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**All good things must come to an end...**

The EPIC whirlwind is nearing its conclusion – and what a whirlwind the past three months have been. Since the last issue, EPIC has hosted two webinars for EU researchers interested in research collaboration with our Asia-Pacific partner regions of **Australia** and **Singapore**. They are still available on the [EPIC website](#). In addition, we have published three new policy briefs (with two more still to come!) to inform policy stakeholders on the topics of digital technologies and the arts, Australia-Europe collaboration potential to maximise the benefits of AI for society, and the potential for Singapore-EU collaboration relating to security, privacy and the role of AI. We have now turned our attention to project reporting, wrapping up more than two years of intense collaboration between the EU, Australia, **New Zealand**, and Singapore.

Finally, there is ample material for us work on for the future. With all the insights into national policies and international trends, we will still be engaging with our stakeholders about the future regarding ICT cooperation with our Asia-Pacific partners. Stay tuned for our final newsletter this Fall, which will contain many interesting summaries and more information about opportunities for future connections within the EPIC network.

I still invite you to follow our website and social media channels (if you're on **twitter**, you can follow us [@EPIC\\_ProjectEU](#)) for some final updates and announcements, and for some informative new reading materials.

We hope that you enjoy learning about what has been epic on EPIC!

Warm regards,

*Erich Prem*

EPIC project coordinator

## EPIC hosts final webinars highlighting opportunities for research collaboration

On June 19<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019, EPIC hosted two final webinars to inform EU-based researchers about opportunities for **ICT collaboration** with Australia and Singapore. **‘What’s up Downunder’** and **‘Researching for the Future’** provided information on collaboration and funding opportunities between the EU and the two Asia-Pacific partner countries.

The featured experts included:

### Australia

- **Dr Rado Faletic:** Co-founder of Montroix and Australia’s foremost expert on the European Union’s research and innovation program. **Topic:** A snapshot of Australia
- **Dr Anthony Peacock:** CEO, [Cooperative Research Centres](#) (CRC). **Topic:** CRCs and CRC-Projects: Potential for more EU collaboration

### Singapore

- **Dr Susanne Rentzow-Vasu:** Regional Representative, [EURAXESS ASEAN](#). **Topic:** Overview of the European Research Council and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions
- **Audry Maulana:** International Consultant, [Sociedade Portuguesa de Inovação](#). **Topic:** Singapore - Market and Opportunities

If you are an EU-based ICT researcher interested in potential collaboration opportunities with Australia or Singapore but missed these events, don’t worry! EPIC has posted the full videos and presentations to the project website. Lots of interesting information and links to funding schemes can be accessed here: [Australia](#) and [Singapore](#).



## Christel Nolte from Australia’s Department of Industry, Innovation and Science on the current landscape in Australia and the country as a destination for EU researchers

### *To begin, tell us about the current landscape in Australia...*

Australia has entered its 28th year of consecutive annual economic growth, setting a new record among developed economies for uninterrupted expansion. This enviable record of steady growth proves the robustness of Australia’s economy and its reliability as a low-risk and safe environment in which to do business. Australia has achieved significant global success in the energy and resources, agribusiness, education, tourism and financial services industries.

Australia is also developing and commercialising new disruptive technologies in a range of sectors, including agriculture, education, financial services and healthcare. We are renowned for its resources sector, upon which Asia continues to

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rely to help fuel its industrialisation. Australian agricultural commodities and premium food are in high demand world-wide, as are its tourism, education, wealth management, healthcare and professional services.

Furthermore, we have a highly educated, multilingual and multicultural workforce which has an entrepreneurial spirit. We have world-leading capabilities in **blockchain** and **quantum computing**, and a robust startup ecosystem has strong competencies in **agtech**, **edtech**, **fintech**, **foodtech** and **medtech**.

