



European Union  
Delegation to Singapore



## The European Union Film Festival in Singapore: 27 Years *Presenting Europe's Cultural Diversity through Cinema*

### 1. Re-branding Singapore's Longest Running Foreign Film Festival for #EU60

The European Union Film Festival, the EU's flagship cultural event in Singapore, ended on a high. The festival has grown much in 27 years, providing a platform for ongoing inter-cultural dialogues between Singaporean and European communities. In its 27<sup>th</sup> edition, the Festival re-positioned itself as it moved to the iconic arts institution: National Gallery Singapore. This move was made possible thanks to Title Sponsor: German European School Singapore.

Says Dr Michael Pulch, European Union Ambassador to Singapore: "In this historically significant year which marks 60 years of the European Union, we looked at deepening our long-established cultural connections with Singapore. In this context, National Gallery Singapore was a fitting venue partner for the longest running foreign film festival here. I am delighted that we drew a record number of film and art lovers to the new setting and I hope to continue with this partnership as we look towards 2018."



*Opening night of the 27<sup>th</sup> EUFF held at the iconic National Gallery Singapore. Over 350 guests attended the event. Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Health, Dr Amy Khor was the guest of honour.*

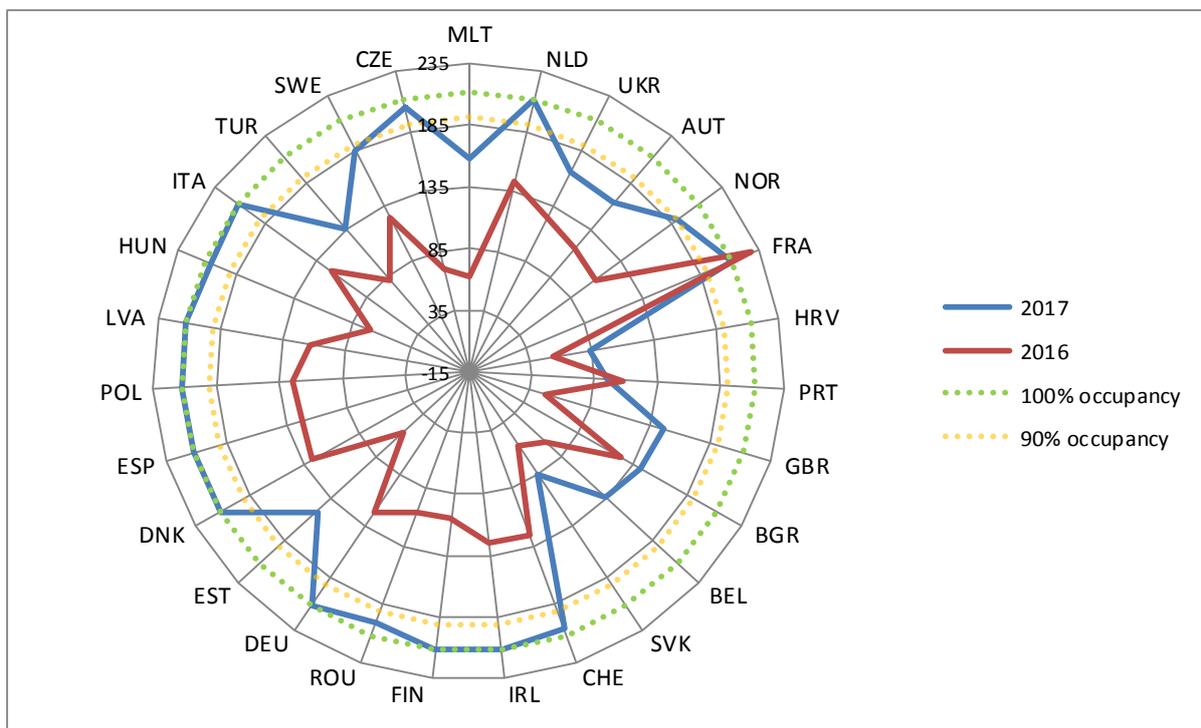
## 2. Successful Cross-Cultural Dialogue and Collaboration

The EUFF offers audiences in Singapore an opportunity to access a variety of films that rarely receive commercial screenings outside Europe thus becoming a cultural bridge between Europe and Singapore. Almost 5,000 viewers watched the 27 movies screened as part of the festival, by far the highest participation to date. Alongside the European movies, 7 short films made by students and renowned alumni from Ngee Ann Polytechnic's School of Film & Media Studies, including award-winning director Boo Junfeng and Kirsten Tan, were screened during the 10-day long festival.

## 3. Changes in the 27<sup>th</sup> Edition of EUFF

Being presented in the year, the European Union marks 60 years, the 27th edition of EUFF benefited greatly from its new setting - National Gallery Singapore. Firstly, moving to National Gallery Singapore enabled the Festival to grow, as the Ngee Ann Kongsi auditorium can seat 212. Consequently, the festival saw an average increase of 72 viewers per show. Furthermore, it allowed EUFF to anchor itself even more in the rich cultural landscape of Singapore and permitted the Festival to deepen its long-established ties with the City-state. Finally, shifting from Golden Village, a commercial venue to an arts institution gave the Festival a more prestigious setting and set the tone for its future ambitions.

