

Barroso urges deeper integration, less austerity

BRUSSELS, April 22 (Xinhua) -- European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso on Monday called for deeper integration towards a future federation and policy shifts from austerity measures to growth incentives. "A half-hearted attitude towards the European integration project only serves to strengthen its opponents and concede the political momentum to those on the side of nationalism and populism," Barroso said in an opening address to a seminar of leading think tanks in Brussels. A European federation is not a super state, but a democratic federation of nation states that share sovereignty to tackle common problems, according to Barroso, who insisted that deeper integration would solve the ongoing debt crisis and other crises in the bloc of 27 member states. Barroso also stressed the European Union should put more emphasis on growth-stimulating policies in the short term, instead of continuing with further austerity measures. "While this (austerity) policy is fundamentally right, I think has reached its limits ... A policy to be successful not only has to be properly designed, it has to have the minimum of political and social support," he said. Crisis-hit countries such as Greece and Spain have been forced into austerity for the past three years in exchange for international bailout funds. While contributing to massive budget cuts, austerity has also been criticized by many for exacerbating unemployment and economic recession.