



**EUROPEAN COUNCIL
THE PRESIDENT**



Bratislava, 30 April 2014
EUCO 99/14

PRESSE 258
PR PCE 89

**Herman Van Rompuy
President of the European Council**

**Remarks at the gala evening
in celebration of the 10th anniversary of the integration
of the Slovak Republic to the European Union**

Dobry večer ! Good evening ! I am truly honoured to be here with you for this festive evening.

Tonight, we celebrate a journey, that of your country, and ten truly transformative years. We celebrate ten years, but we also celebrate and remember a moment. The moment Slovakia became a member of the European Union.

It seems so self-evident today – to the people of all fellow EU nations, and to all the people of Slovakia too I trust. That we are one Union, one big family of twenty-eight nations – rich in our diversity, strong in the ties and the values that unite us. That together, we are more prosperous, we have more clout in the world. And that our countries are there for each other, that your and our solidarity is strong. Belonging to the Union means the past is definitely behind you. It means freedom is there for good.

It has been ten years tonight, and for me, it is moving to celebrate this anniversary in Slovakia. Your country's journey to joining the Union was harder than most, the nineties were not an easy decade. But there was motivation, and there was determination, and then when the time came: there was success.

P R E S S

Dirk De Backer - Spokesperson of the President - ☎ +32 (0)2 281 9768 - +32 (0)497 59 99 19
Preben Aamann - Deputy Spokesperson of the President - ☎ +32 (0)2 281 2060 - +32 (0)476 85 05 43
press.president@consilium.europa.eu <http://www.european-council.europa.eu/the-president>

EUCO 99/14

After years of catching up, now Slovakia leads the way: you were the first in the region, five years ago, to adopt the euro! Together we overcame the threats on the eurozone; and today, others are following in your footsteps and joining the euro. More will come soon I am sure: next year we will be nineteen!

Your euro membership places Slovakia at the core of the core – in the economic heart of Europe. Single market membership can be a magnet for investments, from inside Europe but also from other continents. And these opportunities, your people and your businesses have harnessed them like few others. In the rankings, Bratislava has become the fifth richest region in the European Union. The fifth richest.

But the opportunities aren't only economic. Take free movement: also a source of prosperity, but first and foremost a right, part of our European identity. To me, it defines in essence what it means to be a citizen of the European Union.

To belong to the Union is to be part of something stronger, that can protect us – and that, together, we shape. So tonight, let us mark and celebrate these ten successful years. I know that the Slovak Republic is looking towards the next decade with ambition – for Slovakia, Central Europe, and the Union as a whole! Ďakujem, thank you!
