Dear Readers,

The past months have been of paramount importance for the European Union. European citizens went to the polls to elect a new European Parliament, an event linked to the future of the European Union, a community of 27 Member States, the first of its kind in the entire world. This Parliament in the coming months will debate and decide on a range of issues from trade, security to climate change. The whole focus would be on building a European consensus on key issues of mutual concern that eventually would contribute to improve the lives of the half billion citizens living across European Union. The elections might not have attracted major interest of the Nepalese who were somewhat absorbed following the rapid political developments leading to the change of government. But the existing make up of the European Parliament will not lead to any altering of fundamental policies towards the South Asian region in general and Nepal in particular.

We here in Nepal will continue to extend our assistance to the process of peace building, the reforming of schools, assisting to build the trading capacities of Nepalese entrepreneurs apart from pushing ahead with our earlier commitment of installing renewable energy plants in the villages of Nepal while continuing our encouraging support to non-governmental organisations and other non-state actors. Whatever and however we might be trying to assist, our only goal is to be of help in the ongoing exercise of building ‘New Nepal’ where people would have their fundamental rights protected and thereby are able to pursue their professional and personal growth in a conducive and supportive atmosphere.

Although the political climate appeared somewhat unstable after the recent resignation of the U-CPN (M) led government, the leaders of the political process in Nepal appear to be heading towards consensus one more time. The Nepalis well acknowledge the rewards that consensus can bring. Nepal has shown signs of growth and progress in the past four years following the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The spirit that helped to put the peace agreement into place must be given continuity since Nepal still has a long way to go before a new constitution is prepared and high quality free and fair elections are held for the formation of a stable government. The Delegation of the European Commission would like to reaffirm its commitment to assist Nepal in all possible ways to accomplish the important goals of attaining lasting peace and writing a new constitution together with giving fillip to the ongoing development endeavours. Let us all join hands to fulfill the promises that we have made from our respective sides to make Nepal a model state not only in the region but the world as a whole.

Alexander Spachis
Minister Counsellor
Chargé d’ Affaires a.i.
The State of the Union in 2009

THE KEY ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE BARROSO COMMISSION

Uniting Europe: stability and prosperity for a Union of 27

The Barroso Commission took office just months after the accession of the 10 new Member States, the biggest EU enlargement ever, followed by the accession of Romania and Bulgaria in 2007. The near-doubling of the number of Member States increased the dynamism but also the diversity of the EU, bringing in new political perspectives and traditions, different historical experiences, and new divergences in economic development. These proved both an asset and a challenge for the process of European integration. Contrary to suspicions of many observers that effectiveness and ambition would necessarily suffer in a larger EU (and a larger college of Commissioners), the Barroso commission proved the contrary: the extension of the single market to continental level worked smoothly, and policies ranging from trade to agriculture or energy now enjoy the critical mass of support from 27 Member States. EU cohesion policy, refocused on improving long-term competitiveness has driven forward economic modernisation across Europe. The renewed social agenda has updated social policy for today’s Europe.

Enlargement has enhanced the dynamism of Europe’s economy, giving a new impetus to the Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs. The perspective of joining the euro has acted as a catalyst for reform in many countries. Enlargement of the euro area has brought membership of the euro to 16 countries, with many others keen to join. Europe today also offers more freedom and security to citizens across the continent than was the case five years ago. Abolition of borders controls have been extended to nine new Member

1st row, from left to right: Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Danuta Hübner, Androulla Vassiliou, Viviane Reding, Margot Wallström, José Manuel Barroso, Catherine Ashton, Dalia Grybauskaite, Neelie Kroes, Mariann Fischer Boel and Meglena Kuneva

2nd row, from left to right: László Kovács, Joaquín Almunia, Louis Michel, Günter Verheugen, Antonino Tajani, Charlie McCreevy, Jacques Barrot and Siim Kallas

3rd row, from left to right: Olli Rehn, Stavros Dimas, Leonoard Orban, Vladimir Spidla, Ján Figel’, Joe Borg, Janez Potocnik and Andris Piebalgs
State: 400 million citizens now enjoy passport-free travel across 25 countries. Whilst border controls have been upgraded to make Europe’s borders more secure.

