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President of European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, explains his role



Rompuy.

In his speech to the European Parliament on 24 February Herman Van Rompuy outlined his role as President of the European Council, "*not, as some media put it, President of Europe*". With the changes brought by the Treaty of Lisbon, the rotating six-monthly Presidency has been replaced by a permanent President: "*Greater continuity is fundamental to building relationships and carrying out a serious task.*" said Von

"My role should not be confused with the President of the Commission, Mr Barroso. My task is to ensure that the Heads of State and Government can collectively agree on their overall strategy for the European Union both as regards its internal development and in terms of its external relations". [Read the full document](#)

Iceland's accession to the EU moves one step closer

The European Commission on 24 February issued its opinion recommending the opening of accession negotiations with Iceland following the country's application for membership of the European Union. The Commission acknowledged Iceland's adherence to the common values of the Union, such as democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights. It identifies challenges ahead on the road to accession. Following the recommendation by the Commission, it is now for the Council of the European Union to decide on the opening of accession negotiations with Iceland.

To become a member of the EU, an applicant country must meet the political and economic criteria laid down by the European Council in Copenhagen in 1993 and adopt the entire body of EU law, the "*acquis*". Through its participation in the European Economic Area (EEA), Iceland has already taken on a considerable part of the *acquis*. As an EEA member Iceland has participated in the single market for more than 15 years. The Commission's report identifies areas where the Icelandic authorities need to make serious efforts to achieve full alignment with EU law, in particular fisheries, agriculture and rural development, environment, free movement of capital and financial services. [More information](#)

Council statement of the killing of Mahmoud al-Mabhouh

The Foreign Affairs Council of the European Union issued a statement condemning the fraudulent use of EU Member States' passports, associated with the action in Dubai which killed Mahmoud al-Mabhouh on 20 January. "This was an action which cannot be conducive to peace and stability in the Middle East. The EU strongly condemns the fact that those involved in this action have used fraudulent EU Member States' passports and

credit cards acquired through the theft of EU citizens' identities" said the statement in part. [Read the full statement](#)

European Foreign Affairs Council

The Foreign Affairs Council of the European Union met on 22 February to discuss issues including Haiti, Iran, Ukraine and Zimbabwe. The Council, chaired by High Representative Catherine Ashton, began its meeting with an expression of condolences and support for the government and people of Portugal, following the floods and mudslides in Madeira which claimed at least 40 victims. The High Representative announced she will visit Haiti in the near future. [Read the Conclusions](#)

Commission responds to calls for stronger EU border management agency

The European Commission on 24 February made proposals to strengthen European Union's border management agency, Frontex. The proposals include reinforcing the legal framework to ensure full respect of fundamental rights during Frontex activities and enhancing the operational capacity of Frontex to support Member States. With the new proposal Member States would put more equipment and more personnel at the Agency's disposal. Frontex would be able to co-lead border patrols operations with EU Member States and would also provide technical assistance to third countries and deploy liaison officers in third countries.

Home Affairs Commissioner Cecilia Malmström said: "*Today's proposal will pave the way for more solidarity and better cooperation between EU countries. This will give us the opportunity to better deal with irregular immigration and human trafficking, while at the same time strengthening the safeguards to guarantee full respect of fundamental rights.*"

Frontex, based in Warsaw, was set up in 2005 to coordinate EU Member States' border control operations on the EU's external borders. For more information [MEMO/10/45](#)

EU aid for Turkish Cypriot community: promotion of youth exchanges

The EU has awarded grants for eight projects under the scheme for the "*Promotion of Youth exchanges and other People-to-People Contacts*". The main objective is to enable broad sections of the Turkish Cypriot community in a variety of fields to enter into contact and engage with their counterparts in the European Union. This grant scheme is funded from the €259 million EU aid programme for the Turkish Cypriot community.

Eight grants have been awarded ranging from € 13,000 to €129,000 and covering up to 90% of the total costs of the projects. Grant recipients will take part in workshops, seminars, conferences and congresses in other European Member States. They will meet with other European civil society organisations to exchange experience and approaches and improve their project management capacity while interacting together with partners in other European countries. [Read more](#)

EU urges support for ban on international trade in Atlantic bluefin tuna

The European Commission proposed that the European Union should press for a ban on international trade in Atlantic bluefin tuna to enter into force within the next year. The Commission is deeply concerned that overfishing of Atlantic bluefin tuna driven largely by international trade is seriously depleting stocks of the species. The proposal will be discussed with Member States in order to reach a common EU position for the next meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), taking place in Doha, Qatar, from 13 to 25 March 2010.

European Environment Commissioner Janez Potočnik said: "We have a responsibility to

future generations to take decisive action when faced with the likelihood that a species will disappear forever. We have the duty to preserve our natural capital. Since there is a high risk that Atlantic bluefin tuna will soon be gone forever, we have no other choice than to act now and propose a ban on international trade."

The Commission is deeply concerned about the poor conservation status of Atlantic bluefin tuna and acknowledges that demand for it is being driven largely by international trade. If the ban enters into force the Commission will see to it that artisanal fishing firms are authorised to supply the EU market with catches stemming from Member States domestic waters. Further information: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/cites/home_en.htm

EC-Australia Trade Policy Dialogue

On 18 February, the annual EC-Australia Trade Policy Dialogue was held in Canberra. The meeting successfully covered all aspects of the bilateral trade relationship and cooperation in multilateral negotiations with the broad agenda items of: prospects for strategic cooperation; bilateral cooperation; bilateral trade and regulatory issues; future trade policy directions; and a services and investment thematic discussion. The dialogue was followed by a useful business forum held in Sydney and co-hosted by the European–Australian Business Council (EABC) and the Australian Services Roundtable.

