

Speech by President Jean-Claude Juncker at the ceremony marking the beginning of the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

Добър вечер (*good evening*)!

For my good friend Donald: that means good evening.

Mister President of the Republic,

Prime Minister,

Presidents from here and there,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Excellencies, that is for all of you,

It is indeed a great pleasure to be here in this splendid national theatre for the launch of the first ever Bulgarian Presidency. We have all been waiting for it: I am sure all Bulgarians here remember the clocks hanging all over Sofia and counting down the days to the country's EU accession.

Eleven years ago – in 2007 – Bulgaria joined the European family. But the process, of course, began well before that date. And personally, I feel to be a small part of Bulgaria's remarkable EU journey ever since the day I signed the Accession Treaty in April 2005 – when I was Prime Minister of Luxembourg and holding the Presidency of the European Union.

You have to know, had I refused to sign, you would not be a member – so be grateful – I was in a good mood, in an optimistic mood, in a future-oriented mood, because for years as a Prime Minister and as a Finance Minister of Luxembourg I did admire the performances of the Bulgarian society, mainly of the modest part of the Bulgarian society. How many efforts, how many sacrifices have been delivered by all those who strongly believed in the European future of Bulgaria? So it is for us and to us to say thank you to Bulgaria.

I remember another moment from that day: it was in a Luxembourgish abbey when I heard for the first time the cosmic "Mystery of Bulgarian voices". These voices have literally travelled to space when a recording of these unique voices was placed on the US voyager in 1977. This is quite an achievement already. However, we do not actually know if there was someone in space to listen to them! The Bulgarians were absent from space. But now, tonight, there is a potential audience of 500 million people. In that sense: the Bulgarian voice will be heard loudly and prominently in Europe – tonight and in the next six months and beyond that.

Bulgaria is a country I have a special affection for: for its people, for its culture, for the *шопска* (shopska salad) and the *луканка* (lukanka, Bulgarian salami) – mainly for those.

Your Presidency is taking place at a crucial moment when the European Union must deliver on a number of initiatives for our citizens and shape our Union's future.

I can think of nobody better than my friend Boyko to carry Europe forward and act as a bridge builder in our Union and beyond. I know he will do this with force; he is doing everything with force – *сила* – because he is a strong and committed European.

You can count on us – on Donald, on the Parliament, on the Commission. Because your place is in Europe. And your place is in Schengen. And your place is in the euro. We will work for that. The Commission will be by Bulgaria's side: united we stand strong and united we will stand.

Good luck; best wishes.

Благодаря! For Donald: that means "thank you".

Speech by President Donald Tusk at the opening ceremony of the Bulgarian presidency

*My beloved Fatherland, how beautiful you are!
How blue your vast skies are!
How your sights magically change!
Each glance reveals ever newer beauty.*

These words of Ivan Vazov, the patron of this place, capture the spirit of today's celebration well. "Each glance reveals ever newer beauty" – this reflection is present with me today, as President of the European Council and a Pole. Because as a Pole I understand well how much work, courage and determination it cost you, Bulgarians, to achieve European success for your fatherland. No one gave you anything for free. It was you, in the first place, who were the authors of this historic breakthrough, this "ever newer beauty".

For the younger generations, the theatre in which we find ourselves, is probably more closely associated with the renowned actor, Zachary Baharov, and his role in the cult series "Game of Thrones", than with the poetry of Vazov. The history of the Balkans is more dramatic and interesting than the screenplay of "Game of Thrones", even if there are no dragons in it. We would

all like it if the present and future of the Balkans were less like dramatic screenplays. Stability, security, prosperity – this is what the people of the whole region deserve. And the EU's purpose is to help make this screenplay a reality.

It is a good thing that one of the priorities of the Bulgarian presidency is the future of the Western Balkans. Who, if not you – the descendants of Spartacus, the inheritors of the oldest European statehood, you, who never ever lost a flag in any battle – would be better placed to rise to this important and exceptionally difficult task, that is to renew the European perspective for the whole of the region. You have always been determined and brave, which you have also confirmed in recent years, and this is why I believe that during the presidency you will be just as efficient as Hristo Stoichkov was at the World Cup a quarter of a century ago. With a Prime Minister, who could strike fear into many a Thracian warrior, you will certainly make it.

