



**EUROPEAN COUNCIL
THE PRESIDENT**



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**Press Statement by the
President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy
following the meeting with
Prime Minister of Kosovo Hashim Thaçi**

It is my pleasure to welcome Prime Minister Thaçi to Brussels right after today's meeting of the European Council, which has taken important decisions affecting the future of the Western Balkans.

Let me first of all congratulate Prime Minister Thaçi on the successful outcome of last week's dialogue meeting between Pristina and Belgrade. The agreement on regional cooperation is a major achievement, which will open the door for Kosovo's participation in regional meetings. I am also pleased that an agreement was found on the implementation of the integrated management for crossing points (IBM). Both are important steps towards further normalisation of relations.

The dialogue has delivered the desired results thanks to a strong commitment on both sides. Prime Minister Thaçi's leadership has played an important role. We now have a rich agenda for Kosovo in the year ahead, as we have promised. It is my hope that there will be soon further progress in the visa dialogue, in getting an agreement on trade related issues, access to EU programmes and EBRD membership.

Today, the European Council endorsed the Council Conclusions of 28 February 2012, which will pave the way for a feasibility study for a Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the EU and Kosovo. Together with Serbia's candidate status, this is good news. They strengthen the European orientation of the whole Western Balkans and anchor the region to the EU.

P R E S S

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The stability of the Western Balkans remains our key interest. I trust that the both parties will continue to implement the agreements reached to date and strive for new results. Political and economic reforms, regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations will bring the region closer to the EU. In this context, I underlined the need for Kosovo to continue and intensify its reform efforts and make best use of the enhanced EU presence in Kosovo and the EULEX mission.
