



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

José Manuel Durão Barroso

President of the European Commission

**Statement by President Barroso following his meeting
with Plamen Oresharski, Prime Minister of Bulgaria**

*Check Against Delivery
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort*

Press point/Brussels

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Good morning ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to warmly welcome Prime Minister Oresharski to the European Commission for the first time. We had an open, frank discussion on the political priorities for the European Union and Bulgaria and I think our meeting was very useful.

We have prepared next week's European Council. You know our agenda for the European Council, namely the issue of youth unemployment, how to address it, and also the financing to the economy, especially SMEs. And the Prime Minister also told me his opinion about the urgency in these areas for his country, for Bulgaria.

We are now working at European level to mobilise all instruments and funds we have to support a return to sustainable growth - and I insist on the word 'sustainable', it has to be sustainable, if not it's not what our citizens need. At the same time we are highlighting what has to be done at national level. That's why we have recently published the Country Specific Recommendations that I hope will be endorsed by the European Council. Because a lot of this work has to be done nationally but the European Union can and should support those efforts.

We have discussed in detail the current political situation in Bulgaria. I'm aware that the political situation is tense, reflecting Bulgarian society's desire to see lasting reform and the highest principles of integrity in the political system. I appreciate the reassurances I have received from the Prime Minister regarding the respect for the rule of law.

I've made this point very clearly to the Prime Minister, our concerns. We know that the situation from a political point of view is polarised in Bulgaria. We have a mechanism that was agreed in Bulgaria several years ago - and with all Member States -, the CVM, the cooperation verification mechanism. The Commission has the obligation to check the developments in some of these areas.

That's why I have also urged the Prime Minister to consult widely on key appointments, especially in the areas of the fight against corruption and organised crime. The candidates chosen should be based on merit and should have the highest standards of integrity. We have agreed that our officials will meet to discuss the wider priorities under the cooperation and verification mechanism so that progress can be made before the next scheduled report at the end of the year.

On the economic situation, we have also mentioned the need to keep structural reforms to boost the growth potential of Bulgaria and the need now to implement the country specific recommendations, which in turn will help to improve the business investment climate. We have especially discussed the issue of the implementation of EU funds that is so critical for Bulgaria. As you know, the European Union funds are the main source of investment in Bulgaria, and, of course, we would like to ensure that this money is put for a good cause, for investment, growth and prosperity in Bulgaria and that is not lost unnecessarily. That is why the absorption capacity of Bulgaria is so important.

So overall, I want to tell you it was a very substantive meeting. I would like to thank the Prime Minister for the very open and frank way in which he discussed with me the challenges the country is facing and his commitment to the principles I've just underlined.

Thank you.