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# JakartaGlobe

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Monday Community **Tuesday Literature** We

## EU Slips Under Asia's Radar

**Katrin Figge**

The European Union is invisible and irrelevant to Asia, according to a new book detailing a study by the Singapore-based Asia-Europe Foundation and New Zealand's National Center for Research on Europe.

The research project, initiated in 2006, examines how Asian citizens perceive the EU. While the first volume of the study, published in 2007, focused on China, Japan, Singapore, South Korea and Thailand, the newly released second book looks at EU visibility in Vietnam, Indonesia and the Philippines.

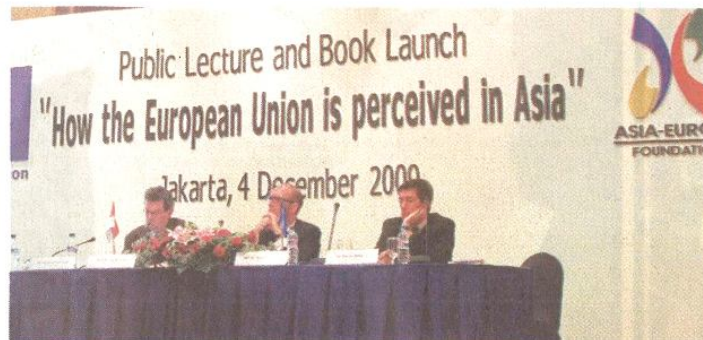
Martin Holland, the director of the NCRE, launched the book in Jakarta on Friday as part of a lecture tour and offered some insights into the topic.

"Our work over the last four years has shown that Europe lacks a face," he said. "I am afraid that Europe is comparatively invisible in this part of the world, despite what Brussels may wish."

The team used three different research methods. First, they examined the Asian media, monitoring how often the EU was mentioned in the news. Second, they conducted public opinion surveys. And third, they conducted interviews with decision-makers from politics, business, civil society and media.

"The EU appears most often in the popular newspapers," Holland said. "So there is some hope, I guess, that ordinary citizens might be exposed to what the EU is doing in the world."

However, he added that the average



Above, representatives of a study into Asian perceptions of the EU at Friday's book launch. Below, Martin Holland delivering comments on the study's findings. JG Photos/Katrin Figge



number of stories mentioning the EU was only one per day, and in those stories the EU might not even be the main focus.

But when it comes to the views of decision-makers, the EU has made a stronger impression, especially economically.

"Decision-makers see the Euro as a stable and promising currency, gaining importance in the international financial market," Holland said. "However, a large proportion still regards the US dollar as the dominant and preferred international currency."

This awareness of the EU was at odds with public opinion.

"We asked people where they would rank the importance of the EU to their country now, and where they would

rank it in the future, in 10 years time," Holland said. "In every case, with the exception of China, the rank of importance people gave to the EU was considerably lower than the reality."

The invisibility of the EU in Asia is of concern, according to Julian Wilson, head of the EU delegation to Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam, who attended the book launch.

"It's a basic dilemma that we have in the European Union, that the bigger you get, the further away you are from the citizens," Wilson said.

He added that the more the EU grew, the more impact it has on people's lives, but that most people were not aware of that.

"There is a stark difference between how the EU is viewed by elites and by the general public," Wilson said. "Forty-three percent of the elite representatives questioned identified the EU as the most important partner for Indonesia, whilst barely 9 percent of ordinary people made the same choice."

This disparity underlined the need for the EU to do more to explain its role and values to a wider audience, he said.

One of the factors in achieving this is a closer relationship with local media.

"I readily take on board the advice set out in the book to engage more effectively with the Indonesian media," he said.

Holland emphasized the importance of the project results as he hoped they would have an impact on the EU at the highest levels.

"A perception of Europe as 'failing' internationally puts at risk the notion of integration and its legitimacy for EU citizens," he said.

The third and last phase of the project will see research focused in India, Macau and Malaysia.



**The EU Through the Eyes of Asia Volume II: New Cases, New Findings**  
 Edited by Natalia Chaban, Martin Holland, Peter Ryan  
 World Scientific  
 271 pages