From the Director

The European Union Centre at RMIT has been in action for a little more than a year and has embarked on a broad range of activities and relationships.

The EU Centre is conceived as drawing on RMIT’s strengths in applied research and vocational education and training and links throughout Asia. Unlike the other Centres in Australia or New Zealand, RMIT does not have a tradition of studies specifically on Europe. Rather, the Centre seeks to engage broadly with the University’s wide range of activities, seeking to build awareness about the European Union and its linkages with Australia, and to assist in developing partnerships, particularly between Australian universities, government and business, and European universities, government and business.

This past year has been a very difficult period for Europe and the Member States. The continuing economic crisis and the difficulties of managing debt continue to attract cause great concern for the European Union, and have generated considerable debate about the future of the Union, and particularly then euro currency. Yet, it has also been a period which demonstrates not only great resilience in European institutions, but also a determination to continue to develop both appropriate organisational arrangements, and greater opportunities for engaging European citizens in shaping the Union.

In implementing the Lisbon Treaty, the European Union has grappled in particular with the challenges of strengthening its role in global affairs, complementing the foreign affairs perspectives of its Member States, and with creating opportunities for democratic participation in its internal processes.

Neither of these is easy. Yet, progress has been made with each of these. There are many more areas where work continues on projects which have an international as well as internal benefit.

The EU Centre at RMIT is able to see some of this work at close hand through its linkages with the Education and Culture Directorate. For example, significant dialogue is underway between European and Australian officials in areas such as early childhood education and lifelong learning.

In these various activities, the emphasis on partnership has been a key theme. The EU Centre will continue to work with the EU on developing partnerships, and looks forward to doing so with a range of Australian government and community organisations, businesses and researchers.

Professor Bruce Wilson
July 2011

Inaugural Annual Conference

The EU Centre at RMIT University with the School of Media and Communication (RMIT) and Media and Democracy in Eastern Europe Research Project (MDCEE) (University of Oxford, UK) is organising the Centre’s inaugural annual conference entitled Media, Communication and Democracy: Global and National Environments.
The Treaty of Lisbon, adopted in December 2009, has marked a significant development in the European Union’s approach to external affairs. The European Union has been at the forefront of debate and legislative action about democracy, and about establishing common principles in relation to rights and democratic processes, especially with the ongoing expansion of the number of Member States in the Union.

In the wake of Wikileaks, it is apparent that the role of media and communications in democratic processes more important than ever. Panels, papers and debate will focus on media, communication and democracy in the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe, the Asia Pacific region, Latin America or Africa, as well as the established areas of Europe and Australia. In a world of regular, unforeseen crises and growing power of media owners, online and otherwise, various questions about the implications for democratic processes will be explored.

Key participants include Professor Paolo Mancini, Associate Professor Ingrid Volkmer, Professor Jan Zielonka and Professor Stephanie Hemelryk Donald.

The conference will run over two days, Thursday 1 and Friday 2 September 2011 launching with a free Public Lecture at the State Library of Victoria on the evening of Wednesday 31 August.

Past Activities

February 2011
Seminar: Transposing Concepts: Lifelong Learning and the Learning Region

February 2011
Roundtable discussion with members of the European Parliament

February 2011
Seminar: UNFCCC COP 16 Post Cancun Briefing

March 2011
Seminar: What Europe has learned about Greenhouse Emission Trading

March 2011
A FEAST of Information: European Funding Opportunities

March 2011
Seminar: The Europe 2020 Strategy: Putting the EU back on track

March 2011
Seminar: The impact of Increased Loading on Wastewater Treatment Flow Processes

March 2011
Seminar: Education, Learning and Brain Research: An International Perspective

April 2011
Public Lecture: Berlin and its Jewish Community: great Significance, Destruction and Surprising Revival

April 2011
Policy Forum: Equity and Access in Education in Australia

April 2011
Inaugural Annual Lecture: The Art of Being Europe

June 2011
Public Event: Gioielli d’Autore: Jewellery in Europe and Australia

Upcoming Activities

Inaugural Annual Conference: Media Communication and Democracy: Global and National Environments

Public Lecture: Translation of the Second Sex by Simone de Beauvoir

Policy Briefing: ‘Green’ Jobs and Skills

For further information on Centre activities is available on the website at: http://www.rmit.edu.au/eucentre.

