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Annual Conference Ponders Alternative Energy

Can alternative fuels step in to replace carbon-based energy and curb ominous climate changes? The Miami-Florida European Union Center of Excellence (MEUCE) brought together an eclectic team of academics, policy makers and entrepreneurs to ponder this seminal question at its 2009 annual conference. As befits the center's orientation, the conference explored the state of affairs in three continents, Europe, North and South America. The day-long debate covered a number of angles, including the role of governments, consumers and the private sector, the economic feasibility of alternative fuels, issues of international cooperation and the increasing import of the developing world.

Co-sponsored by the FIU Energy Business Forum, the conference took place March 13 at the Florida International University (FIU) MARC International Pavilion. It was the first in the new three-year conference series under the theme "Global Europe."

Ed Glab, who heads the Energy Business Forum at FIU, laid the ground for the debate by outlining the main challenges. Glab painted a grim picture, denouncing the "irrational exuberance about how far and how fast we can advance toward a low-carbon alternative fuels future over the next generation" and offered what he called a "reality check."

Today, Glab argued, some 80 percent of world's energy comes from fossil fuels, i.e. oil, gas and coal. By 2030, the global demand for energy will have increased by 30 percent, and fossil fuels will still be supplying the same percentage, because they are abundant, available and affordable.

"On the other hand, alternative fuels are currently less affordable, much less available and severely limited in quantity," he said.



Ed Glab, head of the FIU Business Energy Forum, lays the ground for the presentations.

The developing world will be mostly responsible for the continued predominance of fossil fuels, Glab said. Eighty percent of the growth in electricity demand will take place there between now and 2030, as will the demand for transportation fuels and the emission of CO₂ into the environment. In the United States, the use of

coal to generate electricity is projected to drop from 50 to 30 percent by 2030, while in Europe it will dip to around 15 percent. Conversely, the use of wind power will increase by 9 percent in the U.S. and 14 percent in Europe.

Glab stressed the importance of efficiency, particularly in electricity production. Estimates by the International Energy Agency (IEA) show that full efficiency throughout the world today could reduce the amount of fossil fuels used by 23 to 32 percent.

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“As the area most important to the energy demand growth curve globally, any reduction in the use of fossil fuels in producing that electricity could have a significant impact on reducing greenhouse gases,” he said.

Additionally, he underlined the importance of global cooperation.

“The developed nations cannot combat global warming without the full cooperation of the developing world,” he said.

But high costs make a positive outcome unlikely, Glab argued. In terms of investment, reducing CO₂ emissions by 50 percent from today’s level by 2050 will require close to \$45 trillion, according to IEA estimates.

Is CO₂ reduction an impossible dream? Glab left the question to the three panels of speakers that followed.

Panel I: A European Perspective

The European Union is committed to fighting climate change and reducing green house emissions, and this commitment will pay off, argued Marc Pallemmaerts, senior fellow and head of the Environmental Governance Programme at the Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP) in Brussels.

Pallemmaerts, who is also a professor of European Environmental Law at the University of Amsterdam and the Université Libre de Bruxelles, noted an increasing integration of climate and energy policies and the fact that, by 2005, Europe had managed to decrease its green house emissions levels by five percent compared to 1990 levels.

After Pallemmaerts, a British diplomat illustrated his country’s environmental commitment, but also the positive changes he has observed in South Florida throughout his three-year appointment here.

“It is wonderful to witness all the discussions about energy efficiency, cap and trade schemes and



Marc Pallemmaerts, Keith Allan and Yuda Saydun formed the first panel, giving a European perspective on alternative energies.

renewable energy,” said Keith Allan, the Consul General of the United Kingdom to Miami.

Allan stressed that the cost of unchecked climate change is much higher than the cost of curbing it and that building a low-carbon economy should be perceived not as a liability but as means to economic growth.

The private sector must also look at the effort to curb climate change as an opportunity rather than a crisis, said the first panel’s last speaker, who heads a Miami carbon development and advisory firm. Yuda Saydun, CEO of the Miami-based ClimeCo Corporation, stressed that any company that does not switch to alternative energies and explore opportunities in low-carbon products and services will be eventually swallowed by the competition.