[Download as pdf](#)

[Press release: JASPERS regional support by the Commission and the EIB needs better targeting, say EU Auditors](#)

[Download PDF](#)

[Daily News 11 / 01 / 2017](#)

Commission proposes to invest EUR 1 billion in world-class European supercomputers

At a [press conference](#) this morning by Commissioners Carlos **Moedas** and Mariya **Gabriel**, the Commission announced its plan to invest jointly with the Member States in building a world-class European supercomputing infrastructure. Supercomputers are needed to process ever larger amounts of data and bring benefits to society in many areas from health care and renewable energy to car safety and cybersecurity. Today's step is crucial for the EU's competitiveness and independence in the data economy. Andrus **Ansip**, European Commission Vice-President for the Digital Single Market, said:

"Supercomputers are the engine to power the digital economy. It is a tough

race and today the EU is lagging behind: we do not have any supercomputers in the world's top-ten. With the EuroHPC initiative we want to give European researchers and companies world-leading supercomputer capacity by 2020 – to develop technologies such as artificial intelligence and build the future's everyday applications in areas like health, security or engineering." Mariya **Gabriel**, Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society added: "Supercomputers are already at the core of major advancements and innovations in many areas directly affecting the daily lives of European citizens. They can help us to develop personalised medicine, save energy and fight against climate change more efficiently. A better European supercomputing infrastructure holds great potential for job creation and is a key factor for the digitisation of industry and increasing the competitiveness of the European economy." A [press release](#), [Q&A](#) and [factsheet](#) are available online. The recording of the press conference is uploaded on [EbS](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Inga Höglund – Tel.: +32 229 50698; Julia-Henriette Bräuer – Tel.: +32 229 80707)

First meeting of Sustainable Development Multi-Stakeholder Platform

The Commission's high level multi-stakeholder platform on the follow up to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in the EU met for the first time on Wednesday 10 January. The launch of this platform reflects a new approach which brings together stakeholders to support the Commission's work. Representatives from academia, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), businesses, civil society, the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Committee of the Regions came together to support and advise the Commission in delivering the SDGs at EU level. International organisations such as the World Bank, the United Nations and the European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN) participated as observers. Commission First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans**, who chairs the platform, said: "Sustainability is a European brand, and sustainable development is at the heart of the European Commission's agenda. We need to work from the grassroots up and use the knowledge and skills of a wide range of stakeholders to reshape our economies and societies. The multi-stakeholder platform is an opportunity for experts to come together and learn from each other. I am looking forward to working closely together to develop the vision and the tools we need to succeed in delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals." Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, added: "The circular economy and sustainable finance are examples of an innovative and European way to ensure that our investments not only create economic growth but at that they do so while bringing new benefits to our planet and our citizens. The experience that the platform members bring will help us deliver real results in this crucial work." More information is available in this [press release](#). (For more information: Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456; Tim McPhie – Tel.: +32 229 58602)

L'Europe finance un réseau de transport urbain moderne à Varsovie

Aujourd'hui la Commission a adopté un paquet d'investissement de plus de 448 millions d'euros venant du [Fonds de Cohésion](#) pour financer l'extension de la ligne deux du métro de la capitale polonaise sur cinq nouvelles stations, de

l'Ouest au Nord-est de la ville, passant par les quartiers de Wola, Bemowo et Targówek. La Commission a également décidé d'investir plus de 127 millions dans le développement du tram dans les quartiers d'Ochota, Mokotow et Wilanów, où vivent 1,8 million d'habitants. La Commissaire à la politique régionale Corina **Crețu** a déclaré: *"Grâce à l'UE, Varsovie est en train de se doter d'un réseau de transport moderne, pour le plus grand bénéfice des habitants, des touristes et des entreprises locales. Ils profiteront tous d'un système de transport rapide, confortable et propre, d'une meilleure qualité de l'air dans la ville et de nouvelles opportunités économiques dans les quartiers desservis."* Pour le métro, les travaux financés par l'UE incluent la construction de près de 6 kilomètres de ligne et l'achat de 17 nouveaux wagons. Le projet devrait être achevé à la fin de 2022. Le métro de Varsovie est actuellement constitué de deux lignes. La deuxième a ouvert en 2015, avec un soutien financier de l'Europe à hauteur de 776 millions d'euros. En janvier 2017, l'UE avait également investi 432 millions d'euros pour [la seconde phase des travaux](#) sur la ligne deux. Pour le tram, l'UE finance l'achat de 50 véhicules et la construction de près de 12 km de ligne connectant le Sud-est de la ville à la gare de Warszawa Zachodnia, un important pôle de transport. *(Pour plus d'informations: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)*

