Innovation Union and Horizon 2020: ways to excellence in science

"Today's research and innovative ideas are tomorrow's prosperity" said Máire Geoghegan-Quinn, European Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science at the Innovation Union and Horizon 2020 Conference in Berlin on 23 February. Commissioner Geoghegan-Quinn emphasised the role of research and innovation in the creation of jobs and in boosting growth. Europe's Horizon 2020 program, to commence in 2014, is the world's largest publicly-financed research programme. Commissioner Geoghegan-Quinn said Horizon 2020 provides direct stimulus to the economy and turns "scientific breakthroughs into innovative products and services that provide business opportunities and change people's lives for the better." read more

caption: Commissioner Maire Geoghegan-Quinn pictured with Australia's Senator Kim Carr, former Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research

Eurogroup: agreement to secure Greece's future in the eurozone

At their meeting on 20 February, the euro area finance ministers agreed on the second programme for Greece, which comprises significant additional efforts from both private and official sector creditors and enhanced surveillance. These efforts should ensure that Greece's debt-to-GDP ratio is reduced to 120.5% by 2020. It was agreed that the official sector financing of the programme would amount to EUR 130bn until 2014, provided that all the conditions were continuously met. The Eurogroup agrees that the main task for Greece now is to duly implement the agreed programme, which should put public finances and the economy of Greece on sustainable footing and thus safeguard financial stability in Greece and the euro area as a whole. The European Commission will reinforce the presence of its Task Force for Greece in Athens to bolster the country's administrative capacity and provide technical assistance. read more

Syria: stepping up the pressure

Against the backdrop of the Syrian regime's continued use of violence against civilians, European Union Foreign Affairs ministers at the EU Council's meeting on 27 February 2012 decided to ratchet up the pressure on the Syrian regime by reinforcing the restrictive measures already in place. Among the new measures are an asset freeze on the Syrian Central Bank, banning transactions of gold, diamonds and precious metals. It was stressed that "the EU will continue its policy of imposing additional measures targeting the regime, not the civilian population, as long as repression continues" and "that those responsible for the violence across Syria will be held accountable". read more
Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and Vice President of the European Commission, on 24 February attended the meeting of the Friends of Syria in Tunis. Following the meeting, HR/VP Ashton condemned the repression, brutality and violation of human rights by the Assad regime against the civilian population in Syria. She reiterated her full support for the appointment of Kofi Annan as the UN and League of Arab States (LAS) Special Envoy for Syria. In an earlier statement, HR/VP Ashton condemned the killing of journalists in Syria.

**European Council conclusions**

On 21 February the Council of the European Union agreed a general approach on two draft regulations aimed at further improving **economic governance** in the euro area. The Council also adopted a regulation harmonising rules for **short selling and credit default swaps**. The Council adopted conclusions providing guidance to the EU member states for tackling **macroeconomic and fiscal challenges**. The Council also adopted a directive exempting **very small companies** from accounting and financial obligations, a recommendation to the European Parliament on the discharge to be given for implementation of the EU's **general budget for 2010**, conclusions setting the Council's priorities for negotiation with the European Parliament of the EU's **2013 budget**, and conclusions on the follow-up to the UN conference on **climate change** held in Durban at the end of 2011.

**Europe best, say students**

Forget the eurozone crisis and the attractions of the New World. A new ranking of the world's best cities for students places Europe's cities firmly ahead of the US for quality of life, affordability and their universities' academic reputation.

The city of Paris came first in the world ranking of best student cities established by the British organisation QS (Quacquarelli Symonds Ltd), published on 14 February. According to this assessment, which is based on a series of four indicators: the composition of the student population, the quality of life, attractiveness of the universities to employers, and the cost of studies, Paris leads the world in terms of living standards, attractiveness and cost, pulling ahead of London due to the low cost of enrolment in French universities. From a wider point of view this ranking, based on various traditional ranking criteria, focused on the quality of research, gives the prize to European towns and cities since nine of the fifteen leading cities are on the European continent. Melbourne and Sydney also ranked well, with Melbourne at number four and Sydney number six in the world.