“If you’re not at the table, you’re on the menu,” Saydun said.

“The developed nations cannot combat climate change without the full cooperation of the developing world,” said Ed Glab, head of the FIU Energy Business Forum.



Susan Kaufman Purcell and Stacy VanDeveer listen and take notes as their co-panelist, Jorge Piñon, makes his case.

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Conference: Presenters diverge on the feasibility of alternative energy, consumer responsibility, the costs of going green and the virtues of biofuels.



Unlike Dean and Philippides, who made a case for biofuels, FIU geographer Gail Hollander took a critical position.

Panel II: A North American Perspective

Alternative energy by itself cannot shield the United States from depending on hostile foreign powers in Latin America and the Middle East, said Susan Kaufman Purcell, who heads the University of Miami (UM) Center for Hemispheric Policy. Purcell juxtaposed the United States with Brazil, a country diversifying its energy sources. It depends heavily on hydro power, uses sugar-based and carbon-based energy, and engages in offshore drilling.

“Brazil is doing all of it,” Purcell said. “It’s doing everything it needs to do to not be energy dependent. We in the United States have not done that.”

While Purcell stressed energy independence, the next two presenters highlighted the risks of climate change and the feasibility of and need for alternative sources of energy. Focusing on the northeastern U.S. region, Stacy VanDeveer, who teaches political science at the University of New Hampshire, offered evidence and projections of climate change and illustrated how a region by itself can make a difference.

Following VanDeveer, Jorge Piñon stressed the transportation sector’s share of energy use and the responsibility of individual consumers.

About 70 percent of oil goes into transportation, not power generation, said Piñon, an international energy consultant currently serving as the energy fellow at the UM Center for Hemispheric Policy. Change hinges on consumers.

“The reason today that Hummers are in the market is because there is a demand for Hummers,” he said.

Panel III: A Latin American Perspective

Focusing on biofuels, the last three presenters hailed them as the best alternative to carbon-based energy sources but also charged them with taking food and land away from the poorest people of the planet.

Biofuel targets currently in place in both Florida and federal law require diversified sourcing of ethanol and biodiesel from different feedstock, technologies and regions, according to Brian Dean, commissioner trustee of the International Biofuels Commission. Dean stressed that “the need to establish a hemispheric and ultimately a global marketplace for biofuels is the best hope of both reducing dependence on fossil fuels and promoting economic growth for Florida and the Americas.”

Following Dean, an international expert in ethanol and re-



Brian Dean of the International Biofuels Commission said a global market for biofuels is the best hope for reducing dependence on fossil fuels.

newable energy spoke on the potential of biofuels in the Americas. George Philippides, co-director of the FIU Energy Business Forum, listed the benefits of biofuels and argued that the time is ripe for them to take center stage. He stressed the importance of inter-continental partnerships and public-private schemes.

“Energy by definition has to be a public-private partnership,” he said.

Hailing from academia rather than business or the energy sector, the last presenter lent a critical eye to biofuels. FIU geographer Gail Hollander highlighted their potentially adverse impact on the poorest and weakest people worldwide as well as on the environment and climate change.

For a detailed view of the conference proceedings, you may visit <http://www.miamieuc.org/pdf/conferenceproceedings.pdf>

By Cynthia Malakasis



George Philippides, co-director of the FIU Energy Business Forum, listed the benefits of biofuels and urged for public-private partnerships.

Top European Diplomat Addresses Conference Crowd

EUROPEAN UNION
Delegation of the European Commission to the USA



Angelos Pangratis
Deputy Head
European Union
Delegation to the
United States

Naming climate change “probably the most important global challenge that humanity is facing,” the European Union’s second-top envoy to the United States told the conference crowd (see article on pages 1-3) that, unless countries around the world stick together and to a strict set of rules, the consequences are impossible to even foresee.

“We need an unprecedented level of multilateralism to respond to this challenge” said Angelos Pangratis, the Deputy Head of the European Union Delegation to the United States.

