

EU leaders must address growing euroscepticism caused by crisis

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"EU leaders tomorrow need to produce actions not more words and address the issues that are giving rise to increased euroscepticism across the EU," said Guy Verhofstadt in a debate today in Strasbourg ahead of tomorrow's EU summit on tax havens and energy policy.

"Don't misunderstand me. I think it is very important to tackle tax evasion, tax fraud and tax havens. But I wonder if putting on paper more conclusions will help us forwards. That's simply more of the same. The Council said it already in 2010 and 2011."

"Far more pressing is the case of Syria and the lack of courage of the international community to bring the conflict and loss of life to an end."

"The second point the European Council should talk about, is the growing euroscepticism. Recent polling has seen a sharp decline in attitudes towards the EU. But this is not because everyone has suddenly become nationalistic but a reflection of the desperation at the failure of EU leaders and politicians to overcome the crisis."

"But Euroscepticism is a dead-end street. It is not by going back to the nation state, by dismantling the European Union, that we shall regain our competitiveness. It is not by claiming everything was better in the old days that we will provide jobs for our young people. And it is certainly not by closing the doors on the single market, that our economy shall grow again".

"But it is not only a question of rationality and economics. It is also a question of sovereignty. What do we want? To shape together the world we live in? Or, like Mr Farage seems to like, watching the outside world from the pub and praising the good old days ? The choice is between relevance within the European Union or irrelevance outside it. "