



**EUROPEAN COUNCIL
THE PRESIDENT**



Brussels, 28 June 2013
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**Opening statement by President Herman Van Rompuy
at the European Council welcoming Croatia**

Welcome back for our second working day. This morning I should like to extend a special welcome to our colleague Zoran Milanović, Prime-Minister of Croatia.

Mr. Prime-Minister, in two days, Sunday evening at midnight, Croatia will officially become the 28th member of the European Union. And many colleagues will travel to Zagreb to share this moment with you and with the people of Croatia. Your country has worked hard to achieve this – and with success.

It is a truly historic moment for Croatia. For your government, for the citizens of your country. You have always been European, you're now a full member of our European Union. This means new opportunities, but also new responsibilities – this means a common future.

It is also a historic moment, a milestone, for the region as a whole. Your entrance now, just when your neighbours are taking courageous steps along the same path, after a recent history of war, reminds all of us around this table of Europe's fundamental purpose: living together, in peace, living together in prosperity.

In our Union's sixty year old history, today is the seventh time we welcome new members, the seventh time we add one or more extra seats around this table. For Croatia and for Europe, I am convinced that seven will prove a lucky number! So you are most welcome Zoran, here, in this club. Join the club! Thank you

P R E S S

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