



**EUROPEAN COUNCIL  
THE PRESIDENT**



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**Remarks by President Herman Van Rompuy  
following the first session of the European Council**

*"Alongside our foreseen work, we had a discussion tonight about recent developments concerning possible intelligence issues and the deep concerns that these events have raised among European citizens.*

*The Heads of State or government underlined the close relationship between Europe and the USA and the value of that partnership. They expressed their conviction that the partnership must be based on respect and trust, including as concerns the work and cooperation of secret services.*

*They stressed that intelligence gathering is a vital element in the fight against terrorism. This applies to relations between European countries as well as to relations with the USA. A lack of trust could prejudice the necessary cooperation in the field of intelligence gathering.*

*The Heads of State or government took note of the intention of France and Germany to seek bilateral talks with the USA with the aim of finding before the end of the year an understanding on mutual relations in that field. They noted that other EU countries are welcome to join this initiative.*

*They also pointed to the existing Working Group between the EU and the USA on the related issue of data protection and called for rapid and constructive progress in that respect."*

**P R E S S**

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As far as the agenda is concerned, it happens that our work today at this European Council was devoted to the digital economy and innovation. If we are serious about the single market it has to go digital. At the moment it is still fragmented, our infrastructure soon outdated, businesses are struggling to recruit the IT specialists they need. We know what to do to turn the situation around, and made three pledges.

First: to truly connect our continent:

- by bringing down digital borders, where they are very visible like roaming charges or for online shopping. This is an example, we have not taken a decision on it but it is in line with truly connecting our continent;
- and by encouraging investments in things like high-speed broadband, 4G or cloud computing.

Second pledge: to make it easier for people to do things with one click:

- It should be as easy and safe to buy and sell online from another European country as it is at home.
- And there's no reason why dealing with public administration online should be more complicated than online banking or even social platforms. E-Government could cut public administration spending by up to 20 %.
- Europeans must be able to trust their online providers, and know they are in control of their own data and "digital lives". It's key for the digital single market to work.

Online privacy is also a civil right – one we take very seriously. We want a safe and secure European framework for data and cloud computing. On the global digital market, it would be a competitive advantage for Europe. Clearly there is a market-gap for privacy-friendly platforms!

Our third pledge is to give a vigorous push on IT skills. By 2015 there will be 900.000 digital jobs waiting to be filled. It's not just about skills, but also about social inclusion. So this evening we decided that more structural funds will go precisely to digital training and retraining!

So, three pledges, because a truly single digital market would be a huge boost for businesses, a boost for jobs and growth.

Later this evening, we looked at where we stand with the economic recovery. On the banking union, I am glad we are making good progress.

The Single Supervisory Mechanism was adopted by the legislators last week and will be up and running twelve months from now. Tonight we heard from President Draghi about the bank balance sheet assessment the European Central Bank will be overseeing between now and then. A very important exercise, for which governments must plan well in time, with coordinated and appropriate arrangements, including national backstops.

The next crucial step for the banking union will be the Single Resolution Mechanism. Because once supervision is European, we cannot leave failures to the national level. Member States have committed to reach a political agreement on the Commission proposal by the end of the year, so that it can be adopted before the end of the parliamentary term.

Beyond the banking union, we want to keep the momentum on our roadmap for the Economic and Monetary Union. Ahead of the decisions we will take at our European Council in December, we talked about how to increase the level of commitment, of ownership and of implementation of reforms for growth and jobs in the Eurozone.

We also talked about the monetary union's social dimension. It's important to coordinate not just on economic policies, but on employment- and social policies too. Because when social distress looms somewhere in the Union – impacting social cohesion, fuelling populism – we are all indirectly concerned. The Council will decide on this in December, so that from next year, in the European Semester, we'll review priorities also based on employment and social indicators and on more social dialogue, both in Member States and at the level of the Union.

Tomorrow we will finish our work on economic and social policies and take stock on preparations for the Eastern Partnership summit next month, and discuss how we can step up efforts to prevent tragedies like as in Lampedusa from happening again.

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