Apart from urging cooperation, Pangratis tackled economic concerns, described the currently still divergent EU and U.S. approaches, and painted a grim picture of the earth’s present state.

The threshold that humanity must guard against crossing is a temperature rise of over 2 degrees Celsius – if this happens, the consequences will be hard not only to address, but even to foresee.

A crucial step is the reduction of CO₂ emissions by 50 percent in 2050, compared to 1990 levels.

“That’s the best available science. It’s not abstract or otherwise motivated political will,” said Pangratis, who addressed the conference participants during their lunch break.

A big part of the distance of emissions reductions, close to 20 or 30 percent, must be reached by 2020, he said. The European Union will do at least 20 % even on its own, but others must also join.

“That’s what we want the others to commit themselves to,” he said. In order to reach such levels of emission reductions, “profound changes in our societies are required.”

How? An important part of the answer is adopting national cap-and-trade emissions systems, he said.

“In fact, we believe that a global cap-and-trade system is indispensable for the longer term.”

The new U.S. administration displays a much more positive attitude toward such a course of action, Pangratis said.

“We have seen an administration that wants to commit very seriously to developing a green economy,” he said.

But the commitment displayed so far by the U.S. is not ambitious enough to allow us to stay below the 2 degrees threshold of temperature increase.

“Furthermore, there’s some resistance in this country even among intellectuals, to international compulsory targets,” he said. But “those in the United States who see compliance with international rules as a loss of sovereignty, they have offered no other operational solution at global level either, he said.

The European Union started incorporating climate change as an important component of the European Security Strategy already in 2003. Other EU policies, such as regional development and migration take into consideration the effects of climate change.



Angelos Pangratis addressing the conference crowd during lunch at the Patricia and Phillip Frost Art Museum. Pangratis called climate change “the most important global challenge that humanity is facing.”

“It is a dimension [the security related consequences of climate change] that we have not managed to integrate sufficiently yet in our interaction with the United States,” Pangratis said.

There will be no results of the global fight against global warming, unless all major countries participate in a multilateral discipline and all major sectors of the economy are included. It is a huge mistake to view efforts against climate change as an economic burden.

“From the economic point of view, this effort does not have to be seen as an additional cost,” he said, but also as an opportunity. For example, expansion of renewable energy stands to create 700,000 jobs in the EU.

Closing, Pangratis expressed the hope that, by the time countries meet again to address the issue at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in December 2009, mindsets will have shifted.

“We want to see in Copenhagen a global projection of our approach and of the discipline that we’re imposing on ourselves,” he said.

By Cynthia Malakasis



Elisabeth Prügl, Christine I. Caly-Sanchez, Angelos Pangratis, Marco Rocca, Andreas Psycharis

Polish Cabinet Member Speaks on his Country's EU Experience



As a junior player in a game with complex rules, Poland strove to learn to share decision-making power and make its voice heard amid its savvy European Union teammates. Five years later, the Eastern European state knows the rules well enough to shape them and views itself as a force to be reckoned with.

"We know that we have some power. We know that we have some weight," a senior Polish cabinet member and key accession negotiator told an FIU audience March 31.

Marking the five years from Poland's accession to the EU, the Miami-Florida European Union Center of Excellence (MEUCE) hosted Marcin Korolec, Undersecretary of State at the Polish Ministry of Economy.

Korolec's speech was the first MEUCE event to focus exclusively on Poland, said Nicol Rae, Senior Associate Dean of Liberal Arts at the FIU College of Arts and Sciences. Rae noted the presence in the audience of several other distinguished Poles, including Zofia Schnitzer, chief expert at the Polish Ministry of Economy, Zbigniew Kubacki, head of the trade and investment section at the Polish Embassy in Washington D.C. and Beata M. Paszyc, Poland's Honorary Vice Consul in Miami. The Consul General of the Federal Republic of Germany in Miami, Klaus Ranner, also attended.

Prior to accession, the Polish public worried that their German neighbors would come in and buy their land, said Korolec, who took part in the referendum campaign, traveling and speaking with people throughout the country.

