



# IFAIR

Young Initiative on Foreign Affairs  
and International Relations e.V.

## Report

Conducted in  
cooperation with



## IFAIR's 3<sup>rd</sup> EU-ASEAN Perspectives Dialogue: Delegation visit to Brussels, 14-16 November 2016

The Young Initiative on Foreign Affairs and International Relations (IFAIR), in cooperation with the German Federal Foreign Office, Kanita and the European Institute for Asian Studies (EIAS), organized a visit by a delegation of students and young gender experts to Brussels from 14 to 16 November 2016. The programme marked the final phase of IFAIR's [3<sup>rd</sup> EU-ASEAN Perspectives Dialogue \(EUAP III\)](#). Having discussed current challenges to achieving gender equality in an online conference and jointly written a [policy paper](#) with recommendations for EU and ASEAN decision-makers, the participants presented their findings and suggestions to stakeholders in the European capital. The programme included a Citizen Café and a panel discussion organized by IFAIR, where the young EUAP III experts engaged with the broad public as well as high-level decision-makers on questions of female empowerment, gender and culture, and men's engagement in the fight for gender equality. A highlight of the events was the keynote speech by Helga Schmid, the Secretary-General of the European External Action Service (EEAS).



Members of the EUAP III delegation. A full list of participants can be found [online](#).

[www.ifair.eu](http://www.ifair.eu)



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## Overview of the Delegation Programme:

### **Monday, 14th November 2016**

- Exchange with Laurence Gillois, Programme and Partnership Specialist of UN Women Office in Brussels
- Background talk with Steven Everts and Guisepppe Busini, Senior Advisors to the European External Action Service on EU-ASEAN relations
- Exchange with Friederike Kamm and Daniela Iller, Policy Officers at the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung EU Office
- Exchange with Anne van Nistelrooij, Policy Officer at the Gender Equality Unit of DG Justice, European Commission

### **Tuesday, 15th November 2016**

- EUAP Citizen Café: “Gender Inequality – How is This Still a Thing? Young Perspectives from the EU and ASEAN”
- Panel Debate: “Partners beyond Trade: How the EU and ASEAN Can Promote Gender Equality”

### **Wednesday, 16th November 2016**

- Dialogue with Marilyn Neven, Programme Manager at the International IDEA Office to the EU and Pamela Rodríguez, Regional Manager for Latin America at the Women in Parliaments Global Forum (WIP)
- Working lunch with representatives of ASEAN Embassies and Missions at the Royal Thai Embassy
- Visit to the Parlamentarium
- Background talk with Dr. Tim Prange, COASI and COTRA Delegate at the Permanent Representation of the Federal Republic of Germany to the EU

## Day 1 – 14 November 2016

### **UN Women Office in Brussels – exchange with Laurence Gillois, Programme and Partnership Specialist**

Laurence Gillois gave the participants an interesting insight into how the UN Women Office in Brussels works in general and how it cooperates with the EU in particular. Given its five priority objectives (leading political transformation, claiming economic rights, ending violence against women and girls, making gender equality central to peace, planning and budgeting for empowerment), UN Women in Brussels started its cooperation with the EU in April 2012 by signing an official agreement which was reinforced in June 2016.

In this context, Gillois presented different ongoing projects and campaigns which UN Women is currently undertaking together with the EU, such as the ‘HeforShe’-Campaign or comic competitions on gender equality which were also conducted in the ASEAN region. After her presentation, a vivid discussion and critical reflection unfolded on how the EU and ASEAN member states deal with issues of gender equality and how much more awareness-raising is needed in both regions.



