



Canberra, 16 April 2007

## European Commissioner celebrates EU's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary with Australia

European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, Mr Ján Figel', will join Australian Government representatives, business leaders, and members of Melbourne's education community tomorrow to celebrate 50 years of Europe and commemorate the signing of the Treaty of Rome, the cornerstone of the EU we know today.

Commissioner Figel' will make a keynote speech at the *Treaty of Rome – Europe 50 years* event to be held at the Immigration Museum in Melbourne tomorrow (17 April). The Victorian Minister for Education Services, Skills & Employment and Womens' Affairs, the Hon Jacinta Allan, will respond.

The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Treaty of Rome is an important occasion for Europe, and with almost 90% of Australians claiming European ancestry, it is also an occasion for Australia to celebrate its European heritage and the development of our strong EU-Australia relations.

Commissioner Figel' will take the opportunity to highlight the importance of 50 years of peace and security in Europe and the benefits European integration has brought to Europe and the rest of the world.

50 years ago, six countries – Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands – signed the Treaty of Rome, which ultimately led to the EU and brought European countries that had previously been at war with each other, together as equals to cooperate and collaborate in common institutions.

The signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1957 marked the beginning of a new, more integrated and productive Europe and now, half a century later, the EU consists of 27 countries, nearly 500 million citizens and as a united entity, it is a prominent global power.

The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration is hosted by Europe Centres - Australian universities with leading European studies modules. These Centres include the Monash European and EU Centre, the Contemporary Europe Research Centre at Melbourne University, the National Europe Centre at the Australian National University (ANU) and the Innovative Universities European Union Centre encompassing six universities throughout Australia: La Trobe in Victoria, Macquarie and Newcastle universities in New South Wales, Flinders in South Australia, Murdoch in Western Australia and Griffith in Queensland.

Commissioner Figel' is visiting Australia from 16 to 19 April as a guest of the Australian Government to mark a new era in EU-Australia cooperation in higher education and training. During his visit, the Commissioner will meet with Minister for Education, Science & Training, The Hon Julie Bishop, and Minister for Vocational and Further Education, The Hon Andrew Robb.

The *Treaty of Rome – Europe 50 years* event is invitation only and will be held at the Immigration Museum Theatre, Old Customs House, 400 Flinders Street, Melbourne from 5:30pm.

Media welcome to attend.

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