

Brussels, 18 November 2002

## **300,000 EUR for European and Australian Masters students**

***European and Australian university students will have the opportunity to study abroad through a joint Masters pilot programme commencing in December this year. Mrs Viviane Reding, European Commissioner for Education and Culture, and Dr Brendan Nelson, Australian Minister for Education, Science and Training, today announced the successful pilot project on Higher Education cooperation between Australia and the European Union (EU).***

“I am delighted to see so much interest from universities in Europe and Australia in this type of innovative international collaboration. The European Commission and the Australian Government have been working for a long time to establish closer cooperation and this project shows we are on the right track. I am convinced that Australian universities and postgraduate students will also be well represented in the future programme Erasmus World, starting in 2004, that will support high level Masters with a European dimension and deliver grants to students from all over the world,” said Commissioner Reding.

“It gives me pleasure to jointly announce that LEAFSE (Learning through Exchange – Agriculture, Food Systems and Environment) is the successful pilot project submission and is the first example of collaboration between Australia and the EU in this area,” said Dr Nelson.

“The interest by Australian and European universities in the pilot project has been overwhelming, resulting in a large number of applications of a high standard, covering a wide range of disciplines.”

The EU has committed 300,000 € for the three-year project, with matching funding provided by the Australian Government.

LEAFSE focuses on agriculture, food systems and the environment, accommodating all interests ‘from paddock to plate’, providing opportunities for the exchange of ideas and enhanced multilateral cooperation between the EU and Australia.

The pilot project will enable 36 students from each side to join the Masters programme and study abroad for one semester. In addition to regular courses at host institutions, a specially designed unit will integrate learning outcomes for all students.

The project involves four Australian institutions and four European institutions. The Australian institutions are the University of Western Sydney, The University of New England, The University of Western Australia and The University of Queensland. The European institutions are The Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University (Denmark), the University of Wales – Aberystwyth (United Kingdom), Wageningen University and Research Centre (The Netherlands) and the University of Kassel (Germany).