Five years later, "There's no general movement from Germany to Poland," he said.

"It's the other way around," Ranner pitched in, chuckling.

But changes have occurred in the Union, thanks to the new

members, said Korolec, who said he detects a strengthening role for the European Parliament because of their presence.

The process of collective decision making and the compromises it entails are among the most challenging aspects of EU membership, said Korolec, who joined the Polish accession negotiation team in 1988. He listed the CO₂ emissions standards as an example. The EU's cap-and-trade system is hard for Poland to follow, because it uses a lot of coal.

"It is quite a demanding task to convince our colleagues in the room that we have to manage," he said.

Commenting on the EU's current status, Korolec said that things like the resignation of the Czech government in the middle of holding the EU presidency, the global economic crisis and the constitutional stalemate are holding the Union back.

"My personal judgment of the state of the union is not very optimistic for now," he said.

In the question-and-answer session following his speech, an FIU student brought the issue of energy back to the fore, asking whether Poland has a plan for reducing CO₂ emissions.

"Probably none," replied Korolec. Poland is a carbon-based economy wary of switching to natural gas, as its supplier, Russia, is highly unreliable, he said. Moreover, Poland's climate and geographical position do not promote natural solutions. But he said the country does plan to develop biomass.

Another student asked Korolec what changes he expects when Poland enters the euro zone. Korolec replied that the euro is a good answer to the volatility of exchange rates and a good solution for business, but strips a country of the leeway to shape its own exchange and interest rates.



Marcin Korolec
Undersecretary of State
at the Polish Ministry
of Economy

By Cynthia Malakasis



On the left: Zofia Schnitzer, Zbigniew Kubacki, Klaus Ranner, Marcin Korolec, Elisabeth Prügl, Tony Ojeda and Walter Loy posing after the lecture. On the right: FIU students, academics and members of the Miami community listening to Korolec.

Top EU economist coaches Miami teenagers



Nigel Nagarajan
Economic and Financial Counselor and Head of Economic and Financial Affairs at the Delegation of the European Commission to the United States



“It is economic, but we also have to keep in mind that the European Union is striving to become a political union,” said Dr. Elisabeth Prügl, explaining the nature of the EU.

“And what is globalization, by the way?” asked the man standing in the front of the amphitheatre brimming with eager teenagers.

“It’s how the whole world is connected,” one of them answered.

“Yes, perfect answer,” Nigel Nagarajan replied, tossing the lucky student a USB flash drive, courtesy of the European Commission.

Nagarajan, the Commission’s economic guru in the United States, spent the morning of January 22nd at Florida International University, prepping students from fifteen Miami high schools for the 2009 Euro Challenge Competition (see article on page 8-9). Lively, interactive and informative, his presentation at the College of Law Courtroom 1000 left students not only wiser, but also with a new appreciation for the importance of economics.

Nagarajan, whose official title reads Economic and Financial Counselor and Head of Economic and Financial Affairs at the Delegation of the European Commission to the United States in Washington, DC, kicked off his talk with an overview of the competition.

“It’s an economic competition,” he said. “We’re trying to get you to think about the economy and about the strong relationship between Europe and America.”

Nagarajan urged the students to pose questions and intervene throughout his talk.

“It’s actually a mark of intelligence to put forward a question,” he said. “Today it’s really about you. You have to engage, not just let me talk.”

Nagarajan strove to make students understand that the task before them was not beyond their abilities.

“We don’t expect 9th and 10th grade students to have Ph.D.s in economics,” he said.

As a result of the competition, however, students’ interest in and knowledge of the subject skyrocket, he said. Participating in the Euro Challenge also offers students a key credential that can boost their chances of entering top universities, Nagarajan said.

Nagarajan explained that each team would have to pick a country in the euro zone and use it to illustrate an economic challenge that affects the

area as a whole. Additionally, contestants would have to recommend a policy or policies addressing this challenge. They could pick from the following ten challenges: slow growth, high unemployment, inflation, adapting to technological change (raising productivity), globalization (including immigration), aging (including health care), living with a single monetary policy, sustaining the social system, coping with a housing market slowdown and high government deficit and debts. He stressed the focus should be on the challenge, not the individual country.

