

## Low Mortgage Interest Rates-Pricey "Plastic Money"

A year and a half after the global financial crisis broke out, interest rates in Greece remain the lowest in the eurozone, the figures released by the European Central Bank have suggested. In particular, Greek families are offered the most attractive mortgage interest rates among the 24 nations making up the eurozone group. The so-called plastic money, however, is too pricey in Greece.

Interest rates for house purchase in Greece stands at 5.46 percent, as opposed to 5.35 percent in France, 6.17 percent in Luxemburg and 7.05 percent in Slovenia.

With regard to consumer credit, loans in Greece are cheaper than those in Spain and Italy, but more expensive than those in Germany. Specifically, the interest rates are as follow:

- Greece 8.73%
- Spain 11.87%
- Italy 10.47%
- Germany 6.08%

However, interest rates on credit cards range from 16.1 percent to 21.8 percent:

- Greece from 16.1% to 21.8%,
- UK from 14.9% to 27.9%,
- Portugal from 21.65% to 24.4%
- Germany 18.63%.

Greeks use their credit cards less than the rest Europeans, but their purchases are slightly more expensive, the report of the European Central Banks has shown.

# Stolen £1 million Greek icon returned home

A GREEK ICON PAINTING WORTH £1 MILLION THAT HAD BEEN CUT INTO SIX PIECES AND SMUGGLED OUT OF THE COUNTRY TO BRITAIN HAS BEEN RETURNED TO ATHENS.

*The Byzantine painting, of Jesus being lowered on to the cross, was stolen from a monastery 30 years ago.*

Its repatriation comes after the High Court ordered its return, dismissing the owner's appeal.

British police took hold of the icon after it was put up for sale in London in 2002. Its owners, Greeks living in London, could not provide proof of ownership.

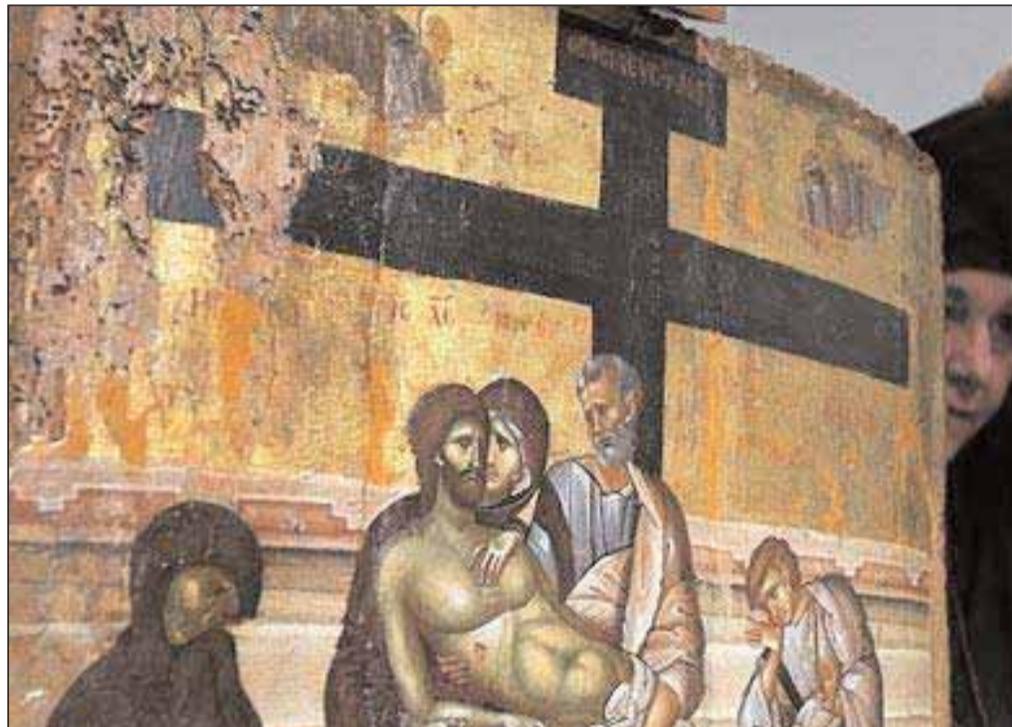
The 700-year-old icon was stolen in 1978 from St John the Baptist monastery in Serres, northern Greece.

Greek officials said it showed their determination to track down stolen works of art.

Victoria Solomonides, Greece's cultural attache in London, said: "It holds the prayers of seven-and-a-half centuries. That is how important it is."

She added: "The message is very loud and very clear. We will not stop until we get what belongs to the Greek state and restore it."

Simon Gass, Britain's ambassador to Greece, said: "Unfortunately too



The painting was recovered by Scotland Yard's art squad

many wonderful works of art have been stolen, including from churches, in Greece over the years and it is just tremendous to see the collaboration between the British and the Greek systems which has allowed this work of art to be returned to

Greece." However, he said it did not set a precedent for the Elgin Marbles, which Greece wants returned from the British Museum.

Restorers will now set to work repairing the damaged icon.



## Scientists Detect our Age

Researchers studying genes believe they can now detect exact "physical age" by

looking at a number of clues - or biomarkers - in DNA.

They believe that the tests will be the first time doctors can accurately predict someone's physiological age objectively without resorting to asking them how they feel or looking at their appearance.

The breakthrough could solve the mystery of why some 70-year-olds function at the level of those in their 50s, while others become frail sooner than would be expected.

The researchers made the breakthrough by isolating the "biomarkers" of ageing in tiny worms which behave similarly to humans.

The speed at which peo-

ple age depends on a number of factors including genetic inheritance, lifestyle and mental health.

Determining chronological age in both worms and humans is easy - count forward from birth. But determining physiological age has remains subjective - based on how someone looks or functions.

The team has identified for the first time biomarkers of ageing which are highly predictive of both chronological and physiological age.

The research, published in the journal *Aging Cell*, involved 104 worms, which had an average lifespan of three weeks.

Now they want to extend their studies to mice and eventually humans.

## Obama Hammering out Resurgence Plan



President-elect Barrack Obama has stated he is hammering out an aggressive two-year resurgence plan, warning in parallel that immediate action should be taken to prevent a prolonged recession. He warned that if no swift action is taken, then millions of working positions will be lost and the American immense debt would rise. After resuming his duties, Mr Obama had said that he would sign a plan for the economy's resurgence that would lead to the creation of 2.5 million of working positions by January 2011. Meanwhile, Timothy Geithner, head of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York is to be the President's Treasury secretary, reported NBC Channel on Friday. 47-year-old Geithner and former Treasury secretary Lawrence Summers under the Clinton administration were considered the two main candidates for the post.