Windows on Europe Film Festival



You still have a chance to catch the award winning European films in Auckland and Melbourne. For the full programme, and information on all films, please visit our website:

<http://www.delaus.ec.europa.eu/News&events/Cultural/FilmFesti>

EU tube: European cinema. Made for you!



EU Tube: European cinema. Made for you!

From: [eutube](http://www.youtube.com/eutube) | February 15, 2010

The new EU clip shows if you seize the moment and grab your chance, then you will fulfil your dream.

<http://www.youtube.com/eutube>

[see EUtube](#)

Academic news and events

"Back to Russia? Explaining the Ukrainian Presidential Elections of 2010"

The Monash European and EU Centre and the Mykola Zerov Centre for Ukrainian Studies invite you to attend a presentation by Professor David R. Marples, University of Alberta, Canada. The lecture examines the results of the Ukrainian presidential elections of 17 January and 7 February and offers an assessment of the likely consequences for Ukraine. Thursday, 11 March 2010, 6:00pm to 8:30pm, Monash University (Caulfield Campus), 900 Dandenong Road, Caulfield East, Room S230 (Link Theatre), Building S, Level 2

RSVP by Tues. 9 March. to patricia.arnold@general.monash.edu.au ph 03 9903 4638

Italian Government Scholarships 2010 - 2011, The Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has released the 2010—2011 Italian Government Scholarships which are available for Australian citizens and Italian citizens residing abroad. Applications must be completed on line no later than 31 March 2010. Printed copies and further documents need to be sent to the Embassy of Italy in Canberra no later than 12 April 2010. All information and documentation is available on website www.esteri.it/MAE/EN/Ministero/Servizi/Stranieri/Opportunita/default.htm

DAAD Alumni Conference "Tackling the Future" 26-28 March, University of Sydney

The German Academic Exchange Service (Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst, DAAD) will hold a Big Alumni Meeting at Sydney Uni in March, hosted by Vice Chancellor Michael Spence, with keynotes, panels, performances, workshops and excursions on the topic of "Tackling the Future – Environmental Challenges and their Impact on Academic Cooperation, Economy and Culture". For more information,

please contact Dr Andreas Jaeger, the DAAD's representative in Australia: andreas.jaeger@usyd.edu.au or <http://ic.daad.de/sydney/events.htm>

Call for applications for the **European Master's Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation (E.MA) 2010/2011** organised by the European Inter-University Centre for Human Rights and Democratisation (EIUC). The first semester of the programme (September to January) takes place in Venice, while the second (February to July) is at one of seven E.MA participating universities situated in the Member States of the European Union. The European Master's Program in Human Rights and Democratisation is open to EU and non-EU citizens. Candidates for admission will find all information to apply on the E.MA website at <http://www.emahumanrights.org>. The deadline for application is 19 March 2010.

Call for Proposals under all three Actions of the **Erasmus Mundus** programme: Erasmus Mundus Joint Programmes; Erasmus Mundus Partnerships; and Promotion of European higher education. The deadline for submission of applications under all three Actions is **30 April 2010**. More information: <http://www.delous.ec.europa.eu/education/Erasmus/ErasmusMundus2010.htm>

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@ec.europa.eu specifying the name of the publication(s) and the number you would like to receive.

NEW: [Key Facts 2010](#)
[EU Insight: Education](#)

[EU Insight: Lisbon Treaty](#)
[European Union Australia Partnership Framework](#)
[EU Insight: Climate change](#)
[EU Insight: Economic relationship](#)

Upcoming events: Australia

French Film Festival: 2-21 March Sydney; 4-21 March Melbourne; 18-31 March Canberra; 17-31 March Brisbane; 17-31 March Perth; 18-31 March Adelaide; – more information <http://www.frenchfilmfestival.org/>

Wed 24 Feb – Sat 6 March 2010 **Presentation of European short films**, Dolphin Theatre, 35 Stirling Hwy, Crawley, Perth; Screen Australia and AFTRS, Sydney. Free Entry. Language: English. [further information](#)

1 February to 29 March 2010 - **Paul Uhlmann: Becoming Imperceptible Art Exhibition**, Goethe-Institut Australien, Sydney. [further information](#)

26 February to 14 March 2010, **Adelaide International 2010**, The video- and performance-artists Nina Fischer and Maroan El Sani, present their video-installation "Spelling Dystopia" as part of the Adelaide Festival 2010. Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art, Adelaide, Hawke Building, City West campus, Univ of South Australia, 55 North Terrace. [further information](#)

20 years of the Peaceful Revolution and of the German Reunification Exhibition, 30 Oct 2009 - 31 March 2010, Goethe-Institut Australien, Melbourne www.goethe.de/ins/au/lp/ver/vsy/en5000568v.htm

4 to 8 May 2010: **The Importance of Being Earnest**. The Melbourne French Theatre Company presents the original play, as written by Oscar Wilde in French. Play in French with English subtitles. More information <http://www.mftinc.org/index2en.htm>

[More events](#)

Upcoming events in New Zealand

Gateway to the EU in New Zealand <http://www.eu.org.nz/>

For more information on the items covered in news@eu, contact Roger Camilleri +61 2 6271 2744 roger.camilleri@ec.europa.eu or Jan Skorich +61 2 62712747 jan.skorich@ec.europa.eu .

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