Securing Europe’s future prosperity: paving the way towards a low-carbon economy

The last couple of years have seen a revolution in Europe’s approach towards climate change and energy. With the ambitious package of legislative measures prepared by the Barroso Commission and approved by the European Parliament and the Council in 2008, Europe showed itself ready to give global leadership: to tackle climate change, to face up to the challenge of secure, sustainable and competitive energy, and to make the European economy a model for sustainable development in the 21st century. Europe is the first economy in the world to put legally binding measures that will allow it, by 2020, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20%, and to boost energy efficiency by 20%.

Serving Europe’s Citizens

The European Union exists to serve its citizens as per the guiding principles of the treaties signed. The single market has been built under the principles of free movement of goods, services, capital and persons. They represent freedom for individuals to travel, work, invest and go about their business within the European Union. On this basis the EU has built a commitment to ensure high standards for citizens as consumers and travellers, and to play its part in providing the public service of increasing citizens’ safety and security. The Barroso Commission proposed new rules on GSM mobile telephony ‘roaming’ which have brought affordable and transparent pricing for all cross- border calls , with price cuts of up to 60 %. Overall mobile call prices fell by 14 % in 2006-07 alone. The extension of the Schengen area to include 25 countries has extended the borderless Europe to millions of citizens.

Reconstruction in the wake of disaster

When the tsunami struck in December 2004, the Commission immediately recognised the imperative to respond. Within 24 hours of the disaster, the Commission had ensured that the first humanitarian aid was on the ground in Asia. Over 1 million people received food aid; some 42000 families were given shelter; and repairs to boats and fishing tackle meant more than 20000 fishermen were back at work within a year. In parallel, a € 350 million programme of long-term reconstruction helped to rebuild the damage caused to coastal communities.
European polls give shape to the powerful European Parliament in the June 2009 Election

The 4-7 June election to the 736-member European Parliament saw 43.1 percent of the 375 million Europeans entitled to vote go to the polls. The European Parliament will continue to be dominated by the European People’s Party (centre-right); the socialist group in the European Parliament (PES) kept their second place, while the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) remain in third place.

SOME EYE CATCHERS

With just under half being newly elected the new Parliament will be markedly different from the one of 2004-2009. The opening session for the new term was held in Strasbourg between 14-16 July.

A total of 50.1% of MEPs were re-elected in June, with the largest proportion coming from Malta with 80%. Thus, 49.8% of all the MEPs have been chosen for the first time, the highest proportion of them being from Lithuania with 75%.

25 and 81

The youngest MEP is Denmark's Emilie Turunen who is just 25. The oldest Member is Ciriaco De Mita of Italy who is 81.

Women & men

Women – 35.3 % (31.2 % in the outgoing Parliament)
Men – 64.6 % (68.7 % in the outgoing Parliament)
Highest proportion of women – 61.5 % (Finland)
Lowest proportion of women – 0.0 % (Malta)

Several former Prime Ministers elected as MEPs

Jerzy Buzek, Poland
Jean-Luc Dehaene, Belgium
Ciriaco De Mita, Italy
Ivars Godmanis, Latvia
Anneli Jäätteenmäki, Finland

Lojze Peterle, Slovenia
Theodor Stolojan, Romania
Guy Verhofstadt, Belgium

The laws the European Parliament passes make a real difference for Europeans, in their daily lives and in their work. Some are felt directly and immediately, some filter through the system via national laws; either way the Parliament makes a difference:

The five big things the European Parliament achieved in the past years are as follows:

• REACH: Parliament broke legislative deadlock on a fearsomely complex proposal from the European Commission to ensure the passage of new laws requiring the registration of tens of thousands of chemical substances, the removal from circulation of many hazardous and toxic substances and providing research money to find replacements of others. Public health and the environment were the big beneficiaries.
• **Passenger rights:** Parliament passed into law new rules requiring transport operators to compensate passengers properly for delays and cancellations to which they fall victim. It also ensured that advertised ticket pricing (for example on websites) must clearly show include all charges and taxes passengers must pay.

