



EUROPEAN COUNCIL
THE PRESIDENT



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**Press remarks by Herman Van Rompuy,
President of the European Council,
following his meeting with
the Prime Minister of Bulgaria Boyko Borissov**

Thank you Prime Minister for welcoming me again in this wonderful capital of your country, Sofia.

Let me first of all congratulate the government and the Bulgarian citizens. Exactly 7 years ago, on 25th April 2005, the Accession treaty to the European Union was signed in Luxemburg. This was an important moment for Bulgaria and for the European Union. Bulgaria became an integral part of the Union and today we cannot imagine a Union without your country.

First of all, we discussed the economy this afternoon. Bulgaria has managed an impressive export-led turnaround of its economy since experiencing a large contraction in 2009. It is on track to shortly exit the excessive deficit procedure for its budget. The example of Bulgaria has wider significance: it shows that the constraints of a currency board or of a common currency can be overcome when the determination is there.

We also discussed the broader economic outlook and the situation in the Eurozone. We are going through a mild recession, and of course the challenges in some countries are very significant. At the same time, we should not forget that some large parts of the Union are doing relatively well which will be helpful for the European outlook more generally.

But Europe will need to do more and to pursue its strategy to restore growth. Tackling youth unemployment, investing in innovation, the green economy and boosting the Single Market remain on top of our agenda. I know that also for Bulgaria these issues and especially tackling youth unemployment are a priority.

P R E S S

Dirk De Backer - Spokesperson of the President - ☎ +32 (0)2 281 9768 - +32 (0)497 59 99 19
Jesús Carmona - Deputy Spokesperson of the President - ☎ +32 (0)2 281 9548 / 5150 - +32 (0)475 65 32 15
press.president@consilium.europa.eu <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/>

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Also further economic cooperation in Europe is needed. Last month, we signed a treaty for more fiscal discipline. The importance of fiscal rules is well known in Bulgaria. You have been ahead in reforming and improving your domestic fiscal framework through the Financial Stability Pact, well ahead many other parts of the Union. Smooth ratification by all signatories is crucial now.

On Schengen, all European leaders have underlined more than once in our meetings that all legal conditions for accession have been met. At our last meeting in March, the leaders made progress: we urged the Council to take its decision on accession by Bulgaria in September. I welcome the fact that your country is taking confidence-building initiatives in the mean time, for instance in the field of border control and police cooperation.

We also discussed the challenges in the field of energy. Prime Minister Borissov informed me about the recent government decisions in the field of energy investment. With rising cost of energy, energy security is more important than ever. We need to decrease our energy dependence. More energy efficiency, new energy sources and diversification of our imports will help us. We appreciate the commitment of your country to the realization of the Southern Corridor. Energy will remain a discussion topic at the European Council.

Lastly, we discussed the future European budget. I have taken note of Bulgaria's priorities, in particular with regard to cohesion policy. Strong economic and social convergence in Europe remains a top priority. The future budget will offer the tools for a competitive Europe through investments in innovation and infrastructure. At the upcoming European Council meeting in June, we will continue the discussions.