***Please tell us about your role at the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science...***

I am the Assistant Manager – International Strategy–Science and Innovation at the **Department of Industry, Innovation and Science**. In this role, I am responsible for Australia's strategic science and research and innovation relationships with Europe, focusing on the European Commission, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands and the UK in particular.

A recent focus of our work has been on the preparation and managing of a range of bilateral joint meetings with France, Germany and the European Union. These meetings are the principal mechanism for setting bilateral research collaboration priorities, discuss areas of mutual interest and future opportunities at a government to government level. Only last week, we hosted the 15th Australia-EU **Joint Science and Technology Cooperation Committee** (JSTCC) meeting in Canberra with the European Commission's Director General for Research and Innovation Jean Eric Paquet.

***What makes Australia an attractive working destination for European researchers?***

The European Union (EU) is an important science and innovation partner for Australia. The EU as a whole contributes to 35% of world scientific output, more than any single country. The level of science and innovation collaboration between Europe and Australia is very high, the EU is Australia's highest publication partner. Six out of Australia's ten top collaboration partners are EU member states: the **UK, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Italy, and Spain**.

Australia's research infrastructure is not only world-class, with national and international networked facilities, but the Australian government's 2018-19 Budget included a new investment of \$2.4 billion in Australia's research, science and technology capabilities. This investment includes:

- increased long term funding for national **research infrastructure**,
- support for cutting edge **satellite-positioning technology**,
- more opportunities to skill our workforce to use **advanced technology**,
- a **new space agency**, the Australian Space Agency (or the ASA).

***What are some examples of funding programmes or mechanisms open to international candidates?***

International collaboration is encouraged through Australia's **Global Innovation Strategy** (GIS), under the **National Innovation and Science Agenda**. This strategy provides a whole-of-government framework that encourages Australian researchers and businesses to collaborate with international counterparts. It also has a strong focus on connections between researchers and businesses and linking Australia to international innovation hubs. As part of the GIS, there are a number of programmes that support international collaboration, such as the **Global Connection Fund** and **Global Linkages Fund**.

Australia also supports a range of existing unilateral competitive research projects, exchange and fellowship programs including those supported by the **Australian Research Council**, the **National Health and Medical Research Council** and other smaller funding sources. The **NHMRC - European Union Collaborative Research Grants** scheme provides modest support for specific calls approved for funding under Horizon 2020. Programmes such as the **Cooperative Research Centres** and the **Industry Growth Centres** provide further opportunities for Australia to collaborate on industry-led innovation with international partners, including with Europe.

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**Implementing Arrangements** are an initiative of the **European Research Council (ERC)** designed to boost opportunities for scientists supported by foreign agencies to join the research teams of ERC grantees in Europe. ERC has a series of implementing arrangements with a number of national funding agencies, including two with Australia. On 13 February 2019, the ERC and the **Australian Research Council (ARC)** signed an Implementing Arrangement. On 22 October 2018, the European Research Council (ERC) and the **National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)** also signed an Implementing Arrangement.

***What advice would you give to European researchers wishing to explore funding and collaboration opportunities in Australia?***

To facilitate our international collaboration, the Australian Government developed the ‘*Partnering with Australia on Innovation, Science and Research*’ booklet- this can be found via <https://www.industry.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-10/partnering-with-australia-on-science-innovation-and-research.pdf>. The booklet provides a clear understanding of the various players in the Australian science and innovation system who are open and enthusiastic about pursuing international collaboration.

We also have a Science and Innovation Counsellor – Dr Alex Cooke at the Australian Embassy based in Brussels, who is also our National Contact Point. For any further detailed enquiries, please contact the [international.science@industry.org.au](mailto:international.science@industry.org.au).

## **EPIC releases three new policy briefs**

EPIC has recently released three new policy briefs from its seven-part series to provide policy makers in the **European Commission (EC)**, as well as in the project partner countries of Australia, Singapore and New Zealand, with an update on the state-of-play of ICT cooperation as relates to the EC’s actions. The briefs are publicly available and can be accessed from the project website. The latest releases are as follows - click on the links to learn more.