• **Freedom to work across the EU:** In one of the hottest political debates of the term - on the so-called "services directive" - members of the European Parliament thrashed out the conclusive deal which allowed Europe to set clear and fair rules allowing providers of services large and small from all EU countries to operate freely across the EU.

• **Global warming:** The European Parliament addressed what many believe is the big issue of our times passing a package of laws which aims to achieve a 20% cut in greenhouse gas emissions, a 20% improvement in energy efficiency and a 20% share for renewable energy in the EU energy mix by 2020.

• **Cheaper phone calls:** The European Parliament passed laws capping the amounts mobile phone companies can charge for calls made and received abroad bringing an end to many disagreeable post-holiday surprises. Later it turned its attention to text messages and data, introducing similar provisions.

**Composition of the 7th European Parliament**

Summary of the composition of the 7th European Parliament, whose mandate runs from 2009 to 2014.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Sub-parties</th>
<th>Leader(s)</th>
<th>MEPs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>European People’s Party (EPP)</td>
<td>European People’s Party (EPP)</td>
<td>Joseph Daul</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&amp;D)</td>
<td>Party of European Socialists (PES) + 2 unaffiliated national parties</td>
<td>Martin Schulz</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)</td>
<td>European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party (ELDR) + 3 independent politicians</td>
<td>Guy Verhofstadt</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Greens–European Free Alliance (Greens–EFA)</td>
<td>European Green Party (EGP) European Free Alliance (EFA) + 2 unaffiliated national party + 6 independent politicians</td>
<td>Daniel Cohn-Bendit Rebecca Harms</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)</td>
<td>Movement for European Reform (MER) Alliance for Europe of the Nations (AEN) European People’s Party (EPP) European Christian Political Movement (ECPM) + 1 unaffiliated national party</td>
<td>Michal Kaminski</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European United Left–Nordic Green Left (GUE-NGL)</td>
<td>Party of the European Left (PEL) Nordic Green Left Alliance (NGLA) + 9 unaffiliated national parties</td>
<td>Lothar Bisky</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFDD)</td>
<td>Alliance for Europe of the Nations (AEN) Libertas + 5 unaffiliated national parties</td>
<td>Nigel Farage Francesco Speroni</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Inscrits (NI)</td>
<td>11 national parties</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source for MEPs: European Parliament</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>736</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
European Commission Delegation marks Europe Day, Nepalese friends join in to express solidarity

The 9th of May is a special occasion, not only for Europeans but even those who have a strong faith in uniting together for a noble cause. The day is celebrated every year as a show of respect to the call of French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman towards integrating Member States in Europe for peace and prosperity. Political leaders of France and Germany had a timely reawakening to shun all forms of dissensions and trigger the process of moving ahead with open minds for an open and united Europe where people would learn to value the real essence of unity in diversity. The unique sense of togetherness and unity among 27 European nations has paid handsome dividends. The dividends of the resulting peace and prosperity have come in many forms with all the multiplicity geared towards bettering the lives of average Europeans. The day widely rejoiced as “Europe Day” is becoming more meaningful both in its form and meaning on entering the 59th anniversary of the founding of the European Union radiating hopes to the less privileged sections of the global populace for a better tomorrow.

Schuman envisaged that economic interdependence between European countries would make war a phenomenon of the past. It took less than a year before Schuman’s idea was translated into a binding legal document – the political commitment to peace was thus already a reality. On 18 April 1951, six countries signed the Treaty of Paris establishing the European Coal and Steel Community. Soon thereafter in 1957 this commitment was sealed with the Treaties of Rome, which are still considered the founding documents of today’s European Union.

The EU Member States in Nepal including the Nepalese Diaspora celebrated the Europe Day organizing a colourful function that echoed with the sounds of Spanish symphony played live. The celebrations started with the playing of the national anthems of the European Union and Nepal. Charge d’Affaires’ a.i. of the Delegation of the European Commission to Nepal, Dr. Alexander Spachis along with other commission representatives welcomed the guests representing a wide section of the Nepalese society.

