



European Council
The President

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Farewell speech by President Herman Van Rompuy to the members of the European Council

Thanks to all of you and particularly to Angela, for her friendly words. Because she spoke on behalf of all of you, but also because they came from her personally. Politics is a rough trade – but loyalty, trust, respect, and even more, do exist. I've received them here, and given them too.

It is a special period for me. Not only is my mandate coming to a close. But so is my political and public life, which has filled a large part of my life, since my youth. So it is not just a farewell. In a way, it is the farewell.

Of course there is a life after politics, but there is also, as a friend said to me, "*l'inévitable nostalgie qui accompagne les grandes étapes de la vie*", the unavoidable nostalgia that comes with every new chapter in life.

I have tried to act in the name of the European interest, which is not abstract. It is more than the sum of twenty-eight national interests, but it also is this sum. Each time we have to agree, with twenty-eight. Not always "in one go", and sometimes with a bit of pulling and shoving. But together we have shown the implausible: that a Union with twenty-eight countries can work.

I've also tried to show that the Union's institutions can work together. Thanks in particular to José Manuel for that. The institutions are not rivals. We serve the same cause, Europe's cause, meaning ultimately the well-being of all our citizens.

In my life I've never had the feeling of being irreplaceable. There has been a European Council before me, and there will be a European Council without me. From December, I will be the first supporter of your decisions. *Un spectateur, mais un spectateur engagé*. I wish Donald and Jean-Claude "*bon vent*" and a smooth sail, as the French say.

There are many open projects for Europe. We avoided a catastrophe, the break-up of the eurozone. Sometimes it is just as important to avoid the worst, as it is to do the right thing.

I am leaving with the feeling of having done what I could. Of course I will miss this high office, and I will miss you, but this is softened by the feeling of a clean conscience – even if I know there is still much to do.

I wish you all the best, whichever country you come from, whichever party you belong to. May you all fare well. In all respects. *Adieu, mais aussi au revoir*.