Nagarajan urged the students to use the online resources available to them in the two months leading up to the competition. Actions they could take include befriending Euro Challenge on Facebook.

“If you’re passive, or if you’re shy, chances are you’ll have a hard time winning,” he said.

Before Nagarajan introduced the European Economic and Monetary Union and its current economic challenges, Dr. Elisabeth Prügl gave a crash course on the European Union’s formation and path leading up to the adoption of a common currency.

The EU is neither an international organization nor a state, but rather an economic union, explained Prügl, who heads the FIU branch of the Miami-Florida European Union Center of Excellence (MEUCE).

“We’re trying to get you to think about the economy and about the strong relationship between Europe and America,” Nigel Nagarajan told this year’s Euro Challenge contestants.



Nigel Nagarajan posing between MEUCE-FIU Director Elisabeth Prügl (right) and Assistant Director Christine I. Caly-Sanchez

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Nigel Nagarajan chatting with students from Barbara Goleman and Christopher Columbus Senior HS after his presentation

“It is economic, but we also have to keep in mind that the European Union is striving to become a political union,” she said.

Prügl outlined the path of European integration, describing it as one of widening and deepening. She described the EU’s decision-making processes, stressing the dialectic between the intergovernmental and the supra-national aspects of the Union. She gave a history of the treaties and explained how the advent of a common currency jolted a mostly complacent European public.

“In the 1990s, people realized that the Europeans are going to take away their coins and give them new coins,” she said. This novel attention to the EU’s doings contributed to the French, Dutch and Irish publics voting down the proposed constitution and the Lisbon Treaty, she said.

People might have wanted to cling to their own coins at first, but as economic woes hit the continent, the euro presented a great shelter against the crisis, said Nagarajan, who delved into the specifics of EMU following Prügl’s presentation.

Yet when countries give up their own currency, they also relinquish the power to determine their own interest rates, Nagarajan said. Using the United States as an example of a single-currency area, he explained to the students the concept of asymmetric shocks.

If Texas has a boom while Massachusetts falls into recession, they would need different interest rates, but, because they are part of a currency union based on the dollar, they would have to use the same.



Nigel Nagarajan with Miami Senior High School Students

“You can’t use monetary policy to deal with these asymmetric shocks,” Nagarajan explained.

Instead, the U.S. can use its federal fiscal policy to transfer funds from one state to the other. Additionally, the United States features a high mobility of labor, with workers moving from areas with high unemployment to places where jobs are available.

Lacking similar labor mobility and a common fiscal policy, the EU is much less equipped to deal with asymmetric shocks. But then why does it not put a fiscal policy in place, a student asked.

“Great question,” replied Nagarajan, who showcased this as an example of the tension between supra-nationalism and inter-governmentalism. Individual state governments, he explained, want to retain control of their fiscal policies.

“One time you had similar attitudes in this country,” he told his American audience. “You overcame all that and you became a country.”

Ending, Nagarajan gave an overview of the current economic situation in the euro zone, stressing global economic interdependence and the adverse and unanticipated effect on Europe of the U.S. economic slowdown.

“Who thinks that economics are boring?” he asked the students at the end of his talk. Who thinks they’re crucially important?

Students said they enjoyed the presentation, but mostly gushed about Nagarajan himself.

“He’s a great speaker,” said Philip Koenig, a 10th grader at Christopher Columbus High School.

By Cynthia Malakasis



Euro Challenge 2009: The first round in Miami



The MEUCE assistant director, Christine I. Galy-Sanchez, organized and ran the first round of the 2009 Euro Challenge Competition in Miami.

She looked at the three judges squarely, her back straight and her voice unwavering.

“I’m Kelly Hsu, assistant to Kristen Silverberg, United States ambassador to the European Union, and your guest host of today’s economic segment broadcasting from Madrid,” she said.

