeks before we arrived in Tianjin an accident occurred in a hazardous goods stock. A series of explosions killed over 170 people and injured hundreds at a container storage station at the Port of Tianjin on 12 August 2015. The explosion site was about 50km from Tianjin city center where we lived, but due to the fact that hazardous water and air pollutants were set free we questioned the safety of our stay. After some days of gathering information and negotiations with exchange responsibilities we decided to go, but nevertheless had to skip some meetings with harbour officials.

At the Tianjin Lüling office – finding common ground for cooperation

Within our first days in the office we presented our work and methodology to each other. Also, we got a introduction into the fields of activity of the staff and volunteers at Green Collar. Within our exchange we faced that our daily working routine as well as in the methods used are very different from each other, thus a major task was discussion about our daily work and the methods we use.

The first week was also strongly dominated by cultural learning effects and mutual exchange on daily living questions. We experienced an unexpected but very pleasant and gracious way of an interlinked working and living condition. The office of Green Collar turned out to be the centre of most of the staff's everyday routine. Next to our work we also spent free time in the office, prepared and ate meals and some of the employees even slept in the office that also was the home for two little cats. We had a very warm welcome within the "family" of Green Collar where everybody tried best to serve for our wellbeing. At this point we doubt whether we would be able to be such good hosts in Berlin.

Different approaches to advocacy work

Two major differences were our manners towards authority bodies and our media work. Authorities in Europe are much easier to access and often itself willing to include NGOs in participatory processes. This reality is enforced by the fact that DUH and NABU are very well

known, settled NGOs with long history with policy making implications. Our media work is relying on traditional broadcasting by news papers and TV, while social media impact is comparatively less important.

For Green Collar as a small and very young NGO social media are the most important platform to spread their ideas and information, while access to official bodies is very limited. The of course helpful detection of differences that limited the scope for joint action lead us to concentrate on learning on the topics rather than on action. While our work in Germany and Europe aims to implement and enforce concrete regulation and raise awareness for the detailed problems, our Chinese partner's agenda focuses on single emitter's violations and help for the local victims.

Getting to know Chinese NGO's working environment and scope of action

At the first stage of learning from each other we both presented our organizations and the European NGO Campaign "Sootfree for the Climate" to the Green Collar Team.

Right after this general introduction phase Dong Jian assigned two of Green Collars staff to the two topics *legal action* and *clean air in marine industry*. They conducted so called in-depth expert talks with us to learn about the European situation, solution approaches and our activities. They prepared reports in Chinese language to make the knowledge available to the team. These two reports are designated to be a roadmap for further actions and cooperation in these two fields.

Before going to Hangzhou to attend the twinning program workshop we had a lot of exchange on the political, legislative and regulatory environment in which the NGOs work is embedded. Green Collar also presented the history and most recent development of the organization. Furthermore they described the specific embedding inside local and domestic framework. While they are engaged in nationwide action they are based in Tianjin where they draw back on some patronage by local authorities.

Twinning workshop in Hangzhou

Our second week in China we spent in Hangzhou where our twinning programs workshop took place.

The workshop provided a broad overview on topics and activities of the NGOs involved in the exchange program. It also gave insight into the work of one specific NGO located in Hangzhou, focusing on air and water pollution including own measurements of air and water quality. The NGO collaborates with local authorities, gathering as well as providing information from and to the public.

The workshop provided us deep insights into the situation of the Chinese NGO landscape. We seized the chance to talk to several other Chinese NGOs as well as with European partners. Apart from learning about other NGOs in China the meeting with a broad variety of European NGOs was an unexpected but very interesting and educational experience on European NGO landscape as well.

Workshop on Stationary Emission Sources

Just after our return to Tianjin, Green Collar held a workshop in Beijing. The topic was air and water pollution from iron and steel industry.

