



**EUROPEAN COUNCIL  
THE PRESIDENT**



Brussels, 14 June 2012  
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**Statement by the President of the European Council  
Herman Van Rompuy,  
following his meeting with the President of Serbia  
Tomislav Nikolić**

Today, I met the newly-elected President of Serbia who was in Brussels for his first official visit abroad.

We had a frank and good discussion, whereby I reaffirmed the EU's commitment to Serbia's European perspective. I was pleased to hear from President Nikolić that he is equally committed and that he considers European integration a top priority for his country.

We both agreed that relations with the EU are key for Serbia's future. The EU is by far Serbia's largest trading partner and the main foreign investor. The mere perspective of EU membership has advanced stability in the region and accelerated much-needed reforms.

Serbia's efforts bore fruit in March when the European Council granted it candidate status. Serbia now has to seize that opportunity and focus on further progress. The EU will do its utmost to help.

The President will play an important role in supporting the work of a new Government to bring Serbia closer to the EU. Key political reforms need to continue – on the judiciary, the fight against corruption and organised crime, freedom of the media and the protection of minorities. Structural reforms and improving the business environment are becoming equally urgent under the current economic circumstances.

**P R E S S**

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Further normalisation of relations with Kosovo remains a key requirement for the next step, the start of accession negotiations. We expect Belgrade to implement the agreements it has entered into in the dialogue with Pristina, in particular on regional cooperation and crossing points. Furthermore, we need to find a solution to the volatile situation in northern Kosovo in the interest of all people living there.

Finally, I wished President Nikolić every success for the upcoming Summit of the South East European Cooperation Process, which he will soon chair. This will be a good opportunity to demonstrate Serbia's active contribution to regional cooperation. A lot has been achieved on regional reconciliation and good neighbourly relations over the past few years. Maintaining the spirit of reconciliation is essential for stability in the region and I expect Serbia to play a positive and constructive role in words and deeds.

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