



**EUROPEAN COUNCIL  
THE PRESIDENT**



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**Remarks by President of the European Council  
Herman Van Rompuy  
after his meeting with Prime Minister of Denmark  
Helle Thorning-Schmidt**

First of all, let me say that I am glad to be back in Denmark. Last time I was here was May last year - during the very successful Danish Presidency of the Council. This time is maybe a bit less exciting as my visit is part of my annual "tour des capitales".

In today's meeting with Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt, the economic crisis was on top of the agenda. The crisis does not only affect the euro area but all countries in Europe - East and West, North and South. There is both good and bad news to report. The good news is that financial stability in the euro zone has been restored. The existential threat to the euro is over. Competitiveness is increasing - also in weak economies. And public deficits have been reduced by more than half since 2008. This is encouraging for all countries in Europe. The bad news, however, is that the economic crisis is dragging out. Unemployment is still increasing, especially among young people. And growth is disappointing.

At our latest meeting of the European Council in March, all leaders agreed on our comprehensive strategy to tackle the crisis. It has four fundamentals:

First, preserve financial stability;

Second, make our economies more resilient, through sound public finances - focussed on structural efforts - and improved competitiveness;

Third, take immediate measures for growth and employment. And that is why I will present a new proposal for immediate action for growth and jobs, notably aimed at reducing youth unemployment, at the June European Council;

# **P R E S S**

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And fourth, complete the architecture of our economic and monetary union.

Sticking to this strategy - which also implies an intelligent, growth-friendly mix of the four fundamentals different for each country - will take us out of the crisis.

In this context, Denmark in many ways serves as a good example. Despite also having been hit hard by the crisis, you have managed to keep a low level of unemployment compared to the EU average. And you continue to carry out ambitious structural reforms with the aim of ensuring long-term sustainable growth.

Likewise, I would like to commend Denmark - as a non-euro zone country - for its constructive approach to the improvement of the Economic and Monetary Union. The Prime Minister has assured me that Denmark intends to continue staying as close as possible to the core of the European Union. I am sure that this will benefit both Denmark and the euro zone.

Finally, we also discussed the upcoming meetings of the European Council. At the next summit on 22nd of May, we will discuss tax fraud and tax evasion. A priority also shared by the Prime Minister. In times of fiscal consolidation, fairness and effectiveness of tax systems become even more essential. The enormous amounts lost every year due to tax evasion and avoidance are unacceptable. There is a need to step up our fight against tax havens; to improve and broaden the scope of automatic exchange of information; to ensure tax transparency and tax fairness; and to tackle VAT fraud more effectively. If we manage to make progress on these and perhaps other elements, the European Union will truly be able to lead by example in tax matters at the global level. Mange tak.