

Deutsche Umwelthilfe e.V. (DUH)

**China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development
Foundation(CBCGDF)**

Report on 2016 EU-China NGO Twinning Program

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The role of NGOs in implementing existing environmental legislation is growing. Taking legal action is a strong instrument in this context. Opportunities for NGOs to engage in this field are growing, not only in the EU due to latest jurisdiction strengthening the rights of NGOs but also in China. However, sound standing knowledge on legal and technical aspects as well as pursuing successful strategies are important to achieve success. It is therefore important to deepen exchange and knowledge transfer among each other and to build up a solid network with the potential or collaboration beyond this exchange program.

Chen Zhen

**China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development
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Beijing, China

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Introduction (Objectives, expectations)

As a member of a non-profit environmental protection organization, it was my great honor to attend the EU-China NGO twinning exchange program and have the chance to work and study in DUH in Berlin.

The objectives and expectations of CBCGDF were to know how DUH and other NGOs work in protecting the environment and learn these advanced experiences, study how the EPIL System works in EU and analyze the differences between EU and China in it. We do want to find a way to cooperate with EU NGOs to protect the environment together.

Challenges (Cultural contrasts)

When I first came to Europe, everything was new to me and I was very excited. I found Berlin was a clean and tidy city, people here were very nice and helpful. When I came to the office of DUH the first day, my twinning partner Peter introduced me to his colleagues, they were all very friendly to me. After a few days working in his office, I found it is totally different in the way we thought and worked. I want to tell a story to show one of the differences.

On the second day I came to Berlin, Peter took me to a river bank, where next to the parliament. And he told me he would ride a bike jump into the river with a group of people. "Do your guys want to commit suicide." I thought. Wearing suit and black leather shoes, riding a bicycle jumped into the river. It seemed super crazy to me, standing on a Chinese perspective. I knew Peter intended to promote Bicycle law in Berlin, to make the cyclist safer and encourage more and more people to ride bicycle instead of driving cars which was intended to reduce the air pollution. "Why do you want to destroy your bicycle, you're always the one who promotes bicycle campaign." I asked Peter, and he told me "No, it's not a destroy. The government sabotaged to passing the bicycle law, and we want public know what the government does. There were a lot of medias here, and everyone would know quickly. I was shocked that they used this way against government to express their dissatisfaction."

In China, we are not allowed to do this. No matter you are a person or an NGO. And this makes me realize that how difficult an NGO wants to do something freely in China. We come across plenty of obstacles when we try to do something good, from the local government, company and even the public. They suspect and impose restrictions on the NGOs, especially the environmental protection NGOs. They may consider that you have nothing better to do. The development of China's NGOs has only a few decades. And still have a long way to go, to learn, to fight.

Activities

Attend the meeting about bicycling in Berlin

I went to this meeting with my partner Peter. Some people who came from small bicycle group and NGOs got together talking about how to make the Government pass the Bicycle law. They intended to encourage more people to ride bicycles and make people safer when they riding bicycles in Berlin.

It was the first activity I participated in Germany. Although people spoke German almost in the whole meeting and I couldn't understand what they said, but I could feel, look, and think. I knew they were eager to have a policy or law to make people safe and comfortable when they riding the bicycle. The more people ride the bicycle, the better air quality there are.

Join the campaign against the local government

My Partner Peter lunched a campaign with some of his friends who made their effort to let the local government pass the bicycle law in Berlin. But unfortunately, the government did something to sabotage this scheme. Just because of this, they lunched a campaign, several people rode a bicycle jumping into a river one by one to protest the local government. It was very crazy to me, as I said before. But I admired their courages, and I learned a lot.

Introduced what we do to the junior school student

A group of junior school student came to DUH's office in Berlin, Peter and I introduced what we did in our organizations to them. I showed them the endangered animals, plants that CBCGDF protected in China. The volunteers who tried their best to protect the environment, to make the air quality better in China. I wanted them to know more about Chinese NGOs, especially environmental protection NGOs.

Attend an activity to express gratitude to people who taking the public transportations

It was at a bus stop in Berlin, Peter and his friends who supported the bicycle law passing got together to express gratitude to people who taking the public transportations instead of driving cars. They used rags to clean every bus window that came by. I was so moved about what they had done, they tried their best to achieve the goal.

Visit some other environmental protection NGOs in Europe

During the exchange period, I visited some other environmental protection NGOs like ClientEarth, EEB (the European Environmental Bureau), FNE (France Nature Environnement), UFU (the Independent Institute for Environmental Issues) to have a better understanding in the practical experience of environmental protection and environmental public interest litigation.

Attend the workshop in Berlin

We were very lucky to attend this exciting workshop in Berlin. All the twinning members had the chance to share their experiences in the exchange period to all of us, including what we did, learned and understood. Luckily, we were trained by some professors from the University of Hamburg on how to express ourselves properly, how to make a perfect presentation. I had to say that it was very useful for us when we made the final presentation to other people. We had a wonderful time during the workshop in Berlin.

Outcome and Impact

Honestly, I found that my partner Peter and I were in different areas when we were working together. My job was as an assistant lawyer to collect evidence to help CBCGDF file environmental public interest litigation when factories, companies polluting the environment. And Peter, his work was concentrate on environmental initiatives and programs. Although we

did the different work ,but what we did were making the world better,that's the same thing we did.And I learned a lot from him when he was working.He took all his work seriously and had done them very efficient and rapid .

Peter and I got along well with each other.It was not easy to get along with people from different background,but we did it .We knew we had differences when we were talking、communating、 working together,but we admitted and accepted the differences and tried to understand each other. Everyone had the rights to express freely and no one could judge them.We helped and respected each other ,no matter at work or in the daily life.

In addition,I have visited some other European NGOs like ClientEarth, EEB(the European Environmental Bureau), FNE (France Nature Environnement), UFU (the Independent Institute for Environmental Issues).I learned the European environmental protection policy especially in the aspect of environmental interest public litigation .

Future Plans and Sustainability of the Partnership

During this exchange, I felt that I was very lucky to join the EU-China NGO exchange program and had a chance to know how other NGOs and twinning worked in protecting the environment.Since we have the same goal, which make us can cooperate in the long run.Although Peter and I are in different areas when working ,but both of our organizations have a lot in common.CBCGDF and DUH are both environmental protection organizations and file environmental public interest litigations.The two organizations can cooperate in many areas.For me and my partner Peter,we are good friends now,we will definitely help each other when someone come across difficulties.Besides,as I have visited some other NGOs in Europe like EEB,Clientearth,FNE,UFU,I would establish relationships with these organizations.It was great to have a chance to vist them and I did learn a lot from these NGOs.