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## European External Action Service – background talk with Steven Everts and Giuseppe Busini, Senior Advisors on EU-ASEAN relations



The meeting at the European External Action Service (EEAS) with two Senior Advisors on EU-ASEAN relations gave the delegation participants an excellent opportunity to discuss the EU's commitment to strengthen its region-to-region cooperation with ASEAN, and to foster and mainstream human rights – including gender equality – in all of its joint programmes. The two experts described the current framework of the EU's dialogue and cooperation with ASEAN. Besides more than doubling its financial assistance, the EU has also established an official Policy Dialogue on Human Rights with ASEAN, which took place for the first time in October 2015. This official dialogue was preceded by a one-week study visit to Brussels by members of ASEAN's human rights bodies, who had exchanges on best practices and experiences in dealing with current human rights challenges. Having established an official Policy Dialogue on one of the most sensitive political fields, the EU is now aiming at elevating its current partnership with the ASEAN to a Strategic Partnership. Furthermore, Everts and Busini stressed that gender equality has also received a specific mentioning in the Bangkok Declaration which was published during the 21<sup>st</sup> ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting in October 2016.



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## **Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung EU Office – exchange with Friederike Kamm and Daniela Iller, Policy Officers**

The dialogue with representatives of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung's (FES) EU Office in Brussels was a great opportunity for the participants to get to know better the work of a political foundation. In the case of the FES, its major objective is to promote social democracy by cooperating with other international organisations and trade unions and to liaise with academics and politicians. Through this, the foundation aims at serving as a platform for critical dialogue and discussions which involve all kinds of stakeholders related to a specific policy field.

Gender equality has been a core working field of the foundation for a very long time. During the subsequent discussion, topics like political education, increasing right-wing extremist movements in Europe and in other parts of the world as well as the need for more male involvement in gender equality-related issues were addressed by the participants. They said that in the EU and ASEAN regions, the topic of gender equality has been overshadowed in recent times by the current refugee crises in both regions. That being said, migration is an issue which in itself requires more gender-sensitive work.

## **European Commission, DG Justice, Gender Equality Unit – exchange with Anne van Nistelrooij, Policy Officer**

Anne van Nistelrooij congratulated the delegation for its policy paper, in which she sees many interesting recommendations. In her subsequent presentation, she explained how the EU Commission and its DG Justice works to achieve gender equality objectives. The latter was already an essential part of the Rome Treaty in 1957. Being a core policy area of the EU from its very beginning, it must be considered and respected in all working areas of the EU, so that gender equality concerns are mainstreamed in all of the EU's daily actions, projects and programmes.



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Nistelrooij went on to highlight the EU's "Strategic Engagement", which aims at getting more women into the labour market and narrowing the gender pay gap, which in turn has a tremendous impact on the pension gap between women and men. Furthermore, the policy framework tackles the still existing inequality between female and male representation in decision-making positions. The participants of the IFAIR delegation engaged in a discussion with Nistelrooij, which touched on the one hand on the different recommendations outlined in their policy paper, and included questions on EU's concrete current activities to foster gender equality on the other.



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Day 2 – 15 November 2016

## **EUAP Citizen Café: “Gender Inequality – How is This Still a Thing? Young Perspectives from the EU and ASEAN”**



During the Citizen Café, which was held at the premises of the European Institute for Asian Studies (EIAS), the delegation members had their first opportunity to present the findings and recommendations of the policy paper to the public. Using flipchart visualizations, they presented their ideas at four stations dedicated to specific focal points. After each presentation, the delegation members engaged with the young audience which included university students and interns at political institutions. The format of the Citizen Café thus made possible a highly interactive and personal exchange between the delegation members and the interested public.

## **Panel Debate: “Partners beyond Trade: How the EU and ASEAN Can Promote Gender Equality”**

In cooperation with the EIAS, IFAIR organized a panel debate, which was kicked off with a keynote speech by Helga Schmid, the newly appointed Secretary-General of the EEAS. In her remarks, she mentioned some of the main challenges that the EU and ASEAN commonly face in terms of gender equality. With a view to the EUAP project, Schmid said she was happy to see how the two regions are constantly growing closer and that civil society and young people are included in this process.



