

The New Geopolitics: EU and Australia, what's next?

Tuesday 13 May 12:30pm-2pm AEST

RMIT University, Council Chamber, 124 La Trobe Street, Melbourne 3000 (+ live-streamed)
Lunch and networking followed by Panel discussion and Q&A

In an era marked by global uncertainty, strategic competition, and shifting alliances, the geopolitical landscape between Australia and Europe is evolving rapidly.

The [2025 Europe Day](#) Seminar will provide an in-depth exploration of the progression in the European Union (EU) strategic partnership with Australia. It will highlight the importance of emerging economic, research cooperation in addressing the challenges arising from the evolving international landscape.



This event will bring together leading voices in diplomacy and academia to explore the contours of a new geopolitics – shaped by shared values, economic resilience, security cooperation, and global governance challenges.

Initial negotiations for the EU-Australia Free Trade Agreement stalled in 2023. An increasingly unstable geopolitical environment presents a growing pressure on Australia to resume negotiations with the EU on several fronts. Thus, critical new incentives are emerging for Australia and Europe to strengthen ties. Europe Day is to celebrate peace and unity. With global tensions escalating, it is more critical than ever to invest in collaborative efforts between the EU and Australia.

The role of Australian universities and research organisations in shaping future strategic collaborations with the EU has reached a significant milestone within the context of current geopolitical developments. The prospect of participating in Horizon Europe, the world's largest collaborative research funding program, presents substantial opportunities for Australian universities.

Our panellists will include:

- **H.E. Mr. Gabriele Visentin**, European Union Ambassador to Australia
- **Dr. Christian Hirst**, First Assistant Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Europe Division
- **Vicki Thomson**, CEO Group of Eight
- **Prof. Bruce Wilson**, European Union Centre of Excellence at RMIT University, *Moderator*.

Please be kindly advised that some of the Speakers might join online.

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ENTRY FREE, BUT REGISTRATION ESSENTIAL

This event is hosted by the RMIT University [EU Centre](#) and [the Australian Institute of International Affairs Victoria](#).

PROGRAM

- 12:30pm: Registrations open for in-person guests.
- 12:30pm – 12:45pm: A light lunch will be offered with an opportunity for networking.
- 12:45pm – 1:45pm: Europe Day Seminar.
- 1:45pm: Q&A opportunity.
- 2.00pm: Event concludes.

SPEAKERS



H.E. Mr Gabriele Visentin has been the European Union Ambassador to Australia since September 2022 and was appointed EU Special Envoy for the Indo-Pacific in September 2021. Prior to his arrival in Australia, Mr. Visentin served as Head of the Parliamentary Affairs Division in the European External Action Service for several years. Earlier in his career, Mr. Visentin was an official of the European Commission and served in the Directorate General for External Relations. Mr. Visentin was also Head of Cabinet to the last President of the ECSC (European Community for Steel and Coal) and Advisor on European affairs to the Italian Minister of Industry, Energy and International Trade. He holds a degree in law and is specialised in International and Community law.



Dr Christian Hirst is a senior career public servant and the First Assistant Secretary of Europe Division within the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. He was most recently Minister-Counsellor, Political, Economic and AUKUS at the Australian High Commission in London (2022-2024). Prior to his posting to London, Dr Hirst was the Assistant Secretary responsible for India and the Indian Ocean in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. He has also led the Political and Economic sections at the Australian High Commission in New Delhi and was Counsellor (Political) at the Australian Embassy in Jakarta. Before joining DFAT, Dr Hirst was Senior Adviser for Cyber Policy at the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, and held senior roles in the Department of Defence. Dr Hirst has a PhD in International Affairs and Strategic Studies from the University of Queensland. He speaks Bahasa Indonesian.



Vicki Thomson has worked in Australia's university sector for more than two decades championing its role as integral to the success of our nation and its people. Beyond being the Chief Executive of the Group of Eight Universities, she is the Deputy Chair of the European Australian Business Council (EABC) and prior to this role she was Executive Director of the Australian Technology Network of Universities (ATN). She is the Deputy Chair of Multiple Sclerosis Australia, (MSA), a member of the Australian Government's University Foreign Interference Taskforce and the Executive Cyber Council, a member of the Australia-India Institute's Advisory Board and a member of Jobs and Skills Australia's Education and Training Reference Group.

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