Policy Brief #3: [Digital Technologies and the Arts](#)

Policy Brief #4: [Getting AI Right: Australian-Europe Collaboration Potential to Maximise AI Benefits for Society](#)

Policy Brief #5: [Security, Privacy and the Role of AI: Singapore’s EU Collaboration Potential](#)

## **EPIC meets Georg Reithofer, Head of R&D Coordination in the High-Performance Metals Division for voestalpine**

**What type of environment does Singapore offer EU companies looking to set up businesses in the region? Recently, EPIC Project Coordinator Erich Prem sat down with Georg Reithofer, Head of R&D Coordination in the High-Performance Metals Division for voestalpine, a leading player in the global Oil & Gas market, to find out.**

***Mr Reithofer, how did voestalpine start out in Singapore?***

Our engagement in Singapore has a history. It roots in our acquisition of Böhler-Uddeholm (completed in 2008) and its excellent service and distribution network. In 2013 we founded **voestalpine Special Metals** dealing with special alloys and special steels with some emphasis on the oil industry and aeronautics. From 2015 onwards, we have been active

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with start-ups in these areas.

### ***What are the advantages of Singapore in research and innovation?***

Firstly, the entry barrier is low as Singapore provides a high standard of living and the working language in our team is English. Secondly, we are able to find qualified staff, something, which has become a major challenge all over the world now. In Singapore we found a high-quality research environment addressing our topics. In addition, there is a good industrial environment regarding our main target industries.

### ***What are the specific strengths of the environment in Singapore?***

Support from the authorities has proven to be generally good, everything is quite unbureaucratic and quick. The **voestalpine Additive Manufacturing Center Singapore** (AMCS) provides a mixed team of experts from many nationalities. Such international teams are a real strength because they facilitate working globally. Cultural differences can be a problem but having a balanced mix is an asset. Singapore clearly shows awareness for this. It was possible for us to start with infrastructure and other assets already in place. In other parts of the world, you are often expected to start from scratch, to invest and grow your team without much existing structure. But here, everything had been put in place already. Also, there is sensitivity to competition between companies. We work as a part of a value chain and less in direct competition with similarly placed industry. This is extremely helpful for communicating in an open fashion.

### ***What are the weaknesses – if any – in Singapore?***

Like in other places in the world, there is a tendency towards isolation. It has become more difficult to bring in our people. This is particularly true for family members or partners and can really be a showstopper because we always need to bring in experts when we start new directions. Also, it takes some time to understand the Asian mentality. All that glitters is not gold – you have to evaluate offers and promises carefully. There are many agencies that are active in parallel and it can be a challenge to successfully navigate them.

### ***What is a good strategy for Europe regarding R&D cooperation with Singapore?***

If you just look at the speed in Asia, it is vital to be proactive. We need to place Europeans here to effectively collaborate. This is also important to improve mutual understanding and build the right networks. There is a good network of European industry here and it is useful to maintain it also in the future. Most important is speed. It is often much more useful to start with some projects rather than waiting for large and often cumbersome programmes. We need a bottom-up and lean way of doing collaboration with Singapore, a bit like lean start-ups. Pilot projects can be a successful route to getting to know business, experts and researchers. From there it is possible to grow – it is never just infrastructure or devices – it is always people that matter.

***Singapore, as well as New Zealand and Australia, is a traditionally strong economic partner for Europe. The Horizon 2020-funded EPIC Project the European-Pacific Partnership for ICT collaboration in research, development and innovation aims to strengthen ties between these regions through academic, industrial and political partnerships. The High-Performance Metals Division of the Austrian voestalpine Group signifies a technological expansion of European activities and opens up access to this growing market in the Southeast Asia region.***



### **Europe's ICT innovation partnership with Australia, New Zealand and Singapore**



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