



THE STATE OF THE UNION

9/10 MAY 2012
SALONE DEI CINQUECENTO
PALAZZO VECCHIO
FLORENCE - ITALY

PRESS RELEASE – EU MUST REMAIN ROLE MODEL IN NEW GLOBAL ORDER

As new states and regions rapidly emerge to challenge the existing global order, Europe must forge a new role as a safeguard of best practices, a leader in know-how, and emphasize local governance with Eurasia, panelists said during a round table on the role of the EU amid a rapidly shifting world order during the second annual State of the Union organized by the European University Institute.

Within the next decade, the EU will become China's largest trading partner, eclipsing the US. A new field for bilateral cooperation is in expertise, as China makes the transition from an industrial to a knowledge-based economy, said Chen Xin, a professor at the Institute of European Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

Russia, the EU's third largest trading partner, is in the midst of putting in place Eurasian unions. The Common Economic Space comprising Belarus and Kazakhstan was established in January. Infrastructure is the basis for creating a new identity for Russia and the common link to create these unions, said Oleg Kharkhordin, Rector of the European Institute at St. Petersburg.

He said the European Union is the model Russia will use for another, the Eurasian Union. But cooperation between Russia and the EU is most promising at the municipal and sub-regional level, and among universities, not at the region-to-region level, and including on such areas as participatory budgeting of cities, since Russia and Europe share a common tradition of self-governing communities, Kharkhordin also said.

"Poverty and ignorance are the biggest obstacles to democracy and their eradication should be a priority," said Pedro Pires, the former President of Cape Verde. Pires called for a new global governance, a redistribution of power and responsibility, and of a redistribution of military, scientific and technological advances from developed to developing countries as essential for the further advancement of democracy in the world.

"Europe is unlikely to fare well in this tough global environment unless it gains its sense of unity and purpose," said Jan Zielonka, professor of European politics at Oxford University. "But being a model power is not a bad option.

"Today a fire brigade, but tomorrow the architects to design a post-crisis Europe. We must start thinking about this today," he went on to say.

CONTACTS

Stephan Albrechtskirchinger, Director, Communications Service
Stephan.Albrechtskirchinger@EUI.eu

Marco Agnoletti, Spokesperson of Matteo Renzi, Mayor of Florence
Marco.agnoletti@comune.fi.it



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