The workshop was held in Swanport Coffee in Beijings Galaxy SOHO building. It was a very good experience for us to see that kind of place. The coffee is a vibrant place where activists and followers meet for exchange and discussion. The cosy but likewise passionate and dynamic atmosphere offered an appealing glance of the Chinese environmental movement.

The workshop was split in to tree parts. At first Green Collar presented their work. Two of the staff held a presentation that illustrated how they conducted measurements of air and water and proved violations by pictures. They presented how they spoke to residents and asked officials and authorities for information.

This part of the workshop was followed by a short Q&A session with a longer statement of a senior adviser who is part of Green Collars advisory body. The next session was opened by a song performed by a Girl from Green Collar who was in charge for the moderation. It was an inspiring experience how to enrich and ease a workshop.

In the last part of the workshop we presented the German and EU legal framework for access to environmental information and showed a website that presents all industry emission data.

Going beyond the twinning team meet international organizations

We spend our third week in China to meet with other NGOs and organizations engaged in the field of air quality improvement in China. Due to Green Collar's lack in policy making approaches that at the same time play a very important role at DUH and NABU we decided to talk to additional potential allies in China. We invited Green Collar staff to join us on these meetings to get in contact with those actors as well.

Along with meetings with other NGOs like NRDC, Clean Air Asia and Energy Foundation we also met with senior experts working in Chinas environmental policy for many years and with GIZ the official German institution for international cooperation and development. These meetings provided us broad insights into ongoing Chinese policy making towards air pollution as well as information how international NGOs work in China.

At the end of our exchange we agreed to keep on exchanging information's especially on regulations and law enforcement. DUH will help Green Collar to get more deep knowledge on the legal situation in Europe and how to transfer this to Chinese policy making.

Green Collar will eventually widen its focus on harbour and shipping emissions and in this case will get support with information by NABU. NABU is already in cooperation with Clean Air Asia and NRDC China to conduct a joined workshop on marine emissions in China of cause Green Collar will be invited to contribute to this workshop eventually by presenting measurement data from Tianjin port.

Outlook on future cooperation

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Conclusion

Due to the big differences of our organizations as well as limited recourses we did not yet fix concrete further action but appointed to share information and sooner or later want to jointly release information on air pollution topics via media channels in Europe and China.

We faced hurdles of communication that were higher than expected since our Chinese as well as our Chinese exchange partners English was rather limited (some of the volunteers and staff could only speak Chinese). Of course there were some slight misunderstandings that are inherent within such intercultural exchange situations. While these situations often bear the risk to lead to disharmony we managed to come over most situations by mutual leniency.

All the three partners learned a lot on working in different cultural environments and how to deal with upcoming difficulties or even turn them into positive outcome. The learning about China's NGOs and the environmental protection legislation that sometimes - and in the future even more - exceeds the European standards gives a good basis to understand the Chinese situation but likewise to stress this in the run for improvements in Europe and worldwide.

Dong Jian, Lüling (Green Collar) - Tianjin Binhai Environmental Advisory Service Center

Dong Jian visited Deutsche Umwelthilfe (DUH) and NABU in Berlin and Hamburg from October 10 to November 10 2015.

Objective of the exchange

When I first came across this twinning plan, I had the desire to learn about joint challenges of air pollution and climate in China and Europe, and whether there exist any experiences we could take over from our European colleagues.

According to a recent OECD study, bad air quality is responsible for approximately 3.5 million premature deaths per year worldwide. Serious health problems especially occur in densely

populated areas. We agreed to jointly work on how air pollution in conurbations affect people's health and ways that our environmental NGOs and other organizations could work to reduce the air pollution, and adapt measures to local needs. I also wanted to study the public participation and communication about air pollution governance in Europe.

We hoped we could make each other understand the sources of the air pollution and how other local NGOs work on it. Secondly, we want to find approaches to improve the air quality building on exchanging experiences and best practices, to learn how to attract general public to participate in our specific programs, and if we can built an international networks calling for more assistant to make sure that our study could be continued.