## 4. Increased Numbers



**Fig.1** Evolution of the numbers of viewers by country between 2016 and 2017 (\*in 2016, France screened its movie twice, the data is the sum of the two shows)

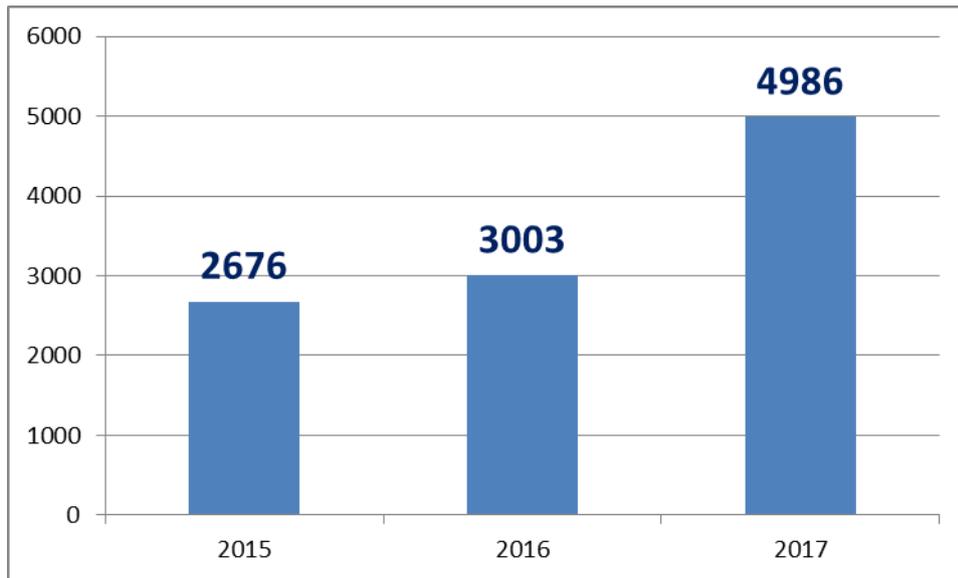
The festival opened with a full-house for the screening of award-winning German movie *Goodbye Berlin/Tschick*. The film's lead actor Anand Batbileg was flown from Berlin for the opening. While here, he was also interviewed by several media. There were over 350 guests at the opening night

backed by EUFF 2017 Feature Country Germany and supported by Goethe Institut Singapore. Dr Amy Khor, Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Health, was EUFF 2017 Guest of Honour. Mr Kenneth Tan, chairman, Singapore Film Society, Dr Michael Witter, German Ambassador to Singapore, and Dr Michael Pulch, European Union Ambassador to Singapore were all in attendance together with Ambassadors from several other European countries.



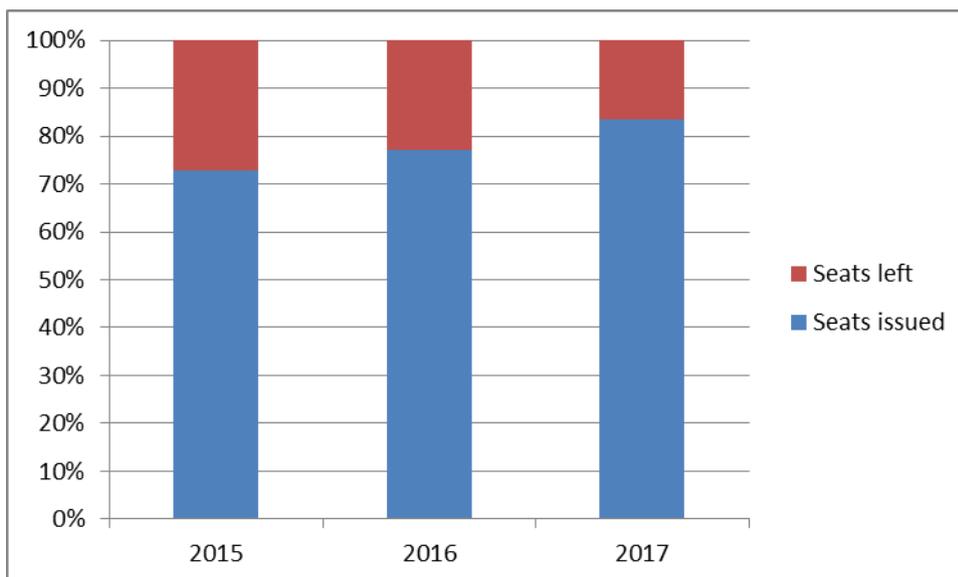
*From top to bottom and left to right: H.E Hakan Jevrell (SWE), H.E. Luis Loravo (PRT), H.E. Karin Fichtinger-Grohe (AUT), Mr Alexandru Irimia (ROU), H.E. Gerard Cockx (BEL), H.E Murat Lutem (TUR), Mr Marco Cardoni (ITA), H.E James Sinclair Manley (CHL), H.E. Michael Pulch (EUD), Ms Chong Siak Ching (NGS), Dr Amy Khor (EUFF 2017 Guest of Honour), Mr Anand Batbileg (Lead actor 'Goodbye Berlin/Tschick'), H.E. Michael Witter (GER), H.E. Zenon Kosiniak-Kamysz (POL), H.E. Geoffrey Keating (IRL), H.E Paula Parviainen (FIN)*

