SO...

YOU’RE GOING TO EUROPE!

Pre-departure student briefing
October 2011
About the European Union (EU) Centre at RMIT

- Aligned with RMIT Strategic Vision: truly global university
- Co-funded through a Grant from the External Relations Directorate of the European Commission in Brussels, Belgium
- Commenced in January 2010 to promote a better understanding of the EU and EU-Australia relations
- One of only four Centres funded in the Southern Hemisphere
- Acts as an advocate for the EU in the Asia-Pacific region and facilitates the exchange of information and knowledge
- Work programme based on four pillars of engagement between the EU and RMIT, industry and the community at large:
  - * Academic activities
  - * Outreach activities
  - * Academic Exchange activities
  - * Cooperation with other Centres
What is the European Union?

Why the European Union?

• An unique economic and political partnership between 27 democratic European countries stretching over the continent of Europe from Lapland in the north to the Mediterranean Sea, and from the west coast of Ireland to the shores of Cyprus…

  Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Hungary, Spain, France, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Sweden, United Kingdom

• To put and end to international hatred and rivalry in Europe and create conditions for lasting peace, prosperity and stability for its 498 million people (1945-1950)

  1957: Treaty of Rome: 6 countries
  1973: First enlargement: increased to 9…now 27…with 3 ‘pending’!

  (Croatia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey)
EU trivia…. 

• The European Flag
  The 12 stars in a circle symbolise the ideals of unity, solidarity and harmony amongst the peoples of Europe.

• The European Anthem
  The melody comes from the Ninth Symphony by Beethoven.
  When the music is used as the European anthem it has no words.

• Europe Day, 9 May
  The ideas behind what is now the European Union were first put forward on 9 May 1950 in a speech by the then French Foreign Minister, Robert Schumann; 9 May is now celebrated as the EU’s birthday! (and see http://www.robert-schuman.eu/)

• Motto of the EU…
  “United in Diversity”
Europe and Australia

• Australia now part of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)
• EU is major trading partner for Australia
• Enhancement of current Framework Agreement to Treaty status
• Increasing science and technology partnerships
The dreaded (but essential) paperwork

• Non-EU citizens need a valid passport
  – make sure it is valid for the whole time you are planning on being away

• Keep a copy of your travel insurance certificate with your passport
  – have both with you all the time

• You must check if you need a STUDENT visa…
  – Different terms and conditions to tourist visas
  – Check on the Embassy website of the country you are visiting
  – Note that the UK differs slightly to other EU countries

• Generally speaking student visas do not allow you to work
  – Check on the Embassy website if you are staying long term and think you might be tempted to try and earn more spending money!
Travelling in Europe

• What is this thing called the Schengen Area?
  – Schengen: a small Luxembourg border town where, in 1985, the governments of Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands signed an agreement abolishing border checks and to introduce common policy on visas

• What countries are part of the Schengen Area?
  – 22 of the 27 EU Member States:
    Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden
  – and 3 associated countries:
    Norway, Iceland and Switzerland

• What does this mean?
  – If your visa is from a country applying full Schengen rules (above) you can automatically travel to other Schengen countries as well!
  – Note: the UK is not part of the Schengen Area you need a valid visa to re-enter
Living in Europe…Money

• Euro € (dollars and cents) is legal tender in 16 EU countries:
  – Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain…
  **Note: not Denmark, Sweden or the UK**
  – That said, many EU countries outside the euro-zone do accept euro but they are not obliged to

• Euro notes are identical in all countries
  – Each country issues its own coins – 1 common side, 1 of national emblem

• Cash is readily available from ‘hole in the wall’ tellers just like in Australia
  – This will attract a fee from your home bank as well as a conversion fee

• Confirm with the bank that your card is usable ‘overseas’
• Have a record of your account numbers not with the card!
…and Credit Cards

• MAKE SURE YOU HAVE A PIN # FOR YOUR CREDIT CARD…signatures only are not accepted in many places in Europe anymore!
  – Arrange this with your bank before you go
  – Disadvantage: Expensive – fees for overseas transactions and conversion
  – Advantage: itemised account of what you have purchased and, depending on your card, it is insured!

• Look into taking a “Cash Passport” (eg. Travelex)
  – Prepaid travel money cards
  – allow you to withdraw local currency at Visa ATMs worldwide

• Notify your bank that you are going overseas…so they don’t put a block on your card when they see overseas transactions!

• Personal tip…
  – Seriously consider taking a ‘spare’ card as an emergency -- keep it tucked away from your others…
Living in Europe…Shopping!

• Current exch rate means: something for 10 euro will be about $AUD14
  – This will be different by the time you go…check at EX.com
  – Variations in the euro can have a big impact on your spending money

• VAT (Value Added Tax) is the same as GST
  – for big items claim it back at the airport before you leave Europe
  – there are limits to the amount of tobacco, alcohol and perfume you can take into (and out of) each country so check!

• Enjoy…
  – leather in Florence is fantastic to say nothing of the pastries in Paris and waffles in Belgium… but don’t forget excess baggage costs
  – Personal tip…post it home by snail mail before you leave Europe…it’s cheaper!
Enjoy your visit…stay healthy…but just in case if things go wrong…

• Single European Emergency Number is: 112
  – This can be rung from any phone, fixed or mobile for no charge

• Loss or theft
  – Report to the local Police – you will need to enclose the police report when making your insurance or compensation claim
  – Cancel any lost or stolen credit cards IMMEDIATELY (have the card numbers and contact phone number stored separately from the cards)
  – Report passport to the Australian consulate in country as well as the Police.

• Have a basic first aid kit with you
  – bandaids, panadol, tube of betadine…there are chemist shops in Europe!

• A reminder that travel insurance is essential!
Stay in touch

• Phone
  – when ringing home don’t forget Australia call code is the “ + 61 3 ….” and the prefix for making international calls out of the EU which is “00”
  
  Example: dial the country access code to make an international call (eg Germany is 00) then the Australia code (61) then the Australian State (Victoria is 3) so…0061 3 9925 8214 would reach the Centre from Germany!

  – Mobile calls are expensive; think about getting an “local” sim card to keep in touch with your friends in the same country…and don’t forget to turn off “global roaming”

  – Skype is a good way to go (download the App) – free wi-fi from Starbuck’s!

• Country codes (for people ringing you)
  – Austria 43; Germany 49; Denmark 45; France 33;
  the Netherlands 31; Spain 34; Sweden 46; UK 44.

• Postage

Postage stamps can only be used in the country you bought them in so when posting home make sure you get international stamps
LAST OF ALL…

HAVE A FANTASTIC TIME!!

Get in touch with the Centre when you get back and let us know how you went – we would love to hear your stories!

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