



**EUROPEAN COUNCIL
THE PRESIDENT**



Bucharest, 25 April 2013
EUCO 97/13
PRESSE 170
PR PCE 86

**Remarks by President of the European Council
Herman Van Rompuy
after his meeting with Prime Minister of Romania
Victor Ponta**

Allow me first of all to thank Prime Minister Ponta for his hospitality. Our meeting today was a good opportunity to discuss a number of current affairs since we last met in Brussels in February.

Having met both the President and the Prime Minister of Romania today, let me start off by saying that I am encouraged by the recent improvements in cooperation between the political forces in Romania. I am convinced that this constructive attitude will be to the benefit of all citizens. In difficult times, it is wise to meet challenges together. Just like we do at European level.

Prime Minister Ponta updated me on the constitutional reform in the country, an important endeavour, especially in the light of the specific recommendations that the European Commission issued in July last year. I encouraged him to continue the reform process in full respect of fundamental values such as respect of the rule of law and the separation of powers and ensuring the widest possible consensus in the society.

We addressed important economic topics. To overcome the economic crisis, we need to act in the short term to improve our longer term perspectives. In this context, we also talked about further improving Romania's absorption capacity in order to make better use of the existing EU funds. This could help give an extra boost to the Romanian economy - and make a real difference for many people.

P R E S S

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We also discussed the necessity to move, gradually yet relentlessly, towards a genuine Economic and Monetary Union. Most importantly, rapid progress should be made towards a banking union that will help restore normal lending conditions to our economies. This is indispensable to strengthen growth and employment on a lasting basis. Romania, like all other euro non-members, are welcome to participate in the Single Supervisory Mechanism for banks. The banking union, will not only set clear rules for future handling of crises - but also lead to a more stable financial sector.

In terms of Romania's aspiration to adopt the euro, we shared the view that it is important for Romania to stay as close as possible to the euro area developments in order to ensure a good preparation for entry. There is progress on the convergence criteria and I encouraged the Prime Minister to continue the efforts towards meeting all the necessary conditions for joining the euro.

Finally, we also discussed the Union's Eastern neighbourhood. The Eastern Partnership Summit will take place later this year in Lithuania. It will be an important moment, in particular related to those of our Eastern Partners, who we hope to be able to finalise negotiations on the Association Agreements. In this context, I recognise Romania's particular support to the efforts and aspirations of the Republic of Moldova and to finding a viable negotiated solution to the Transnistrian conflict.

So, at the end of my visit to Bucharest, let me say that it has been a pleasure to be back in Romania and its beautiful capital, in a new spirit of cooperation between the main political actors.