



**EUROPEAN COUNCIL
THE PRESIDENT**



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Remarks by President Herman Van Rompuy following the informal dinner of Heads of State or Government

This informal dinner of heads of state or government took place against the backdrop of the European elections. We had a useful, first discussion.

We discussed the results of the European elections. Of course the situation differs in every country, with a mix of continuity and change. Overall, voters sent a strong message, and this message was at the heart of our discussions tonight.

In terms of the way ahead, the European Council as the EU's strategic agenda-setting body has a key role to play and must give clear guidance.

As set out in the Declaration 11 to the EU Treaty on the election of the President of the European Commission, there must first be consultations between the European Council and the European Parliament.

In that regard, we also took note of today's letter sent by the Conference of Presidents of the European Parliament.

Leaders have given me a mandate to conduct these consultations on behalf of the European Council.

I intend to be in touch with the presidents of the newly constituted political groups as soon as these groups are formed and their presidents elected.

I will also have bilateral talks on this with the members of the European Council, including on the European Union's future priorities and strategic agenda, and I will report back to the European Council.

P R E S S

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All the leaders agree that a key issue at hand is to set these priorities and the strategic agenda for the crucial years ahead.

Today was not the time to go into details, but there are a few key orientations we all agree upon.

As the Union emerges from the financial crisis, it needs a positive and future-oriented agenda of growth, competitiveness and jobs.

We need a well-functioning and more developed Economic and Monetary Union, while preserving the unity of the Union as such.

There must also be a strong response to the climate change challenge and a determined push towards an energy union and also a push for lessening energy dependency.

Consolidating the area of freedom, security and justice is imperative, building on the progress already made.

We have to preserve and develop key freedoms while ensuring security and fighting irregular migration, crime and fraud

Finally, we must continue to strengthen the European Union's external action, using all instruments available at European and national levels.

To achieve these objectives, EU institutions must work together constructively and organise themselves in such a way as to maximise the chance of success on the major priorities I have just outlined.

This requires a common understanding on what should best be done at European and what at national level, in line with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality set out in the treaties.

The process we have started today will continue over the coming weeks. We will discuss this strategic agenda in June. I expect inputs from all the member states. I already received input from six member states and I will put on the table a paper with concrete proposals on this strategic agenda.

We also spent part of this evening discussing Ukraine.

We welcomed the holding of Sunday's genuine presidential elections, in decent conditions considering the circumstances. The turnout was good, and the outcome was clear and we look forward to working closely with the new President. I spoke with President elect Poroshenko yesterday, and reconfirmed the Union's support to Ukraine. We prepared a statement on Ukraine which the President of the European Commission will explain. In any case this is also the basis for the position we will take at the G7 meeting in Brussels next week. We will speak not only on behalf of the countries and institutions participating in the G7 but on behalf of the 28 member states.

We also raised the issue of the floods in the Balkans and expressed our solidarity with the peoples of Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia, who suffered the worst floods in over a century.

The European Union is providing assistance, further needs are being assessed.