European Union Centre Publications

Policy Briefings:

1. Skills Formation in Australia: Lessons from Germany
Jean Monnet Grant

The EU Centre submitted an application to the Lifelong Learning Call for Proposals 2011 from the Jean Monnet Programme earlier this year, and we are very pleased to announce that our application “Comparing Regional Development Policies and Approaches: Europe and Asia” has been selected for a grant from the European Commission.

Many Asian countries are developing policies to confront regional inequalities and achieve greater national cohesion. This has been a major priority for the European Union for twenty years, reflected in the development of a range of projects and significant financial investment.

The purpose of this module is to provide students with an understanding of the regional disparities and inequalities which exist in Europe and Asian countries, and of the key elements of policies designed to achieve greater economic and social cohesion.

It will offer students a framework for analysing the key elements of European Regional Cohesion Policy, with a view to developing a clear analysis of the underlying logic about why particular programs will lead to Cohesion objectives which are articulated in Europe 2020.

The proposed module draws on Bruce’s extensive experience in working with regional leaders in both Australia and Europe on achieving balanced economic and social development. This background provides a strong foundation for teaching students from various disciplines about the aims and practice of the EU’s Regional Cohesion Policy, its underlying theory, and its applicability in a variety of settings. In developing this module, Professor Wilson is able to draw on RMIT’s strong academic presence in Global Studies, where there is a strong focus on the Asia Pacific region.

As the Director of the new European Union Centre at RMIT, Professor Wilson has developed a sound overview of key EU programs, and their purpose in relation to achieving integration. His role within RMIT enables him to link those insights with activities in all parts of the RMIT curriculum, and to enable students to make connections between their core studies and professional practice, and opportunities which might arise in the context of European integration.

EU Visitor

Nowadays, international cooperation and sharing good practices are effective to enhance education, research, and innovation. A meeting recently occurred in the EU Centre at RMIT with Professor João Miranda (ESTG/IPPortalegre, Portugal), researcher of CPQ/IST at UT Lisbon, with the focus in the dissemination of good practices and the complementarity of expertise.

The IPPortalegre is a Portuguese higher education institution responsible for teaching, training, research and other activities in their respective scientific, pedagogic, technical and artistic scope. The IPPortalegre is attended by about 3,000 students and it offers twenty-two initial training courses in four autonomous colleges. The College of Technology and Management is hosting the ERASMUS Intensive Programme (IP) in “Optimization and Decision Support Systems for Supply Chains”.

The ERASMUS IP is foreseen to occur in July of 2012 and it gathers experts on supply chains from several European countries. The will focus on the modeling and optimization of production-distribution facilities in manufacturing industry, petrochemical and pharmaceutics, and it also address the “green” logistics approach. This IP is quite interesting for MSc. or PhD. students on Engineering or Logistics specialties, and non-European students are very welcome.

International Visiting Fellow

The EU Centre has submitted an application for funding from the RMIT Foundation under the International Visiting Fellowship scheme to bring Professor Klaus Kunzmann to Australia in February-March 2012.

Professor Kunzmann is a leading European authority on spatial planning, knowledge cities and European politics. He is a preeminent Scholar with particular expertise in relation to city-regions and their development of knowledge industries as strategy for renewal. His CV indicates extensive breath of engagement with European cities, writing for both academic and for professional
Professor Kunzmann will bring a great deal of expertise not only as an academic who has studied city-regions in change, but as one who has contributed to their efforts for change. His experience encompasses many parts of Europe, and China and Australia. In his capacity as a Jean Monnet Chair, he also has a very good grasp of the politics of the European Union and of the challenges faced in working across the diverse national and city-regional settings found throughout Europe.

Professor Kunzmann’s schedule is designed to provide various opportunities for him to contribute publicly and informally to strategic discussions about Melbourne’s future, and that of other Australian cities and regional development policies. It allows also for him to contribute directly to research activity related to the EU Centre and SURF projects (Sustainable Urban and Regional Futures programme), as well as to fulfil commitments to the other European Union Centres and European Studies centres.

Please contact the Centre for further information about Professor Kunzmann’s visit.

**Student Interns**

Student interns undertaking placements for their RMIT course requirements are also able to spend a term of approximately three months with the Centre.

During this time, the students benefit from being involved in the decision making and activities of the Centre as well as undertaking their research project incorporating aspects of Europe-Australia relations.

Students interested in undertaking placement at the EU Centre can contact Fran Martens at franny.martens@rmit.edu.au.

**Contact us**

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