Commission launches public consultation on actions to halt the decline of bees and other pollinators

The Commission is today launching a public consultation on a European initiative on pollinators. Wild pollinators such as bees, butterflies and many other insects pollinate crops and wild plants, so that they can bear fruit and seed. An estimated €15 billion of annual EU agricultural output is directly attributed to pollinators. Commissioner for the Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Karmenu **Vella** said: *"Scientists have warned us of steep pollinator decline across Europe. We have a good understanding of declines for some pollinators while there are knowledge gaps for others. But it is beyond doubt that it is time to act. If we do not, we and our future generations would pay a very heavy price indeed."* Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Phil **Hogan**, said: *"Pollinators are too important for our food security and farming communities – as well as for life on the planet. We cannot afford to continue losing them."* The mid-term [review](#) of the EU 2020 biodiversity strategy showed that pollination might be significantly decreasing. Almost 1 in 10 bee and butterfly species is facing extinction, according to the [European Red List](#). To tackle the decline, the Commission is looking to develop a European initiative on pollinators and calls on scientists, farmers and businesses, environmental organisations, public authorities and citizens to contribute. The consultation will remain open until 5 April 2018 and is available [here](#). *(For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: + 32 229 56172; Iris Petsa – Tel.: +32 229 93321)*

Eurostat: La production industrielle en hausse 1,0% dans la zone euro, et aussi en hausse de 0,9% dans l'UE28 en Novembre 2017 comparé à octobre 2017

En novembre 2017 par rapport à octobre 2017, la production industrielle corrigée des variations saisonnières a augmenté de 1,0% dans la zone euro (ZE19) et de 0,9% dans l'UE28, selon les estimations d'Eurostat, l'office statistique de l'Union européenne. En octobre 2017, la production industrielle avait progressé de 0,4% dans la zone euro et de 0,5% dans l'UE28. En novembre 2017 par rapport à novembre 2016, la production industrielle a augmenté de 3,2% dans la zone euro et de 3,5% dans l'UE28. Un communiqué de presse Eurostat est à votre disposition [en ligne](#). (For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel.: +32 229 56182; Maud Noyon – Tel.: +32 229 80379; Victoria von Hammerstein – Tel.: +32 229 55040)

Eurostat: EU28 current account surplus €69.4 bn and €46.5 bn surplus for trade in services during the third quarter of 2017

The EU28 seasonally adjusted current account of the balance of payments recorded a surplus of €69.4 billion (1.8% of GDP) in the third quarter of 2017, up from a surplus of €47.5 billion (1.2% of GDP) in the second quarter of 2017 and from a surplus of €44.8 billion (1.2% of GDP) in the third quarter of 2016, according to estimates released by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. In the third quarter of 2017 compared with the second quarter of 2017, based on seasonally adjusted data, the surplus of the goods account increased (+€43.1 bn compared to +€34.1 bn), as did the surplus of the services account (+€46.5 bn compared to +€40.1 bn). The deficit of the primary income account turned into a surplus (+€2.0 bn compared to -€2.6 bn). The deficit of the secondary income account decreased (-€22.1 bn compared to -€24.2 bn), as did the deficit of the capital account (-€6.4 bn compared to -€13.4 bn). A Eurostat press release is available [online](#). (For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: +32 229 56185; Kinga Malinowska – Tel.: +32 229 51383)

[Upcoming events](#) of the European Commission (ex-Top News)

Pressemitteilung: Kommission und EIB müssen die regionale Unterstützung durch JASPERS besser ausrichten, so das Fazit der EU-Prüfer

[Download PDF](#)