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Schmid's comments provided a good changeover to the debate, to which IFAIR had invited high-level ASEAN and EU representatives from the academia and civil society. An EUAP III participant represented the young voice on the panel. Under the broad topic of gender equality, the panellists discussed the different challenges in the two regions. There was a consensus that policy-makers are usually aware of gender difficulties and have introduced various legal frameworks and projects in order to tackle these challenges. However, the panellists also observed that there is a remarkable difference between the issuance of official commitments and their implementation in the aftermath. Too often, policy-makers subordinate concrete follow-up action on gender issues to the benefits of fostering business and trade cooperation.





The speakers emphasized that the fight for gender equality is a process in which cultural and religious contexts need to be taken into account. Despite this, they saw similar challenges and potential for cooperation between the two regions, for example through an exchange on good practices, some of which were highlighted during the debate. For example, Marisna Yulianti, the EUAP representative on the panel, shared insights about how Muslim scholars are currently trying to interpret the Koran with a more gender sensitive approach. The debate stimulated a discussion in which the audience was highly engaged. The full report on the Citizen Café and the panel discussion can be found [online](#).

Day 3 – Wednesday, 16 November 2016

**International IDEA EU Office and Women in Parliaments Global Forum (WIP) – dialogue with Marilyn Neven, Programme Manager (IDEA) and Pamela Rodríguez, Regional Manager for Latin America (WIP)**

As Pamela Rodríguez pointed out in the trilateral meeting, WIP has committed itself to fostering greater gender balance in politics. To this end, it conducts training sessions and workshops for female politicians. Rodríguez also showcased activities such as the Leadership Campaign and newly published studies.

International IDEA is an intergovernmental body which is active in the broad field of democracy promotion. This year's programmatic objective of IDEA is to analyse political parties and systems under a gender equality angle, with a view to the question how the use of money affects political parties and democracy. Marilyn Neven highlighted some of the findings: according to her, women often have less access to money and, by consequence, less access to power.

In accordance with IDEA's desire to cooperate more with the young generation, International IDEA invited delegation members to attend the Regional Consultation on Gender Equality and Political Empowerment of Women, which took place on the sidelines of the Bali Democracy Forum "Gender Equality and Political Empowerment Regional Consultation" in December 2016. This occasion presented the EUAP III participants with a valuable opportunity to deepen their dialogue with other stakeholders and to further develop its network.



## **Working lunch with representatives of ASEAN Embassies and Missions at the Royal Thai Embassy**



The Embassy of Thailand, which currently chairs the ASEAN Brussels Committee, kindly invited the IFAIR delegation to a working lunch together with representatives from all ASEAN Embassies and Missions in Brussels. While enjoying original Pad Thai noodles, the delegation participants were given the possibility to address questions on a variety of topics concerning ASEAN-EU relations in general and gender related issues in both regions in particular. The meeting revolved around topics like region-to-region connection, people-to-people interaction, ASEAN's human rights bodies and their functions. The ASEAN diplomats also shared some insights on potential ways for the EUAP III group to engage further with Southeast Asian policy-makers.

## **Permanent Representation of the Federal Republic of Germany to the EU – background talk with Dr Tim Prange, COASI and COTRA Delegate**

The last meeting of the delegation was held at the Permanent Representation of the Federal Republic of Germany to the EU. Dr Tim Prange introduced the work of the Permanent Representation and explained the challenges that he personally faces in his daily work. Besides referring to gender equality as a core topic, he also addressed other current international developments in the ASEAN region that were of interest for German and European foreign policy just recently. Covering topics from the recent ruling on the South China Sea Dispute to the EU's desire to elevate its relation with the ASEAN to a more strategic level, he also shared some frank insights on difficulties in EU-ASEAN relations, as well as internal and external challenges to the EU's global standing more generally. Dr Prange showed a keen interest in the questions, ideas and recommendations of the delegation members and was eager to learn how they see current challenges in their respective regions.