

# EUROPEAN UNION CENTRE

The EU Centre at RMIT and CESAA are pleased to present a seminar on:  
**Lessons for regions from the new EU smart specialisation strategies**

**By David Charles, Professor of Regional Economic Development and Policy, European Policies Research Centre, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow**

Following Professor Charles' presentation, two colleagues with extensive experience with regional innovation systems in Europe, specifically in Värmland in Sweden, will commence the discussion. Mats Williams has spent more than a decade developing and supporting clusters in Värmland, while Professor Steve Garlick has worked closely with regional authorities and universities in Sweden on behalf of the OECD and Pascal projects on universities and regional engagement. They will reflect on the possible benefits of smart specialisation strategies in Värmland, and in other regions in Europe and Australia.

Regional innovation policies have been promoted by the EU for almost two decades. Over time, the concept of regional innovation strategies has evolved and become somewhat main-streamed in Europe's regions. It is being further developed at present through 'smart specialisation strategies for regional innovation' in response to the Europe 2020 strategy.

Although the concept of smart specialisation is not necessarily different from regional innovation strategies, there is an enhanced focus on the diversification of the region on the basis of existing strengths as well as a more dynamic approach to cluster policy. This approach fits with current thinking on regional policy in being place-based, where regional strategies are distinctive and founded on exploiting local assets. A final dimension is the recognition of inter-regional connectedness.

This raises questions as to what is a smart specialisation strategy, and whether it makes sense for all regions to follow this model. Smart specialisation should not be seen as being about technology as such but about knowledge and its application. The presentation will examine the concept of smart specialisation and its applicability to a range of different forms of regional context, and will question the mechanisms by which innovation can be encouraged in regions lacking strong technology-based clusters. Implications for Australian regions will be drawn out in discussion.

## Biography

David is professor of regional economic development and policy at the European Policy Research Centre in the University of Strathclyde. EPRC is a specialist centre researching regional policies, primarily focusing on EU member countries and the policies of the EU itself. Previously David was at Newcastle University before moving to Curtin University in Perth, Australia.

**Professor Steve Garlick** has professorial positions at two universities; is a thought leader in spatial economics; an applied ethicist; has a publication record numbering several hundred focussing on knowledge systems, human capital, innovation and trans-species learning; has undertaken numerous international reviews of higher education; is an inaugural fellow of the Australian Universities Community Engagement Alliance; and with wife Dr Rosemary operates a self-funded wildlife recovery and research centre for traumatised and severely injured Australian native mammals.

**Mats Williams** worked with The Paper Province in Värmland, Central Sweden, for 11 years from the early 2000s and is now working with the Centre for Strategy and Competitiveness at the Stockholm School of Economics, an institution that works with cluster studies and evaluations and operates the European Cluster Observatory. He also has his own consulting firm which supports regional development processes and clusters.

## Event details

Monday 25 February, 2013  
12.30 pm—2.00 pm  
RMIT City campus,  
Conference Rooms 1 & 2, Storey Hall  
RMIT Building 16, level 7  
342 Swanston Street, Melbourne

Free event. All welcome. A light lunch will be served.  
Please RSVP to [eucentre@mit.edu.au](mailto:eucentre@mit.edu.au) for catering purposes