**EU-backed films 'The Artist' and 'The Iron Lady' scoop seven Oscars**

European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, Androulla Vassiliou, has welcomed the major success of European films the 84th Academy Awards ceremony in Hollywood. *The Artist* was crowned with five Oscars and *The Iron Lady* with two. This year, nine nominated films received support from the European Union's MEDIA programme for cinema. *The Artist* scooped the big prizes for Best Picture, Best Director (Michel Hazanavicius), Best Actor (Jean Dujardin), Costume Design (Mark Bridges) and Best Music (Ludovic Bource). *The Iron Lady* collected the statuettes for Best Actress (Meryl Streep) and Best Makeup (Mark Coulier and J. Roy Helland). *The Iron Lady*, a UK-French co-production, received €1.5 million in distribution support to encourage cinemas to screen the film outside the country where it was made. *The Artist* (France-Belgium) received €17 000 for the same purpose. Seven other EU-backed films were also nominated for Oscars.

MEDIA (a French acronym for "Mesure pour le Développement de l'Industrie Audiovisuelle") is the 2007-2013 EU Programme which supports the European film industry and the audiovisual sector.

**Windows on Europe Film Festival continues**

The 2012 season of the European Union Windows on Europe Film Festival continues in Sydney until 8 March. This festival showcases the best in European cinema with its rich diversity and talent. The program includes gems from Finland, France, Greece, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Hungary, Ireland,
Spain, Slovakia, Germany, Sweden and Slovenia. Two British-Australian premiere movies have been procured by our partners, Dendy Cinemas - "Coriolanus" directed by and starring Ralph Fiennes, and "The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel" starring Judi Dench, Bill Nighy and Maggie Smith. More information from www.dendy.com.au

European economic news

The unexpected stalling of the recovery in late 2011 is set to extend into the first two quarters of 2012. However, modest growth is predicted to return in the second half of the year. On an annual basis, real GDP in 2012 is now forecast to remain unchanged in the EU (0.0%) and to contract by 0.3% in the euro area. Uncertainty remains high and developments across countries are uneven. The inflation forecast for 2012 has been revised slightly upwards compared with the autumn, due to persistently high energy prices and increases in indirect taxes. It now stands at 2.3% in the EU and 2.1% in the euro area. read more

Let's Jam

Take this opportunity to influence leaders with your ideas. Security Jam 2012 lets you take part in frank discussions and the free exchange of ideas worldwide. Global leaders will receive the Jam’s initial results ahead of the NATO and G8 summits in Chicago in May 2012. EU and NATO leadership will receive the full report, including the ten most acclaimed recommendations, in Brussels later that month. The report will also be sent to thousands of high-level policymakers around the world. Take advantage of this unique opportunity; join us March 19th – 23rd 2012. Register at www.securityjam.org

Academic news and events

Call for Papers: Conference on "Rethinking the Grand Strategy of the European Union", at Loughborough University, 24-26 May 2012. We invite abstracts from both advanced research postgraduate students and established researchers for our multidisciplinary conference on "Rethinking the Grand Strategy of the European Union", to be held at Loughborough University on 24-26 May 2012. More information http://www.rmit.edu.au/eucentre

Islam and Europe: Culture, History, Politics Conference 2012. Thursday 8 & Friday 9 March 2012. The conference is open to the public but registration is essential as seating is limited. Venue: ANU Centre for European Studies, 1 Liversidge Street (Bldg 67C), Canberra RSVP: europe@anu.edu.au by Monday 5 February 2012

The Ocean Currents of EU Financial Regulatory Reform: Irish Periscope, International Waters, Public lecture 6 March, 2012 - 11:00, ANU Centre for European Studies. The EU integrated single market vision may be traced to the mid-1960’s. Of more recent time its rationale has centred upon economic growth, read more


2012 Global Emerging Voices brings together EU and Asia-Pacific professionals together. GEV offers fully funded fellowships to Europe. Applications close 1 March 2012 http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/alumni/gev

Upcoming cultural events

Picasso: masterpieces from the Musée National Picasso, Paris - on view until 25 March 2012 at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney. read more

Renaissance 15th and 16th century Italian paintings from the Accademia Carrara, Bergamo - 9 December 2011 to 9 April 2012 at the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra. read more


Bruno Taut: Master Architect in Colourful Berlin & Living in a World Heritage: Berlin Housing
**European Union Delegation: publications available online**

The following publications are available from our website. If, however, you would like to receive hard copies of any of these publications, please send an email to delegation-australia@eeas.europa.eu specifying the name of the publication(s) and the number you would like to receive.

- **Who do you call when you want to call Europe?**
- **EU-Australia Economic Relationship 2011**
- **Key facts: update September 2011**
- **EU Insight: European External Action Service**
- **Study in Europe 2011**
- **EU Insight: Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS)**
- **European Union Australia Partnership Framework**

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