Activities

Workshops on Emissions in Brussels

Whether in China or in Europe, the communication with my exchange fellows and other organizations, their practices gave me most of the answers to my questions. On October 21, I took part in the Expert Talk on Shipping Emissions with Prof. Alice Bows-Larkin at the Member of European Parliaments Keith Richard' office, as well as the Workshop on Emission Control in European SECA (Sulphur emission control areas) at the European Parliament in Brussels. In Europe, there are clear legal and standard demands for emission and air quality, as an important premise to air pollution governance.

Getting familiar with the problematic of shipping emissions in the EU

I also went to visit the harbour in Hamburg with Soenke form NABU. He told me that air pollution causes over 420,000 premature deaths throughout the European Union. Of these, 50,000 premature deaths are attributed to shipping in European waters. Ports are hubs of air pollution because many emitters operate there: numerous kinds of transport and port machinery with diesel engines without exhaust treatment systems or even running on a comparatively dirty fuel. Some of these forms of transports and machinery, such as ocean-going vessels, do not fall under the strict(er) land-based regulations, but enjoy emission privileges as allowed by international maritime laws. But even where-European or national-legal limits for air emissions exist, the limits are not strict enough, moreover, some are breached without consequences for the emitters. And for some pollutants, such as blank carbon, there are no limits at all.

Although there are already many examples of ports where stakeholders voluntarily implement measures to clear up the air, these examples and what it takes to implement them are not well known. This is one of the reasons why NABU has started the project Clean Air in Ports. Eight environmental organizations from six European countries campaigned for better air quality throughout Europe. Over the three-year period, Clean Air in Ports has held six workshops in European port cities. The workshops not only aimed to bring experts, relevant stakeholders and policymakers together that either have an interest in or the possibility to contribute to better air quality in and from ports, but also to inform people about the problem of air pollution and to present, collect and discuss best practices and

examples for clean air in ports.

Outcomes of the exchange – methods and refuted anticipations

From the Clean Air in Ports workshops, I found that it is important to link different resources, which could play on a roll. The relevant methods were also used usually in my work and helped me a lot after I started working in my organization in China again.

Besides, during the exchange, I believe that our participating organizations benefitted mainly in the following aspects: 1. Broaden our horizons, such as access to more information about environmental topics in European countries; 2. Give us a chance to learn from good experience of the partner NGO or find something that has never done in the inland areas 3. the exchange fellows and the institutions they visited in each other countries could developed into long-term partnership and continue to work on more joint-issues.

Before joining in this exchange, I thought it would be quite complex. Fortunately, when I started, I felt it was a clear cooperation. We worked on advocating towards policymakers in a similar way. Before I came to Europe, I thought European NGOs would suffer less pressure, because of the functioning governmental system in Europe and the European awareness in environmental protection. But reality showed that they also feel under pressure when working on environmental issues. As mentioned above, I also aimed to study the public regarding air pollution governance in Europe. But contrary to my expectations, I didn't find various methods of public participation and communication on air pollution. In my opinion, this could be one developing direction for the European NGO landscape.

Future plans for cooperation

During this exchange, I felt closer to other NGOs because we have the same objectives, which benefits a long-term partnership. We are still in contact with NABU and DUH mostly by email when working on a similar topic. And for the future, we have decided to work on air pollution emissions control in ports. A next step is to find possible chances to work on it cooperating with larger and professional Chinese organizations, like the NRDC.

In my eyes, the activities in this exchange proved sustainable. I'd like to stress the importance of practitioners, the exchange fellows should spend enough time to communicate with each other to make sure the quality of the exchange. Last but not least, when exchange fellows design the activities for the opposite side in their countries, it will be nice to prepare a general background and introduction of the meetings, as well as the introduce of some key colleagues and his/her main work, which could be beneficial for joint learning. During the exchange I have also met one more German NGO which we might cooperate with: T&E (Transport and Environment) could be another future partner for Green Collar.