



State University of New York Model European Union

The SUNY MEUs

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Vale de Almeida to speak at opening

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This year's SUNY Model European Union Intergovernmental Conference will kick off with words from the former Ambassador of the European Union to the U.S. João Vale de Almeida. Since his appointment by former President Barack Obama in 2010, Vale de Almeida has been a key player in negotiating the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP).

Still in the works, TTIP hopes to provide job opportunities to U.S. workers, businesses and farmers while strengthening America's ability to compete internationally. According to the Office of the United States Trade

Representative, TTIP is aiming at adding 13 million more U.S. and European Union jobs that are already supported by the trade and investment in the Transatlantic. According to the OUSTR website, the agreement also plans on "maintaining high levels of health, safety and environmental protection."

In an interview with the Delegation of the European Union to the United States, Vale de Almeida expressed optimism regarding TTIP's completion.

"It was never going to be easy, particularly the regulatory chapter, but I am convinced that negotiations will eventually result in an agreement that is good for consumers, workers and companies on both sides of the Atlantic," he said during an interview to euntheus.org.

Before becoming an ambassador, Vale de Almeida held several senior positions in the European Council, a branch of the EU that sets its policy agenda. In the Council, he helped create and execute EU foreign policy.

Vale de Almeida believes cooperation leads to effectiveness.

"Our relations are very good, but we should never take each other for granted," he also said to euntheus.org.

"While respecting our differences, we need to remind ourselves of the importance of our transatlantic ties, our shared history and the expectations our citizens place on us to work towards making our societies a better place."



Photo courtesy of euntheus.org

European Union Ambassador to the United States, João Vale de Almeida

The EU and the U.S. lead the rest of the world in most developed economies. The Office of the United States Trade Representative reports that both economies would benefit immensely from a TTIP completion. Echoing the idea, Vale de Almeida believes that "completing TTIP will be a powerful signal that the EU and the U.S. have a unique partnership and one that is essential in today's complex and unpredictable world."

Twenty seven member states make up the EU. That being said, culture is heavily diverse. As an example, 23 official languages are spoken within the institution. Although he doesn't speak all 23 languages, Vale de Almeida says this is what makes the EU strong.

"Our motive by the way is: united in diversity. And I think this captivates the strength of the European Union. We respect the diversity

of each member state, but at the same time we do a lot together," he said to Bill Miller.

Miller's interview was in March of 2016. Wednesday, March 29, 2017, marks the dawn of the UK's divorce negotiations.

Steven Erlanger of the New York Times reported that many analysts have agreed that the UK's exit means good news for Russia, and possibly for China too. With the UK out of the EU, Russia and China are expected to have an easier time negotiating with the individual state than they would with a tightly drawn EU.

More recently, at a lecture before the Foreign Policy Association, Vale de Almeida joked that 2017 should be an "exciting" year.

"In the first few months, what do I see? Well I see the first politician being selected to secretary general to the United Nations, and the first non-politician being elected president of the United States," he said.

Vale de Almeida continued his thoughts on 2017 by sharing his first Super Bowl experience and by pointing out this year's Oscar mishap.

Although he acknowledged the upcoming uncertainty caused by Brexit, Vale de Almeida offered positive thoughts by recognizing the progress these past few decades have brought.

"We [now] have hyper-globalization. Trade is growing more than GDP. We've had an enormous technological revolution which allows us to be totally interconnected," said Vale de Almeida. "I think we should be proud of what we've achieved in the past 25 years."

The former ambassador will address the conference at the SUNY Global Center at the opening ceremony on Thursday, March 30, 2017.

The 2017 SUNY MEU Leadership Group

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President of the European Council
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Vesalius College

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Philmore Hughes

European Commission - Trade
Cecilia Malmström
SUNY Buffalo State

Timothy Kaiser

European Commission President
Jean-Claude Juncker
SUNY Buffalo State

Which Country, Which University

Austria - Schmalkalden University

Belgium - SUNY New Paltz

Bulgaria - Lille University

Croatia - Drake University

Czech Republic - Ithaca College

Cyprus - University at Albany

Denmark - SUNY Cortland

Estonia - University at Buffalo

Finland - Drake University

France - University at Albany

Germany - University at Buffalo

Greece - SUNY Cortland

Hungary - University at Buffalo

Ireland - University at Albany

Italy - SUNY Fredonia

Lithuania - Schmalkalden University

Luxembourg - SUNY New Paltz

Malta - SUNY New Paltz

Netherlands - Lille University

Poland - Coastal Carolina University

Portugal - University at Albany

Romania - SUNY Cortland

Slovakia - SUNY New Paltz

Slovenia - SUNY Fredonia

Spain - Drake University

Sweden - Jamestown Community College

European elections mean uncertainty for the EU in near future

The EU is experiencing uncertainty this year as over 40 percent of its member countries hold major elections. In the wake of Brexit and the rise of populist revolutions across Europe, elections held this year have the potential to bring major changes to the EU.

Recent elections and referendums in the Netherlands, Italy, as well as upcoming elections in Germany and France have the potential to have significant impacts on the EU.

In December, 2016, Italy's Prime Minister, Matteo Renzi, resigned after his constitution reform plan was defeated in a referendum. In his resignation speech, Renzi said, "I did all I could to bring this to victory...if you fight for an idea, you cannot lose."

