

INTRODUCTION by Dr Philip Bull, Director of the IUEU Centre:

Welcome: students right across Australia can now learn about the European Union in an exciting experiment in university education. The EU is a major player in world affairs and is Australia's largest economic partner. We all need to know more about it.

This is made possible by the Innovative Universities European Union Centre, which we established in 2006 and is now a network of seven universities. One of its roles is to teach about the European Union. You will see in a moment the ways that Dr Stefan Auer of La Trobe University makes this more exciting through a series of lecture-length interviews.

This delivery of lectures across a number of different universities is unprecedented in Australia. You can now see displayed the seven universities where you can study this. So far over 700 Australian students have completed this unit, many of them declaring it to be the best and most interesting subject they have studied.

The EU matters to you, to Australia and to how our world develops in difficult times. Learn more about it.

Music: Beethoven: Ode to Joy

A BIT OF HISTORY?

Prof Raffaella Torino, University of Roma Tre

For us the European Union is a fantastic experiment, never seen before in all the history of the world.

Dr Michael Bruter, London School of Economics: The European Union first and foremost became a reality, at least the European Communities became a reality, largely because of the second world war and it was originally something which was designed to help to avoid further wars in Europe.

Dr Stefan Auer, Deputy Director of IUEU Centre: So today it is really a very different animal to what it was 50 years ago when six countries of Europe got together to forge unity?

Peter West, British Consul-General: All 27 countries have an input, but the larger countries have traditionally carried more weight.

His Excellency Csaba Gabor, Hungarian Ambassador: It is a larger European Union definitely now.

His Excellency Martin O Fainin, Irish Ambassador: We are trying to simplify as best we can, but it is a very complex bureaucracy, and a very complex organization, the EU. That is because it is dealing with 27 member states.

Dr Michael Bruter, London School of Economics: What does it mean to you to be European? The first thing that they answer is that you can move from one country to the next without passing any border control. This has been a major change in the very conception of what a state is, what state sovereignty is. And the second thing they mention is that it means having Euros in their pockets.

Dr Gonazlo Villalta Puig, University of Hull, GB: It's been a phenomenal success story. Now we have peace in Europe and the prospect of war is unthinkable. There is great interaction and interdependency among the member states. There is prosperity. There are many initiatives that are bringing ever closer together the different member states of the Union.

His Excellency Bruno Julien, EU Ambassador to Australia: could you have imagined at the end of the war, [when] people were so antagonistic that we could [have] reached unity? No. [And] the young generation are forgetting that.

WHO IS IN? AND WHO IS OUT?

Prof Richard Parson, Sussex Centre for Migration Research, University of Sussex: I think it is totally understandable that the European family got bigger. And we said we treat every one in the family as the same, but we need a clear demarcation as to who is in the family and who is out. So we toughened our outside borders and that is a process of toughening that has been going on ever since.

His Excellency Martin O Fainin, Irish Ambassador: In principle any European country is welcome to join the Union.

Dr Nick Bisley, Politics, La Trobe University: There is the Copenhagen criteria that established that point to key things you have to do to get in and central to them are democratic government, respect of minority rights, you got to have the administrative capacity, you got to have a stable market economy and most importantly, I think this is the big one,

your economy has to withstand the competitive pressures of the single market.

His Excellency Csaba Gabor, Hungarian Ambassador: Being the member of the European Union means that you have been put on an encouraging and hopeful track, which means that your country is supposedly moving into the right direction.

FOR OR AGAINST THE EU?

Peter West. British Consul-General: There is general psyche among some people in Britain saying that we just do not want to be there, and that is actually true. Lot of the Nordic countries, I mean the Danes felt very much like that as well, and lot of people wanted Europe to be no more than a free market economic area rather than anything to do with political or foreign policy.

Dr Michael Bruter LSE: The prejudice in the 1980's was against Europe, and the prejudice in the beginning of the 21st century was in favour of Europe.

His Excellency Martin O Fainin, Irish Ambassador: The Irish people are very pro-EU.

Peter West. British Consul-General: There is no question, no one is seriously talking about doing away with union or leaving the union. I think that those debates have moved on.

His Excellency Martin O Fainin, Irish Ambassador: Everybody envies the European Union and acknowledges the great strides that it has taken

in restoring peace to Europe, in bringing Europe together, in economic progress. Elsewhere, in other regions of the world, people are trying to emulate what Europe did, In south America and Asia. They look to Europe as the ideal model of this kind of union. European countries not yet in the union all want to join.

UNITY OR DISUNITY?

Dr Stefan Auer: The project of Europe's unity is also preserving the diversity of Europe.

Dr Stefan Auer on Sky News: There is no need to renounce your national identity in order to become an integral part of the European Union. I mean, I think it is perfectly plausible to imagine multiple identities.

His Excellency Bruno Julien, EU Ambassador to Australia: This has developed a kind of fraternity between the people. And the Germans are no more just thinking in terms of [being] German or the French in term of [being] French and this create cement between the states, and that is very important. That is something you can not dissolve, because these ties are now existing and they are very very solid.

Dr Michael Bruter LSE: The motto of the European Union is united in diversity.

AUSTRALIA AND THE EU?

Dr Stefan Auer: When you look at the main destination for senior Australian politicians they always went to London first and most often omitted Brussels altogether from the itinerary.

Dr Philomena Murray, the University of Melbourne: Yes, there was no cricket in Brussels.

Peter West. British Consul-General:: the reality on the ground is that prime minister Mr. Rudd went to Brussels he also went to London.

John Richards, Counsellor European Commission Delegation, Canberra: It was significant I think that he went to Brussels. It was symbolic for a greater interest being shown by the new government in European affairs.

His Excellency Martin O Fainin, Irish Ambassador: When Kevin Rudd, your prime minister was over in Brussels recently he kind of re-launched a new and warmer, a warm relationship with Europe which we welcome very much.

His Excellency Csaba Gabor, Hungarian Ambassador: Kevin Rudd has a very open mind about really intensifying relations.

His Excellency Martin O Fainin, Irish Ambassador: He looks to us and we look to Australia as well for a better partnership between Europe and Australia particularly in the global context on issues where we can act globally through multilateral institutions on climate change and areas like that, on energy. So now we are looking to a new area, a stronger cooperation with Australia as Europeans than in the past.

EU: EASY to UNDERSTAND?

Dr Michael Bruter LSE: People do not know much about the European institutions. But as political scientists we also know that people do not know much about their national institutions either.

His Excellency Martin O Fainin, Irish Ambassador: The European union, the Lisbon Treaty are very complex, nobody can understand it even the academics can not understand it, or the experts.

Dr Stefan Auer: I also think that our ambition is to better understand the European Union, than to find all the final answer, because there is no such a thing I suppose, in relation to such a complex political entity.

SPANISH, FRENCH, IRISH, ITALIAN, OR EUROPEAN?

Dr Gonazlo Villalta Puig, University of Hull, GB: I consider myself European, a citizen of the European Union, before I consider myself to be a Spanish citizen.

His Excellency Bruno Julien, EU Ambassador to Australia: I am not French first, I am European.

Dr Philomena Murray, the University of Melbourne: I know that my accent has a tiny bit of Irish, but I actually would not just consider myself Irish, I do feel very European and I do feel very Australian and I am very proud of that.

Prof Raffaele Torino, University of Rome Tre: I feel myself very, very open to the European dream. I feel me Italian and I feel European. And I am proud to be Italian and proud to be European.