



**EUROPEAN COUNCIL
THE PRESIDENT**



Zagreb, 1 July 2013
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**Speech by President of the European Council
Herman Van Rompuy
on the occasion of the entry of Croatia
into the European Union**

Mr. President, Mr. Prime-Minister, Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen, and above all: you, Citizens of Zagreb, People of Croatia! To all of you I say: Čestitam Hrvatska! Congratulations Croatia!

As midnight struck, your country crossed an important threshold. It will change the life of this nation for good. You have always been Europeans – and you are now members of the Union. On behalf of the leaders of the 27 member states, many of whom are here, I welcome you wholeheartedly.

Your country has worked hard for it – with success. As of tomorrow your representatives will sit side-by-side with all other member states. Together shaping decisions for the benefit of all citizens across the Union – from Zagreb to Zaragoza, from Split to Stockholm.

As new challenges arise, you will discover that membership is not just about respecting and shaping rules, but as much about sharing the responsibility for our common endeavour. In weather fair and foul, "for better and for worse", we must remain united as a Union.

P R E S S

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The European Union is one of peace, built on the spirit of reconciliation. In the recent history of the Western Balkans, your country's entry marks a milestone towards a shared future: living together, in peace and prosperity. Over the past months, jointly with Slovenia, you have courageously overcome hurdles; also with Bosnia Herzegovina.

Following the same path, Belgrade and Priština have also reached a historic agreement. I am confident that more positive steps will follow. As a trailblazer for the region, your country, now as a member state, has a vitally important role to play.

I'm proud to be here tonight for this historical moment. Hvala, thank you.
