



European Council
The President

Brussels, 12 December 2017

Dear colleagues,

On Thursday and Friday we meet in our last European Council this year where – in line with the Leaders' Agenda method – we will engage more directly on the politically sensitive issues of EMU and migration. The new method means speeding up our work and breaking deadlocks in the Council of Ministers, which is challenging by definition. We will hold these debates without adopting conclusions, but with a view to setting the scene for decisions next year.

Let me, however, start by underlining that our unity in recent months has been outstanding, and I would like to thank every one of you for this. We have demonstrated that we stand firmly together, supporting one another when needed. Also this week we can demonstrate that despite differences, maintaining unity is possible. The best example of this will be the launch of new cooperation in European defence, i.e. Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). This will be a historic moment, not only because we are witnessing European countries taking up long-term defence activities together. But also because of the context and how this decision came about. 25 EU countries – with the consent of all EU members and within the existing Treaty rules – are launching cooperation in a new field. This example of unity in practice should be an inspiration to all of us, and hopefully a good omen for other important decisions.

After our traditional exchange of views with European Parliament President Tajani at 15.00 on Thursday, Prime Minister Ratas will give us an overview of progress in implementing our previous conclusions. This feedback is important to ensure that the guidance we provide is taken forward with resolve, notably by the co-legislators.

We will then be joined by Secretary General Stoltenberg to discuss EU-NATO cooperation. Next, we will adopt conclusions on Security and Defence where we are making good progress on all fronts. We will also come back to the Social dimension, Education and Culture and adopt conclusions to follow up on the Gothenburg Summit, including our fruitful discussion over lunch. After the first working session, we will celebrate the launching of Permanent Structured Cooperation with the participating Leaders in a short dedicated event.

Over dinner I hope to have an open and frank political discussion on migration, on the basis of the enclosed Note. I think it is important to look at what has – and what has not – worked over the past two years, and draw the necessary lessons. This debate will form the basis for further work in the first half of 2018. Chancellor Merkel and President Macron will also report on the implementation of the Minsk Agreements, with a view to renewing economic sanctions vis-à-vis Russia. Prime Minister Michel has also asked to raise the question of the United States' decision to move their embassy to Jerusalem.

On Friday, we will spend the day among the EU27. In the morning, the Euro Summit will meet over breakfast in an inclusive format, in the presence of ECB President Draghi and Eurogroup President Dijsselbloem. The improved economic situation provides an opportunity to discuss the challenges ahead and the ways to tackle future crises. I want us to have an open discussion on the Economic and Monetary Union and the Banking Union on the basis of the enclosed Note on the EMU.

Finally, the European Council will decide whether it is time to move our negotiations with the UK to the next phase. Whether we have enough guarantees that citizens' rights, EU financial interests and the integrity of the Good Friday Agreement in Ireland will be effectively protected when the UK leaves the EU. In short, whether sufficient progress has been achieved. The EU and UK negotiators have prepared a joint report on what has been agreed so far, and I think we have a satisfactory result on most issues. For that reason, and based on the recommendation by our chief negotiator, I have tabled guidelines which will signal, if you agree, that we are ready to move to the second phase, which will expand discussions to cover transition and the framework for the future relationship. The conclusion of the first phase of negotiations is moderate progress, since we only have ten months left to determine the transition period and our future relations with the UK. This will be a furious race against time, where again our unity will be key. And the experience so far has shown that unity is a sine qua non of an orderly Brexit. Our meeting should end before lunch.

Yours sincerely,



D. TUSK