



**EUROPEAN COUNCIL
THE PRESIDENT**



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**Press statement by the President of the European Council
Herman Van Rompuy,
following his meeting with the Prime Minister of Serbia
Ivica Dačić**

It was my pleasure to meet today the Prime Minister of Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić. Let me first congratulate him on his recent appointment and wish him every success in his challenging and demanding position.

Our discussions focused on Serbia's European perspective. I reiterated my wish to see Serbia making progress on its path towards the EU and becoming a member once the well-known and necessary conditions are met. I was satisfied to hear from the Prime Minister that he and his government are equally committed and that they will do everything possible to bring Serbia closer to the EU.

It is now important that key political reforms continue – on the judiciary, the fight against corruption and organised crime, freedom of the media and the protection of minorities. Structural reforms are becoming equally urgent under the current economic circumstances. Improving the business environment is another important factor in attracting investments, boosting exports and alleviating unemployment.

A visible and sustainable improvement of relations with Kosovo remains a key requirement for the next step, the start of EU accession negotiations. I am pleased that the Serbian Government has issued a decision that will now allow for an effective and inclusive cooperation throughout the region. But the work does not end here. All previous agreements from the dialogue need to be implemented, in particular the agreement on crossing points. Furthermore, a solution needs to be found to the volatile situation in northern Kosovo, a solution that will improve the lives of people there. I therefore urge both Belgrade and Pristina to constructively engage in the EU-facilitated dialogue.

P R E S S

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To conclude, the European perspective of the Western Balkans is a great success. It has generated reforms in all sectors of society, increased cooperation and helped to maintain stability and peace throughout the region. All countries in the region have the possibility to follow Croatia's example if they work hard and fulfil the criteria. The EU is willing to help Serbia to advance the EU agenda. But ultimately, the speed of progress will depend on Serbia. The future of Serbia lies in Europe.