Kelly Hsu she was, but the suite-clad teenager was no ambassador’s assistant – although her demeanor and grasp of economic issues could have one fooled. Instead of broadcasting from Madrid, she sat in a Miami classroom trying to convince a panel of experts that she and her teammates had mastered the intricacies of the European currency and economy.

Hsu and her four school mates from Miami Palmetto Senior High School formed one of the ten high school teams from Miami-Dade and Broward counties that took part in the Miami first round of the 2009 Euro Challenge Competition on

April 1, organized by the Miami-Florida European Union Center of Excellence (MEUCE). A complete list of the schools that sent teams is available at <http://www.miamieuc.org/calendar.php>.

The rules of the game were simple. Each team had to select one country of the euro zone and use it to demonstrate an economic challenge that affects the area as a whole, as well as make policy recommendations to address this challenge. A fifteen-minute presentation would be followed by questions posed by experts – three in each of the three rooms of the MARC Building at Florida International University (FIU), where presentations were evolving concurrently.

More information on the judges is available at http://www.miamieuc.org/pdf/bio_judges_april1_2009.pdf.



THE JUDGES

Elisabeth Prügl, Philippe Vinogradoff, Pilar Méndez-Jimenez, Mihalea Pinteá, Astrid-Christina Koch, Volker A. Anding, Alan Melchior, Marycela Diaz-Unzalu and John Yearwood

(Continued on page 9)



As the time of judgment neared, teammates clustered together at the spacious MARC lobby, calming each other's jitters and reflecting on the long training process.

"I kept feeling we're so up on the current economic crisis," said Wadira Capaz, a freshman at G. Holmes Braddock High School. "It was a good time to learn about it."

Apart from economic wisdom, preparing for the Euro Challenge also taught students how to transcend their high school cliques and co-exist with a variety of people, said the Luis Pagan, the teacher who had trained the G. Holmes Braddock team.

"It created a lot of tension in the beginning, but there was a lot of understanding toward the end," he said.

Each team strove to convey its knowledge to the judges in an entertaining, yet sophisticated manner. Hsu's team impersonated a panel of experts sharing their savvy at an economics talk show. Their topic was unemployment in Spain. After their presentation, the real experts took over.

What has been the most important contribution of the euro to the European economy, asked Mihalea Pinteau, FIU assistant professor of economics.

A single market enhances competition and facilitates free movement of goods and services, Hsu's teammates replied.

Why is Spain a good choice to illustrate the challenge of unemployment, asked John Yearwood, world editor at The Miami Herald.

Because the problem has hit its most vulnerable groups, such as youth and women, students replied. What's more, the country suffers from cyclical, structural and frictional unemployment.

And what are the best policies to address the issue for particular groups, asked Pilar Méndez Jiménez, Spain's Deputy Consul General in Miami.

Implement green projects to create more jobs, educate women more and enhance the transportation infrastructure that would enable them to get jobs farther away from home.

Next door, students from the International Studies Charter High School talked about unemployment in France. As luck would have it, the French Consul in Miami, Philippe Vinogradoff, was one of their judges, and asked why his country posed a good example of this challenge.

"It is interesting to see that a developed country also has problems with unemployment," one of the students replied.

Questions also covered more general economic issues. Alan Melchior, an economic and financial education specialist at the Miami branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, asked the team how we determine the passage from recession to depression.

An economy goes into depression when the GDP growth is negative, a student replied.

As teams exited the exam rooms, relief mixed with pride.

"We did pretty well," said Scarlet Aleman, a sophomore at South Miami Senior High School. "It was nerve-wrecking."

The three teams that won the first round and will make it to New York City for the finals were Barbara Goleman Senior High School, Coral Reef Senior High School and Miami Palmetto Senior High School.

For more information on this year's national competition, you may visit <http://www.euro-challenge.org/>.

THE WINNERS



Miami Palmetto Senior High School



Barbara Goleman Senior High School



Coral Reef Senior High School



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LET'S CELEBRATE EUROPE DAY

Saturday, May 9th, 2009

2:00 p.m. –5:30 p.m.

**FIU—University Park
Graham Center—GC 243**