Continuous Enlargement

Over the years the European Community has expanded from 6 to 27 member states with the entry of Romania and Bulgaria on 1 January 2007. The initial 6 member states are Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom joined in 1973, Greece in 1981, Spain and Portugal in 1986, Austria, Finland and Sweden in 1995. The biggest ever enlargement took place in 2004 with 10 countries – Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. Following the enlargement of 2007 which marked the joining of the Union by Romania and Bulgaria, the number of Member States reached 27.

The EU, its members, and institutions have a common flag that is used as a symbol of the European unity – the flag is dark blue
with a circle of 12 yellow stars. No matter how many member states join the EU, this flag remains the same.

As a further integrating factor the common currency, the Euro (€), was introduced on 1 January 1999 and put into real circulation three years later. Currently 16 EU Member States, including Cyprus and Malta, the latest ones joining the European Monetary Union on 1 January 2008, use the Euro as official currency.

The term Schengen Agreement is used for two agreements concluded between European States in 1985 and 1990 which deal with the abolition of systematic border controls between the participating countries. The Schengen rules apply among most European countries, covering a population over 400 million and a total area of 4,268,633 km². They include provisions on common policy on the temporary entry of persons (including the Schengen Visa), the harmonisation of external border controls, and cross-border police and judicial co-operation. A total of 31 states, including 27 European Union states and four non-EU members (Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein and Switzerland), are subject to all or some of the Schengen rules, and 24 have fully implemented them so far.

The EU Institutions

There are five main EU institutions, each playing a specific role:

- European Commission (driving force and executive body);
- Council of the European Union (representing the governments of the Member States);
- European Parliament (elected directly since 1979 by the citizens of the Member States);
- European Court of Justice (ensuring compliance with law);
- Court of Auditors (controlling sound and lawful management of the EU budget).

Several other agencies and bodies complete the system, including the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions, the European Central Bank, the European Ombudsman and the European Investment Bank.

The Presidency of the European Union rotates every 6 months among the 27 Member States. Sweden took over the presidency of the Council of the European Union on July 1, 2009 from Czech Republic. Every five years European citizens elect new members to the European Parliament.

EU Missions reach out to Nepali Students

Between March and June 2009 the EU missions in Nepal (Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the European Commission), led by the local Finnish Presidency, conducted a series of outreach programmes for Nepali students to raise awareness of the EU and its work in Nepal.

Visiting a variety of Kathmandu-based institutions, including Mangala Devi Secondary School, Gyanodaya Secondary, Rato Bangala School, Tribhuvan University and the British Council, EU diplomats joined hands to explain the structure and function of the European Union to students.

What is Europe? What is the European Union? In response to those questions, students were presented with a short video clip and presentation which covered fundamental aspects of the EU’s history, membership, currencies and key policies. Participants also had the opportunity to discuss the work of EU missions in Nepal and the support which they provide in the fields of peace and stability, education, economic growth and trade as well as energy and the environment. Small interactive group sessions allowed students to engage in in-depth discussions on identity issues and develop EU country profiles.

“I learned a lot about the EU, especially on education, Human rights, election observation, culture and religion”, a Nepali student attending the workshop at the British Council said.

Feedback received from students showed that there is a high demand among Nepali students for information on the EU and its Member States. Some students suggested broadening the programme to include information on all 27 Member States and to hold the workshops on a more regular basis.

Overall, the programme reached 134 students in Kathmandu schools and the British Council. In addition, an estimated 250 students from Tribhuvan University participated in the workshop.
Sweden takes over council presidency of European Union, thrust on climate deal, overcoming economic crisis

The arrival of Sweden at the tiller of the European Union for the next six months has raised hopes of a functional and practical presidency of the Union. Tackling Europe’s economic woes and finding consensus for a post-Kyoto environment deal will be two of their toughest tasks. Ministers from EU presidency country are obliged to report to MEPs so PM Fredrik Reinfeldt, Foreign Minister Carl Bildt and Europe Minister and ex-MEP Cecilia Malmström will be regular visitors to Brussels and Strasbourg.

