



**EUROPEAN COUNCIL  
THE PRESIDENT**



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### **Remarks by President Herman Van Rompuy following the European Council**

I can announce to you that the European Council has just adopted the decision to propose Jean-Claude Juncker to the European Parliament as Commission President. We did so after a formal vote by qualified majority; apart from the United Kingdom and Hungary, all other countries voted in favour. I already congratulated Jean-Claude Juncker over the phone.

This decision follows the extensive soundings I have had with the members of the European Council and with the main groups of the European Parliament.

It is expected that the Parliament will vote on our proposed candidate on 16 July. That very evening, the European Council is planning to reconvene, to discuss other top nominations. In the meantime I have been asked to conduct consultations in view of other nominations to be made.

On 16 July, we will also have a debate with the Commission President-designate on the European Union's upcoming priorities. I just invited him. Indeed, the dinner discussion we had last night was precisely about the priorities for the next 5 years.

You will have seen that we met exceptionally in the city-hall of Ypres, after a very special and moving ceremony with the Prime Ministers and Presidents of our 28 countries at the Menin Gate, to commemorate the outbreak of the First World War. I can tell you that the emotion and sense of history remained present throughout that evening – and still resonated today.

# **P R E S S**

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In our Strategic Agenda we set out five overall priorities:

- stronger economies with more jobs
- societies enabled to empower and protect all citizens
- a secure energy and climate future
- a trusted area of fundamental freedoms
- effective joint action in the world.

On all these points, we indicate actions to be taken. However, the main purpose was not to go into details, but to set the direction for the legislative work in the next five years; to achieve what people expect Europe to do. These five priorities must guide the action and planning of the EU institutions in the years ahead, and it is important that all institutions organise their work accordingly. All five points are forward-looking, and I could expand on each, but it is fair to say we paid particular attention to economic priorities.

There was a wide consensus in the room that we need at the same time to continue on the path of reform and fiscal consolidation and to carry out the investments needed for the future. Both are essential for a healthy economy. To balance fiscal discipline with the need to support growth, the EU's existing fiscal framework offers possibilities, which should be used.

What does it mean? That we are all committed to the Stability and Growth Pact and that it is a matter of making best use of the flexibility that is built into the existing Stability and Growth Pact rules.

Our economic discussion this morning also marked the end of the European semester, by now a well-established exercise. The European Council agreed and generally endorsed the key messages for 2014 – on which no doubt President Barroso will say more.

But let me turn to our eastern partners. This morning's historic signing of the Association Agreements with Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine is a milestone. Stronger political and economic ties will bring greater stability and prosperity to the entire European continent. The three countries have chosen an ambitious path. In the economic and social challenges, as well as the geopolitical ones, the European Union stands by them. These are the most far-reaching bilateral agreements the Union ever entered into – the result of a truly collective effort.

After the ceremony, we addressed the current situation in Ukraine, starting with an exchange with President Poroshenko. We gave our strong support to the peace plan announced by President Poroshenko last week. We regret that the cease-fire, while been respected by the Ukrainian authorities, has not led yet to an end of military hostilities in eastern Ukraine.

We expect concrete steps to be taken before next Monday. We want a verification of the cease-fire; we expect the return to the Ukrainian authorities of 3 border checkpoints, as well the release of hostages. We also expect the launch of substantial negotiations on the implementation of the peace plan. All this within the next three days. We urge the Russian Federation to actively use its influence.

The Council will assess the situation and, should it be required, adopt the necessary decisions. The European Council leaders are committed to reconvene at any time for further significant restrictive measures.

This morning we also spoke about the Union's work in the area of Freedom, Security and Justice, defining the strategic guidelines for legislative and operational planning, as the Treaty specifically requires the European Council to do in this field because of the political salience of some of the issues.

Overall, our message today is one of consolidation of the work in progress, and there are several important policies where we want to see more – for instance on cooperation with third countries on migration and asylum, or cross-border judicial cooperation.

On energy and climate, we took stock of the work towards our October European Council, where we will take a final decision on our 2030 climate and energy framework. But already today we confirmed that our emissions target for 2030 will be fully in line with the agreed ambitious EU objective for 2050.

To conclude, let me congratulate Prime Minister Antonis Samaras and Greece on a successful Presidency of the Council – and a steady steering of the final months of this legislative cycle. Prime Minister, it was a pleasure working with you, with your ministers, with your staff. Although Greece is going through a very difficult period, you and your ministers did a great job assuming the Presidency of the Council.

This concludes this European Council of June with a huge agenda and with important decisions.

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