Paolo Gentiloni was appointed prime minister of Italy, and took over on Dec. 12, less than a week after Renzi resigned. The next elections will be held in early 2018, and the possibility of three different prime ministers in less than three years could bring instability to both Italy and the EU.

In the Netherlands, parliamentary elections were held on March 15, and the current prime minister's party, the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy, came out on top. This prompted a sigh of relief from many who feared that the anti-Islam populist leader, Geert Wilders would win the most seats after leading the polls for almost two years. Wilders had expressed desire to hold a referendum to leave the EU, drawing fears of a second Brexit from many.

The German elections won't be held until the fall, but are already drawing attention as Chancellor Angela Merkel's Christian Democratic Union (CDU) party won 40 percent of the votes in Saarland state elections, showing that there is still strong support for

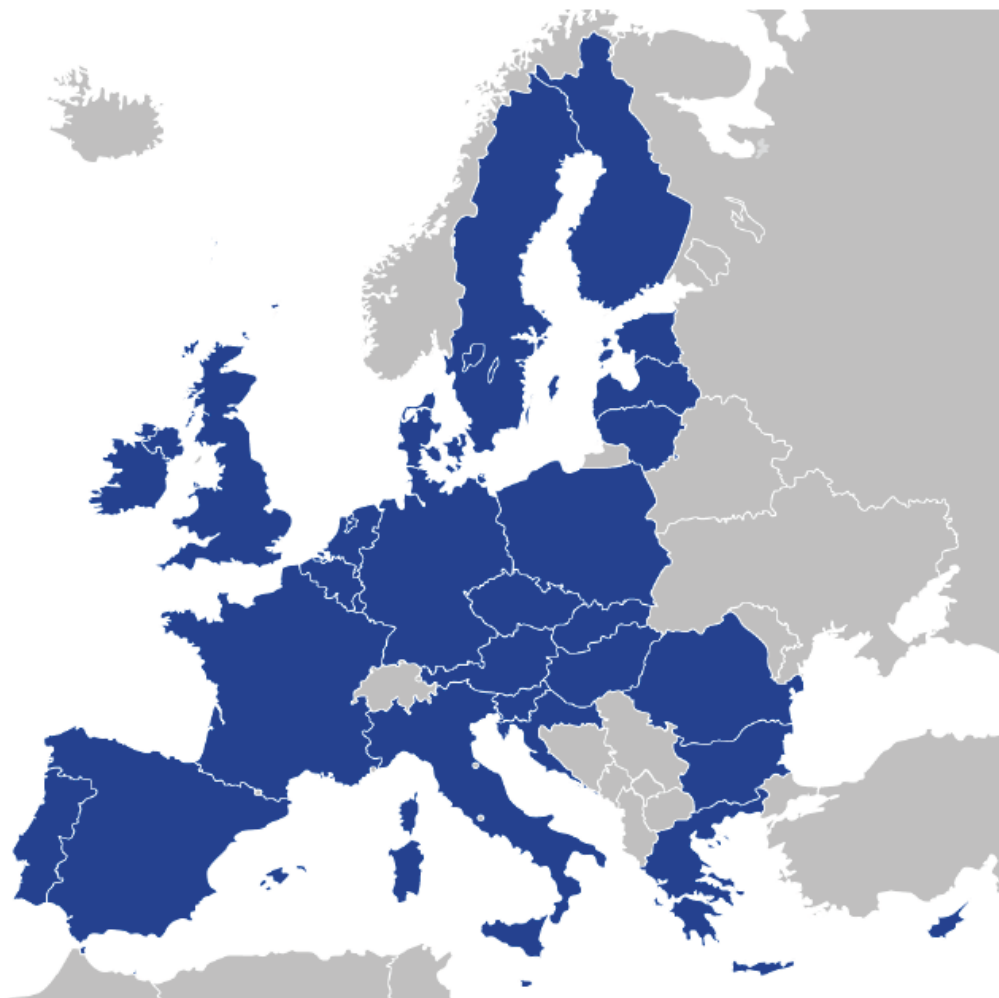


Photo courtesy of Kolja21, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=26292616>

the party. Merkel is running for her fourth term as German Chancellor.

CNN's Nina Schick calls Merkel's run "an astonishing feat," and says that if she wins, Germany may find itself trying to lead Europe without much support from other countries. "She will come under pressure to be the 'last defender' of moderate, liberal democracy and globalization," said Schick.

Bloomberg reports that the CDU still leads over rival parties, but Merkel's refugee policy has fallen under criticism and could potentially weaken that lead.

France will hold presidential elections this year and current president Francois

Hollande is not seeking reelection because of low approval ratings. The two front-runners are Marine Le Pen of the far-right National Front party, and Emmanuel Macron of the En Marche party. Either of these candidates could have a major impact on the EU.

Le Pen has promised to hold an EU referendum within six months of taking over as president, according to BBC News. Macron has no political experience and has never run for office before, but is neck and neck with Le Pen in the polls. A win for either of them could have a huge influence on the EU, as France has the second biggest population and GDP in the EU.

Highlights from 2016



A panoramic view of La Grand Place in Brussels, Belgium.



Tom Muller as last year's Donald Tusk



A sculpture in Brussels, Belgium.



Belgian cuisine a la Madagasikara



Last year's leadership group