Some of the priorities of the Swedish Presidency are managing the financial crisis and unemployment and addressing climate change—especially the search for and international agreement on climate change in Copenhagen in December.

Other important issues for the six months ahead include cooperation in justice and home affairs and an EU strategy for Baltic sea aimed at tackling the appalling pollution that blights the sea as well as building economic cooperation among the States that border it. The Swedish will also have to continue the work on EU enlargement and the future of the Lisbon treaty with the referendum in Ireland on the treaty likely to be a landmark.

Presence in Plenary

The head of the state or government also returns to the Parliament at the end of six months for a “taking stock” speech and a debate. Depending on events, the second meeting can always be highly charged than the first. A minister from the country holding the presidency, attends all plenary meetings during the six months to make statements and answer questions from the MEPs.

EU leaders meet twice a year in the European Council to set the political agenda for the EU. Ahead of each meeting Parliament’s president tells leaders where MEPs would like the EU to concentrate its efforts.

Informal Meetings Have A Role

As well as attending the Parliament’s Committee twice, Swedish Ministers and MEPs will also hold many formal and informal contacts with MEPs.

The co-decision legislative procedure means frequent meetings with parliament’s rapporteurs and the political groups. As the presidency chairs all the meetings at the council of ministers, its role as a seeker of compromise on legislation is vital.

The next country to hold the presidency will be Spain in January.

Fredrik Reinfeldt, Prime Minister of Sweden, which currently holds the presidency of the Council of the European Union
NAULO GHUMTI (Pokhara based NGO)

Brings smiles on the faces of HIV/infected & sex workers

WITH SUPPORT FROM
European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR)

Democracy and human rights have always received high priority in the development cooperation agenda of the European Commission. As part of its efforts to achieve the twin objectives of fortifying democracy and human rights, the European Commission through its European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) project has been joining hands with local non-state actors in different parts of the world. The EIDHR has recorded success stories in promoting rule of law by raising awareness on human rights among the backward communities and the minority groups.

Nepal is a priority country, for EIDHR projects, where the European Commission is supporting non-state actors. The non-state actors in Nepal have earned a good name for their unwavering efforts towards promoting the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law. They have been bringing to the fore the issues related with the indigenous people, ethnic communities, Dalits, women and children. The issues related with HIV/AIDS carriers, sex-workers and the gender minorities have also been drawing the attention of the Nepali non-state actors.

The EIDHR has been extending support to around 60 projects in the country, most of them still ongoing. Recently the 12-month project titled ‘Strengthening the Human Rights Situation of People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLHA) through Advocacy and Awareness’ got completed. Naulo Ghumti, a Pokhara based NGO in partnership with another local NGO ‘Ashako Saathi’ in Kaski district was dedicated to the task of awareness raising on the human rights of HIV/AIDs victims. The European Commission funded NPR 40, 00,000 for the project.

The project worked towards promoting human rights of PLHAs, developing positive attitude towards them and increasing information access and knowledge to migrant and other rural communities, empowering sex workers to fight back against violence in addition to enhancing their capacities to fight social stigma and discrimination. Besides, the project also helped them to adopt safer sex behaviour and promote their human rights. It worked towards strengthening the service delivery mechanism for the HIV affected and infected children.

For this, the project focused on promotion of human rights of PLHA, generated awareness and ensured empowerment of sex workers against violence. Its main areas included advocacy for the rights of HIV infected and affected children. A total of 20 episodes of street drama were staged against stigma and discrimination. The Condom Day, World AIDS Day, Human Rights Day, Women’s Day, International Day and the Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Girl Trafficking were observed.

Different information leaflets and songs sung by Gandharvas (traditional singers) were produced and mass awareness campaigns carried out including radio programmes, hoarding boards were placed in key locations. In addition to all these, life skills, advocacy and basic STD, HIV/AIDs training were provided to the female sex-workers as part of the efforts to bring about their empowerment. The female sex workers
were mobilised as peer educators.

