



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

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**Ministerial meeting of the reflection group on the Future  
of Europe**

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

Ministerial meeting of the reflection group on the Future of Europe.

**Palma de Mallorca, 19 July 2013**

Ministers,  
Honourable Members of the European Parliament,  
Dear Ladies and Gentlemen !

I would like to thank the Spanish and German Foreign Ministers for this excellent initiative and for

the invitation to attend the meeting of the reflection group on the Future of Europe here in Mallorca.

The presence of and introductory speech by the Spanish Prime Minister underlines the importance of

this meeting.

I very much appreciate the questions and topics you have proposed to discuss on the Future of

Europe. I fully agree that in particular and in the current context economic issues are at the forefront

of our deliberations.

I am very grateful for the very friendly and pro-European atmosphere you have created for this

meeting. The crisis has been very hard on all of us - at European and national level. The idea of

European cooperation and solidarity, even the very idea of the EU itself has been severely tested.

Therefore I very much appreciate your call for European unity, solidarity and decisive action on the

world stage. Many citizens are frustrated; the crisis has already gone on too long; we have to end the

harmful blame game and act as a team. We must show orientation and leadership to our citizens and

communicate in unity that we can emerge from the crisis stronger. This meeting is a clear sign that

we can do it.

The stabilisation of the Euro and ensuring sustainable growth and employment are by far the most

important benchmarks for how citizens will judge our national and European performance as

politicians.

We do not have to shy away from tackling this issue. We have already built very solid instruments

governing economic governance. We have concluded the third European semester. We have very

much improved the process but two questions remain: first, how can we increase the common

ownership of both the process and content of the European semester exercise in such a way that it is

not perceived only as a Commission tool, in particular through the better involvement of national

governments and parliaments, as well as the European Parliament. And second, how can we enhance

the ownership of the Council, or to put it in other words, how can we make Member States more

interested in each other's recommendations. So far, the discussion is mostly limited to the

Commission and the Member State concerned, with other Member States tending to err on the side

of leniency when it comes to softening recommendations.

This autumn we will apply for the first time the two-pack legislation, which will imply the assessment

by the Commission and the Eurogroup of Member States' national budgets. If we do not explain this

properly together, it could be misused by various eurosceptics and misinterpreted as an attack on

national sovereignty. Therefore I appeal to all of us to communicate and explain it in time to our

citizens.

We will need to continue with additional steps towards deepening economic and monetary union

(EMU) . On a personal note, I hope that this pro-European spirit, which is prevailing here in Palma,

will be also shared by colleagues in the ECOFIN.

The Commission will present shortly a communication on the social dimension of the EMU as well as

on the ex-ante coordination of major reforms. This autumn we would also like to propose how

contractual arrangements with Member States can be associated with a solidarity mechanism.

One major element to be completed is the banking union, which is the cornerstone of the EMU. All

crucial proposals are now on the table: the single supervisory mechanism, the capital requirements

directive, the bank resolution and recovery directive, as well as the proposal on the single resolution

mechanism. It is crucial that we adopt all pending legislative proposals well ahead of the 2014 EP

elections.

Tackling youth unemployment and financing the economy are equally major challenges. We need to

deliver on the youth guarantee. The EIB should get more involved as 'our' bank. The European Social

Fund should be also better used in close interactions with national resources.

In further advancing and completing the EMU, all steps should be based on the Community

approach, and not by inter-governmental instruments.

Let me briefly also comment on Europe's role in the world and on the institutions. Guido and José

Manuel are right: we sometimes forget that the EU and its Member States are economic giants, a

superpower. And we should act like this. It requires a united approach. We should better spend more

time on finding a common position than on seeking bilateral favours from our principal competitors.

On the institutions: the Commission proposal on an ambitious administrative reform programme was

just adopted, that will produce considerable savings over the coming years and make this institution

even more efficient and effective. I hear the call for working more in clusters. We discussed it already

for the external relations issues at the last Gymnich meeting. This is, of course, a matter of internal

organisation and a prerogative of the future President of the next Commission. I am sure that the

future Commission will work not only in RELEX clusters, but also, for instance, in clusters concerning

EMU, infrastructure, rule of law.

A last point, on the number of Commissioners:.. Please allow me a personal remark: Some of you

have referred to the criticism that the number of, now, 28 Commissioners is too high. But what is

often forgotten is that they are the only political representatives of the Commission. We do not have

State secretaries or Assistant secretaries. It would not be acceptable to you, or to other international

organisations, or the EP or National parliaments to meet representatives of the various Commission

services instead of Commissioners. You want political representatives as your counterpart.

Moreover, each Commissioner has only six advisors in his Cabinet to get his political vision and

direction through to the administrative level. This is not always easy.

I happily join your call for high participation in the 2014 EP elections. They will be very important, as

the next legislature will have to deal with many files and decisions related to the economic crisis. In

this context, granting the European political parties a legal status is instrumental, if we want to

enhance the European dimension of these elections and avoid that these parties have only the status

of Belgian NGOs. Therefore I appeal to you to support a quick agreement on the relevant Commission proposal for a Regulation.

Once again, let me thank you for this excellent initiative of the reflection group. I do really appreciate

the ideas laid down in the Mallorca declaration and its very encouraging European spirit!