Apart from the two full-house screenings of 'Goodbye Berlin/Tschick' on opening night, 12 other films ran to full-houses. These included: 'Beyond Sleep' (The Netherlands), 'Oslo, 31 August' (Norway), 'Open at Night' (France), 'The Chinese Lives of Uli Sigg' (Switzerland), 'The Young Offenders' (Ireland), 'The Happiest Day in the Life of Olli Maki' (Finland), 'Two Lottery Tickets' (Romania), 'Goodbye Berlin/Tschick' (public screening - Germany), 'Marie Kroyer' (Denmark), 'Marshland' (Spain), 'Planet Single' (Poland), 'Mellow Mud' (Latvia), and 'Correspondence' (Italy). This is an increase from last year where 11 shows in total ran to full-houses. It proves that local audiences appreciate the opportunity to watch award-winning European movies in high quality format. Most of the films were screened in Digital Cinema Package (DCP) format - a standard in Singapore.



**Fig.2** Evolution of the total number of viewers since 2015 (figures for 2015 and 2016 don't include opening night guests)

Overall, the number of festival goers increased by almost 60% from 2016<sup>1</sup> (fig.2). The festival also saw a significant increase in participation: 83.40%<sup>2</sup> compared to 77.14%<sup>3</sup> in 2016 and 72.86%<sup>4</sup> in 2015 (fig.3).



**Fig.3** Evolution of the participation since 2015 (excluding opening night)

<sup>1</sup> the Festival welcomed 4774 in 2017, 3003 in 2016, and 2576 in 2015 (all excluding opening night)

<sup>2</sup> opening nights are not accounted in participation rates, if taken into account participation rate for 2017 moves to 84.00%

<sup>3</sup> Idem; n.b. in 2016, 30 movies were screened for a total of 31 shows (excluding opening night)

<sup>4</sup> Idem; n.b. in 2015, 29 movies were screened for a total of 29 shows (excluding opening night)

## 5. Media Coverage

The festival received extensive media coverage including in The Straits Time, Channel News Asia and Silverkris. A snapshot:



From top to bottom and left to right: Silverkris, The Peak, Channel News Asia, The Straits Times

It was listed in various magazines and was featured in the Life section of The Straits Times newspaper for six consecutive weeks. The presence of the lead actor from 'Goodbye Berlin (Tschick)', Anand Batbileg and filmmaker of 'The Chinese Lives of Uli Sigg' Michael Schindhelm, at the 27th EUFF garnered positive media interests. Popular online media, Pospoken, which has a strong following among the millennials, interviewed Anand Batbileg. Michael Schindhelm was interviewed by online film magazine InCinemas.sg, news radio 938 LIVE and Channel NewsAsia's breakfast news programme, First Look Asia. The 27th EUFF had the strong support from 2 key media partners for the promotion of the festival: Art Republik and InCinemas.sg.

## 6. Social Media Support

Once again, the festival greatly benefited from a sustained social media campaign led by the EU Delegation with active updates from most participating member states. The #EUFFSG hashtag was widely used. In digitally-wired Singapore, several movie-goers shared their cinematic experiences on social media. Our followers on the EUFF page also went up.



Screenshot of the EUFF Facebook and followers count as of 29/05/17

At the time of the compilation of this report, we had 3210 followers (+500 from last year) on our EUFF Facebook page.

## 7. Innovative Programming around Film Screenings

Several EU Member States used the opportunity to showcase the rich and diverse aspects of their cultures by organising receptions in the Ngee Ann Kongsi Auditorium Foyer before their respective screenings. The Swiss embassy had a post-show discussion with art collector Uli Sigg and movie director Michael Schindhelm who both flew down just for the festival. The Polish embassy invited 3 acclaimed Polish chefs to prepare some food for ticket holders.

## 8. Inclusivity in the Arts

The EUFF has been privileged to support inclusivity in the arts and included various outreach activities in its festival programming. The British Council Singapore invited special guests from the Singapore Association for the Deaf to their feature film, 'Electricity' as part of their wider Inclusive Arts Campaign. The film was subtitled for the hearing-impaired viewers. The Embassy of Belgium in Singapore invited a group of ten Bangladeshi migrant workers who are poets to the screening of the Belgian feature film 'Problemski Hotel'. The movie inspired by controversial Belgian novelist Dimitri Verhulst's internationally acclaimed novel of the same name takes on the many sensitive issues migrants face.



Members of the Migrant Bengali Literature of Singapore at EUFF

**Comment:** Once again, EUFF was excellently received and promoted cross-cultural dialogue this year. The 27<sup>th</sup> edition owes its unprecedented success mainly to the change of venue to National Gallery Singapore coupled with the great line-up of films offered by Member States.