Advocacy training was provided to the PLHAs and coordination meetings were also held besides conducting parental education and counselling. All this was also backed by media interactions and monthly meetings. Sensitisation workshops were also held for protecting rights of children and referral of the HIV infected children.

These activities have resulted in reducing social stigma and discrimination against PLHAs. They have contributed to mainstreaming the PLHAs into the social development processes. Sensitisation of the hospital authorities, police and other stakeholders has contributed to reducing rights violations of PLHAs and also ensured better care and support. HIV infected children are now accepted more easily in schools. Mass awareness activities have contributed to enhance public knowledge thereby helping to reduce stigma and discriminations.

Naulo Ghumi has established a district level information centre and formed a five- member lawyers group for dealing with these issues. Besides, a group of Female Sex Workers (FSW) has been formed to step up the awareness campaign to protect the rights of FSWs.

The group has succeeded to generate awareness on rejecting sex without condoms, preventing oneself in advance from the situations where violence could be inflicted, reporting immediately to the lawyers group and police etc. PLHAs are now represented in the District AIDS Coordination Committee. The local authorities have also ensured that additional resources are available for the HIV issues. Sustainability and livelihood development of the families have been enhanced. The society has started discussing the issues of the sex workers more openly. Female sex workers have been empowered and started defending their rights which have resulted in the reduction in atrocities against the female sex workers.

The European Commission in Nepal is considering continuous offering of funding opportunities for the furtherance of such issues. Despite the elaborate and strict funding procedures, which the civil society sometimes finds difficult to comply with, the available resources have been highly effective and also appreciated for their contribution to achieving significant results. Individual project details and the forthcoming opportunities can be viewed at www.delnpl.ec.europa.eu.

**EU works to support Human Rights Defenders in Nepal**

Guided by the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders (HRDs), the EU missions in Nepal are taking up HRDs issues in different forms i.e. showing public support by inviting them or visiting them in their office/work place, putting HRDs on the agenda of bilateral talks with the Government. Measures also include attending trials and supporting projects addressing HRDs issues. A local implementation strategy adopted by the EU missions in Nepal further elaborates on the operational role of the missions.

An informal network, the EU Working Group on the protection of HRDs, was formed to monitor the situation of HRDs in Nepal, encourage their work, and provide backing in improving their security. It is composed of staff from the EU missions in Kathmandu (Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, United Kingdom, and the European Commission) as well as OHCHR, NHRC and local human rights organisations.

HRDs concerns have been addressed in different bilateral talks and some funding has also been allocated supporting HRD issues.

Recently, a delegation coordinated by the EUWG undertook a field visit to the eastern Terai and hill districts from 26 to 28 May to obtain first hand understanding and information from HRDs about their security and protection as well as the Human Rights situation in general.

On the occasion of the field visit to Morang, Ilam and Panchthar districts, the EUWG team met with HRDs, journalists, political party representatives as well as state authorities. Talking to the Chief District Officers and District Superintendent of Police, the group stressed the importance of state obligations regarding protection and security issues of HRDs. The visit also provided an opportunity to inform all stakeholders about the EU Guidelines on the protection of HRDs and its local implementation strategy.

In addition, the group met in each of the districts with Women Human Rights Defenders as well as other HRDs working on the right of marginalised communities such as the LGBTI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex) defenders to discuss about their special needs in terms of protection and security.

The visit comes at a time of growing interest on and concern about the safety and security of HRDs. Openly speaking out on cases of murder, abduction and violence against women, HRDs reported to be subject to increasing pressure and intimidation due to the proliferation of armed groups in the region.
Second European Union Film Festival draws bigger crowd

Prashan Shrestha, a Bachelor level student from People’s Campus, was one among the over three thousand audiences who visited the army club to be part of the European Film Festival. Shrestha seemed to be pretty absorbed in watching the move ‘Blind Sight’. The 104 minutes long adventure set against the breathtaking backdrop of the Himalayas featuring six Tibetan teenagers on a climbing expedition up the 23,000 foot Lhakpa Ri on the north side of Mt; Everest turned out to be a widely admired movie of the second European Union Film held between June 13 to June 17.

