

Mr. Pangratis with the organizers of the event



A Greek introduces EU to American students



Mr. Pangratis speaking at the event

By Pete Chatziplis

It may be known to many that a Greek, Dr. Angelos Pangratis, is currently the Deputy Ambassador of the European Union in America. Based in Washington D.C., he serves as the Minister and Deputy Head of the European Commission Delegation to the US. As part of the delegation's activities in raising the level of awareness in the US of the European Union, Ambassador Pangratis recently gave a speech at Smith College on the European Union, its relationship with the US and its role in the global community.

Among the questions asked was whether the euro will continue to rise over the dollar and whether the EU will be hit by the recession now looming in the US. Pangratis mentioned that the EU has balanced external trade and a much lower fiscal deficit so it might not be hit to an equal extent by a recession. However it is certain that the EU cannot stay completely unaffected by economic developments in the US.

Complex to many, the European Union is not that difficult to understand. Just as in the United States, it has a President, a Federal Administration which is the

Commission, representatives from its member states in the Council of the European Union (such as the Senate in the US) and the European Parliament (such as the House of Representatives). The similarities stop there, however, as the European Union is a group of 27, at the moment, independent states. Contrary to the US where everyone is an American, one can be a good European but at the same time a good German, Italian or Greek. The European Union confers on its citizens additional rights such as to work, study, trade, even voting, not to mention the financial support it offer to the less developed member states. Of course, all members of the union share the euro as the common currency.

Although not in the media's focus, the EU and the US are the two major forces in today's world, accounting for around 60% of global GDP and 40% of global trade. Transatlantic investment accounts for 14 millions of jobs, splitting almost evenly between the EU and the US. It is obvious that there's significant common interest in various areas, and for that reason the European Union and the US have recently set up the Transatlantic Economic Council

in order to improve cooperation in key sectors.

Dr. Pangratis himself is a high-ranking European Union diplomat who has served as Ambassador at the European Commission's Delegation to Argentina and also at senior positions in South Africa and South Korea. He has also been in charge of relations with China, Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and Mongolia. Born on the Greek island of Corfu, he did his undergraduate, graduate and doctoral studies in Paris, and although his duties keep him away from his place of birth, he manages to visit frequently. He's married and a father of three children.