



**EUROPEAN COUNCIL
THE PRESIDENT**



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**Video message by President of the European Council
Herman Van Rompuy
on the fight against tax evasion to be discussed at next
European Council on 22 May**

Every year around one trillion euro is lost in EU Member States because of tax evasion and tax avoidance.

To give you an idea. One trillion euro is about the same as the entire GDP or total income of Spain, the fifth biggest economy of the European Union. It is about the same as the Union's budget for the full seven years ahead. And it is one hundred times more than the loan that was recently agreed for Cyprus.

Tax evasion is unfair to citizens who work hard and pay their share of taxes for society to work. It is unfair to companies that pay their taxes - but find it hard to compete because others don't. And tax evasion is a serious problem for countries that need resources to restore sound public finances.

The current economic crisis only helps to stress the urgent need for fair and effective tax systems. We simply cannot afford nor tolerate tax complacency.

That's why the European Council discussed the question of fraud and fight against tax havens in our March meeting. And that's why I have decided to put it on the agenda of our next meeting of the European Council on the 22nd of May. We must seize the increased political momentum to address this crucial problem.

P R E S S

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Let us be clear. It is first and foremost for Member States to act. But Member States cannot effectively do it on their own or in isolation. Tax evasion is to a large extent a cross-border problem that reveals our inter-dependence and therefore needs cross-border solutions. Not only in Europe but also globally.

It is in this context that I welcome the important new political signals coming from many European countries, on tackling tax evasion head-on, and addressing bank secrecy. And the European Commission has already put ideas on the table.

I look forward to the European Council in May, where we will discuss how to take these important issues forward - at EU level certainly, but also ahead of important meetings of the G8 under British presidency and of the G20.

To tackle this problem, in all our countries and globally, Europe must speak with one voice. The European Council will play its role.

[watch the video](#)