"I really liked the movie as it carried a lot of adventure," says Shrestha who likes utilizing his free time watching movies that encompass a diverse genre. Shrestha came to know about the festival through his friends. "I watched only two out of the ten movies, but still enjoyed them to the fullest," he says.

Many college going youngsters showed profound interest in the festival. This was well evident from the fact that the number of viewers was greater compared to last year. More than three thousand viewers spared time to watch the European movies of their choices at the Nepal Army auditorium. The audience comprised of people from all age groups, with students from schools and colleges making a glaring presence. Ten different movies -- two each from five European Union member states were screened with four screenings every day.

Diplomatic missions and cultural institutions of the European Union (EU) based in Kathmandu organised the event.

The film festival this time contributed a lot to building cultural and sentimental linkages with European lifestyle, culture and the social realities.

The movies that were screened were: Le Couperet, La France, The Flying Scotsman, Blindsight, Grave Decisions, Yella, Beauty and the Bastard, Christmas Story. Ekko, With Your Permission).
37 Nepalese students, one scholar receive Erasmus Mundus scholarships

The 'Erasmus Mundus' scholarship has been attracting a large number of applicants each year. The worldwide cooperation and mobility programme aims to enhance quality in higher education and promote intercultural understanding. A larger number of students from different parts of the world have succeeded to get scholarships this year after the European Commission decided to scale up the budgetary allocations. An indicative amount of 950 million Euros has been earmarked for the period 2009 to 2013.

Thirty seven Nepalese students and one scholar are among the 10,000 awardees of the Erasmus Mundus scholarship for the academic year 2009-2010. Eight thousand three hundred and eighty five students and academics will come to study or teach in Europe, and 1,561 Europeans will spend periods at partner institutions in countries outside Europe.

"I am overjoyed on bagging such a prestigious scholarship," says Sameer K.C., 25, a permanent resident of Sarlahi district. K.C along with other awardees participated in an information session organised by the Delegation of the European Commission to Nepal a few weeks ago.

"I was surfing the net for scholarship opportunities in Finland, and suddenly my eyes landed on the Erasmus Mundus," said K.C. who is going to Finland and Denmark for his Masters in Mobile Computation." He completed his Bachelors in Information Technology from one of the colleges in the capital. Sukriti Kaini, who studied from Pulchowk Engineering College got to learn about the scholarship from friends. She has secured 80 per cent marks in her Bachelors degree and is pursuing her European Masters in Industrial Management.

Kaini is not an exception as far as excellence in academics among the awardees is concerned. Most of the Nepalese awardees have achieved impressive academic results in the courses they took at their respective Nepalese colleges prior to their bid for the prestigious scholarship, an initiative of the European Commission to enhance quality of education within and outside Europe.

A total of 89 students from Nepal have won the 'Erasmus Mundus' scholarship between the years 2006 to 2009. Now with the fresh group of winners the number has reached 127.

In a statement issued in Brussels recently, Ján Figel', the European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, said, “Erasmus Mundus is going from strength to strength. In the years since 2004, when it began, the programme has been able to establish itself as one of the worlds foremost international mobility programmes. With its emphasis on quality and excellence, it is doing an outstanding job of promoting European higher education on the world stage.”

A total of 103 Masters in different academic streams are being provided by consortia of Europe's top higher education institutions.

The scholarship-winners come from 105 countries: China is the most-represented country, followed by India, Brazil, Mexico, Bangladesh, the US, Ethiopia, Russia and Indonesia. The academics come from 75 countries; the best represented in this category are the US, China, India, Australia and Canada.

New Funding Opportunities for 2009

In addition to the global calls posted at [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/work/funding/index_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/work/funding/index_en.htm) the delegation is going to launch call for proposals under the instruments for the European Instrument for Democracy & Human Rights (EIDHR). The Commission will also carry out briefing sessions on the calls. Please log on to [www.delnpl.ec.europa.eu](http://www.delnpl.ec.europa.eu) for updated information.

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