



**EUROPEAN COUNCIL
THE PRESIDENT**



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**Remarks by President of the European Council
Herman Van Rompuy
after his meeting with Prime Minister of Slovenia Janez Janša**

I am very happy to be here in Ljubljana again and I am very honoured by the warm reception of the Slovenian government and yourself. I was here on the very first day of my first term in office as president of the European Council on December 1st 2009. The prime minister and I had very good talks.

Of course, we just met only two days ago in Brussels at the informal European Council meeting. But still we had a large number of issues to discuss. Slovenia is remarkable in many ways: you were the first former Yugoslav country to join the EU and to join the Euro zone. In 2012, you are again among the first ones to ratify the ESM and the fiscal stability treaty. In the current stormy times where European responsibility is sometimes short in supply we do not take this for granted!

The current economic situation is difficult in Slovenia, as in many places in Europe and unemployment is high. The prime minister and I discussed this at length. As we know from many other countries experiences, managing the fall-out of a construction cycle takes many years. There are no quick fixes, reforms take time.

At our informal meeting in Brussels, European leaders discussed a range of growth and employment boosting measures, that could also benefit Slovenia, for example how to complete the single market, support innovation, facilitate external trade, support financing for European-wide infrastructure and improve worker mobility and skills.

P R E S S

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EUCO 95/12

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A precondition for our growth agenda to work is, however, that government public finances are sound: fiscal consolidation is thus necessary to build confidence and to ensure that young people today are not burdened by high levels of debt tomorrow. Some of the measures are of course painful, but they will also help Slovenia gain competitiveness and hence grow again.

I therefore think that the government is on the right track and I hope that a consensus can continue to be found on necessary economic reforms, including with the social partners. More broadly, of course, I hope that a consensus can be found on implementing the fiscal treaty, notably a balanced budget rule at a constitutional or equivalent level, which will anchor sound public finances in the medium run.

The Prime Minister and I also discussed recent developments in the Western Balkans. Slovenia is playing an important role in promoting good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation. Your experience, Mr. Prime Minister, of the region is a valuable asset for the whole EU.

The European Union remains committed to the European perspective of the Western Balkans and it is our hope that Croatia will be able to join the Union on 1 July 2013, pending the successful conclusion of ratification procedures in all EU Member States. More broadly, it is now of utmost importance that all countries of the region continue to make reforms in order to realise their European perspective. Croatia's accession to the EU will give an additional boost to their reform efforts.

I thank you Mr Prime Minister for your cooperation in the European Council in these difficult times for the European Union and euro zone.
