

Remarks by President Donald Tusk after his meetings with President of Bulgaria Rumen Radev

Good afternoon. Let me first of all thank President Radev for his hospitality here in Sofia. Our discussions today focused on the political situation in the Balkans, migration, Schengen and Brexit.

Let me start with migration. Bulgaria is perhaps the best example of how to protect our borders. I witnessed this myself today during the briefing on the situation at your borders with both Turkey and Greece. Thankfully, the situation is under control and it proves how efficient the Bulgarian border services and its political leadership are. Unfortunately, there will be a need for vigilance for a long time to come.

We are determined to keep routes of illegal migration in this region closed. And we remain committed to the full implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement. The EU is honouring its commitments, just like we expect Turkey to continue keeping its part of the deal.

I know that Bulgaria's strengthened border control has put a considerable pressure on your budget. You have invested a lot of your own security resources in this task. The EU and its Member States have helped with financial support and the rapid deployment of a joint European operation. Only at Bulgaria's border with Turkey, the European Border and Coast Guard has deployed around 100 officers to support you. Should further difficulties arise on Bulgaria's borders, the EU has already planned emergency funding, and stands ready to react quickly in support of Bulgaria.

For me the excellent job you are doing at your borders is evidence that you have made enough progress to become part of the Schengen area. Many think this should already have happened by now. I can assure you of my support but we need, as you know, all Member States' agreement. We work hard to make it happen. Member states have already shown their support for Bulgaria to be covered by the new high-tech systems we are building to strengthen Schengen, and this is a promising step forward.

Now let me add a word on the Brexit talks, which we also discussed today. Your citizens only recently gained the full right to work in the UK. They deserve our full commitment that their interests will be safeguarded. Our goal in this respect is clear: to minimise the costs of Brexit for all EU citizens wherever they come from.

You live in a challenging neighbourhood but you are an essential part of Europe. Europe is not only about procedures and money but also about shared values, dignity and political solidarity. And political solidarity means one for all and all for one. Edin za vsichki i vsichki za edin. Europe will always stand by you.