

The Vietnam - Austria Friendship Association

**Submission to the Human Rights Committee 144th session (May 2025) -
State Parties to be Examined – Vietnam**

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Logo of VAFA:



REPORT OF THE VIET NAM – AUSTRIA FRIENDSHIP ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS IN VIETNAM

The Vietnam -Austria Friendship Association (VAFA):

The Vietnam-Austria Friendship Association (VAFA), voluntarily established in 2022, is a social organization of Vietnamese citizens and organizations that plays an important role in strengthening the close and diverse relationship between the Vietnamese and Austrian communities. The main goal of the Association is to create an open forum for cultural, economic and social exchange, contributing to a deeper understanding between the two countries. The purpose of VAFA's activities: to gather and unite members, organize effective people-to-people foreign affairs activities between Viet Nam and Austria to contribute to strengthening the friendship, understanding and cooperation between the Vietnamese and Austrian people; to act as a bridge to promote cooperation activities in the fields of politics, economics - trade, education, culture, information and communication, tourism, sports and other fields between Viet Nam and Austria, serving the interests of the people of each country, for peace, cooperation and development in the region and the world.

VAFA's activities demonstrates the implementation of civil and political rights Viet Nam

Since its establishment in June 2022, VAFA has organized many activities with rich content and diverse in form to enhance mutual understanding between the people of the two countries, effectively connecting people's organizations and businesses for the benefit of the people of each side. In its activities, VAFA has received support and coordination from Vietnamese authorities, enthusiastic participation from members, businessmen, artists, etc. Specifically, the Association's activities can be divided into the following groups:

(i) Activities of peace, friendship and people-to-people cooperation:

Organizing a friendly exchange between VAFA and the Austrian Embassy in Viet Nam, visiting localities and religious sites on the occasion of the New Year according to traditional Vietnamese customs. Austrian members and

friends have the opportunity to increase exchanges, share knowledge; learn about heritage and freedom to practice religion in localities of Viet Nam¹.

VAFA coordinates with the Austrian Embassy in Viet Nam and the Vietnam Symphony Orchestra to organize concerts and art performances with the participation of Austrian and Vietnamese artists to spread the cultural values of Austria to the Vietnamese people, creating conditions for Vietnamese artists to exchange professionally with Austrian artists².

VAFA organizes and coordinates to participate in organizing exchanges and roundtable discussions between Vietnamese people and members with Austrian policy researchers on issues of interest to members; organizes working sessions and connections for social organizations and businesses of the two countries³.

(ii) Media activities:

VAFA has a social media news page in three languages, helping readers at home and abroad to know information about its activities, thereby better understanding Viet Nam and the Vietnam-Austria relationship. VAFA has also deployed groups on social platforms for members to update, freely exchange information, propose methods of association activities, promote initiatives and ideas to contribute to promoting the Vietnam-Austria people-to-people cooperation relationship, and at the same time enrich the spiritual life of members⁴.

(iii) Research and consulting activities:

VAFA and the Austria-Vietnam Association have agreed to sign a Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation to create a legal framework for the two people's organizations to concretize joint activities in research, academic exchange, educational consulting and business connection; Through the Vietnam Union of Friendship Organizations, the Vietnam-Austria Friendship Association contributes opinions, recommendations and aspirations of the people to competent authorities of Viet Nam in the field of developing friendship and cooperation between Viet Nam and Austria.

¹ Yen Tu Pagoda - 2023 (Quang Ninh province); Au Co Mother Goddess Temple – 2024 (Hoa Binh province).

² “Musik Aus Wien” - 2023, Hà Nội City; “Melody of May, Vietnam-Austria” – 2024, Ha Noi City.

³ Topics on Vietnam-Austria-EU relations, promoting science and technology cooperation; connecting the Austrian Institute of Technology with Vietnamese partners to cooperate on fire prevention and fighting.

⁴ Zalo group, fanpage, newsletter.

(iv) Organization development work:

VAFA is an organization of the Vietnamese people, has legal status and its own seal. VAFA is free to organize meetings to carry out association activities; has its own identity and news pages on social platforms; is free to develop members, and considers organizing local associations when conditions are suitable. Members are free to participate in social, charitable, and humanitarian work.

The VAFA has observed significant improvements in the Vietnamese Government's efforts to promote and protect civil and political rights, as demonstrated in the following areas:

Legally, the right to freedom of association in Vietnam is expressed and regulated as follows:

Decree 126/2024/ND-CP regulating the organization, operation and management of associations (Article 3) defines that “Associations are voluntary organizations of Vietnamese organizations and citizens in the same field, profession, interest, and gender, with the common purpose of gathering and uniting members, operating regularly, not for profit, to protect the legitimate rights and interests of the association, members, and the community; supporting each other to operate effectively, contributing to the cause of socio-economic development, building and defending the Fatherland, organized and operating in accordance with this Decree and other relevant legal documents.”

The right to association is both a “natural, inherent” right and a “legal” right. In the world, the right to freedom of association is widely recognized and regulated, typically in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 (Article 20) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1966 (Article 22).

In Vietnam, from practical needs arising in life, in activities and production, the legal system has provisions to regulate the right to establish associations. First appearing in the 1946 Constitution (Article 10), Vietnamese citizens have the right to "Freedom of speech, Freedom of organization and assembly". Inheriting the democratic spirit, protecting this beautiful and humane human rights continues to be recognized in the 1959 Constitution (Article 25), the 1980 Constitution (Article 67), the 1992 Constitution (Article 69) and the 2013 Constitution (Article 25).

Not only is it generally stipulated in the Constitution, the right to form and join associations is also regulated in the Law No. 102-SL/L-004 of 1957 regulating the right to form associations (Articles 2, 3) and in the Labor Code 2019 (Article 5).

It can be said that everyone has the right to form associations, to freely join legally established associations and to freely join associations. This is an extremely important political and civil right that no one can violate. However, the establishment of associations must have a legitimate purpose, to protect and strengthen the people's democracy and the establishment of associations must be authorized.

The right to association is not simply the establishment, freedom to enter and exit legal associations. As a political and civil right, the right to association also has a close relationship, demonstrating the right to freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of access to information of Vietnamese citizens in particular and people in general.

On those legal bases, VAFA was established and operates according to the set principles and purposes to contribute to strengthening and developing the relationship and solidarity between the people of Vietnam and Austria.

VAFA's operations always comply with the regulations of Vietnamese and Austrian law. Since its establishment, VAFA has not been subject to any direction, control or imposition from the Vietnamese Government.

As an NGO deeply committed to advancing human rights, we recognize the Vietnamese Government's efforts in this field and are confident that civil and political rights will continue to be further strengthened in the years ahead.

For and on behalf of VAFA

Vice President

Nguyen Thi Quynh Anh

Vice President of Vietnam Bar Federation;

Director of InvestPro LLC.