

# Women in International Security - Brussels

## Report on 2024

2024 was a year of connections, growth, and impact for our community. Beyond its ability to gather people and network in this capital of Europe, WIIS Brussels reached out wide and far across borders, both online and in person. It delivered on a couple of new initiatives and deepened practices in bringing to the table various perspectives and experiences, as well as new voices across generations drawing together this rich mosaic of women in the international security community in Brussels. The Steering Committee doubled down on its dedication to diversity, equity, and inclusion in meaningful ways, committed to do things differently. Mentoring & trainings continued to serve the Brussels-based community. From conversations with strategic leaders to consultations on women's roles and perceptions in peace and security, we continued to serve the network. Through our circle times and rich dialogues, offering a safe space to go beyond knowledge and expertise, we found new ways to build lasting relationships around thought-provoking ideas.

### WIIS connecting women

The [2024-2025 mentoring programme](#) started with an in person launch, on 21 October 2024, gathering 28 pairs of mentees and mentors this year. This is a competitive programme and the feedback is always extremely positive. Some productive relationships are built sometimes leading to successful job searches. The group of mentors continues to include several members of the WIIS-Brussels steering committee, but reaches out to EU officials and NATO international staff, as well as professionals from the private sector and academia/think tanks. Everyone loves this programme!

[Happy Hours](#) resumed this year in different formats. Two regular networking sessions around a free drink downtown for our community opened up opportunities to welcome potential new members from the fast moving environment of experts that exists in Brussels,. In addition, we successfully bundled up Happy Hours with specific events: once with a training event on Networking with Sonal Bahl; a second time at the occasion of our event on Exploring the Impact of New and Emerging Technologies on European Elections, together with Defend Democracy; and another time at the occasion of the visit of WIIS Germany to Brussels, where we were graciously hosted by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Foundation Brussels Office.

### WIIS developing women

In 2024, WIIS Brussels organized [a wellbeing Sanctuary Circle](#) on 20 June for those in need of quality time to replenish in a busy and often challenging work environment. We will look to doing more circles next year as this has been a much appreciated occasion in our training series. In addition, [eight training sessions](#) were offered to our members, namely: "*Salary negotiation*" and



also “Mastering Networking: From theory to practice” with Sonal Bahl; “Public Speaking” by Magda Kern; “Leadership” by Lucia Montanaro; “Exploring the intersection of Climate, Gender and Security in a polycrisis world” by Sofiia Shevchuk; “Having difficult conversations”, Series of 3 trainings by Daria Nashat and Claudia Cortes.

### WIIS exploring new ways for impact

In 2024, WIIS Brussels continued reaching out beyond its Belgian network organizing consultations among its members and friends abroad on how to relate to [security from the inside out](#). Building on a coaching approach, through meaningful questions, delving into personal stories, WIIS continues to explore how to create the conditions for our security beyond old concepts and structures. WIIS Brussels engaged this year with women from Columbia, Central and Eastern Europe, Women on the Move through the refugees communities, and finally with women from Ghana, Senegal and South Africa through a new series of *four consultations* (22 January, 11 April, 11 September and 17 December) both on-line and in-person. This self-enquiry process, navigating a complex reformulation of security in today’s world, bridges across cultural and geopolitical divides in an effort to shape a new approach that takes account of human, economic, health, mental and psychological security, stresses the importance of trust, community, the need to empower people, and offers greater compassion, in search of a new balance between the respective roles of individuals, national and international players.

**Social Media:** Our team has tirelessly amplified the events, consultations, training and mentoring programme of WIIS Brussels as well as the work of WIIS colleagues, pushing information to our community, ensuring impact and visibility. We are proud to announce the launch of our [WIIS Brussels Newsletter](#), which will be emailed to our members every other month as of 2025.

### Special Events and Partners

In 2024, WIIS Brussels has invested in its relationships with other [WIIS chapters](#). With WIIS Germany, we welcomed special events on 11 April: a happy Hour with the support of RUSI Brussels, and a lunch at NATO headquarters hosted by our antenna *WIIS@nato* with a speaker: Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy, Marie-Doha Besancenot. On 15 May, we also hosted online an event for the WIIS Canada chapter devoted to “Careers in Brussels”. Finally, on 31 July, we hosted an online informal brief on the NATO Summit at the end of July to foster a free exchange on the results of the Summit among security experts.

Special events on line and in person offered opportunities to further develop our [partnerships](#) with GLOBSEC, the Delegation of the Netherlands to NATO, the Brussels offices of Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS), and Heinrich Böll Foundation (HBF). We have greatly benefitted from our interactions with them as well as with friends from the Brussels Office of RUSI.

### Community Building



The WIIS-Brussels community meets regularly and in several formats in support of its community of Brussels-based members, notably through Happy Hours. The Steering Committee meets every month. It engages with a group of Advisors on an *ad hoc* basis. Advisors have notably supported the Steering Committee in the end of the year on their brainstorming over a change of leadership in 2025. The Brussels leadership team is on the move!

**WIIS@NATO** had a particularly active year with *eight conversations* with women in leadership positions at NATO; *two training sessions* exchanging tips and know-how on having difficult conversations and on leadership for this specific community; *two brainstorming* discussions on organizational culture with the delivery of a Non-Paper to the new NATO Secretary General. The community also organized *three networking events* in 2024 over coffee.

### **Brussels Team**

- President: Isabelle François
- Vice President: Romana Michelon
- Secretary-General: Mona Koehler-Schindler
- Treasurer: Stephanie Daher
- Steering Committee members: Angelica Arambulo, Lucile Bardin, Diana DeVivo, Eva Houtave, Krystal Gaillard, Hajar Busif, Isabella Vogel, Mona Koehler-Schindler, Nad'a Kovalcikova, Nuria Portero, Sofiia Shevchuk, Rebekka Haffner, Anne Shintgen, Enisa Musai.
- Collaborators: Hafsa Temsamani, Stella Zervoudaki,
- Advisors: Rosa Balfour, Ilana Bet-El, Cristina Gallach, Corinna Hörst, Marta Martinelli, Pauline Massart, Daria Nashat, Teri Schultz.

### **Partners and cooperating organizations this year**

- European Commission (FPI)
- Delegation of the Netherlands to NATO
- U.S. Mission to NATO
- Globsec
- Defend Democracy
- European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)
- Konrad Adenauer Stiftung
- Henrich Böll Stiftung
- WIIS-Canada
- WIIS-Germany
- WIIS-Latvia
- WIIS Global

