

From Lisbon to Madrid: Spanish EU presidency preview

"I am sure the Spanish presidency will be truly transforming"
Jerzy Buzek



Presidential priorities: can José Luis Zapatero shape the EU's future?



"It's the beginning of the dream of the united states of Europe"
Gabriele Albertini



Madrid must assume clear positions on institutional relations, argues Cristina Gutiérrez-Cortines



Spanish presidency preview

Priorities: Lisbon implementation, economic recovery, citizenship, external relations

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Parliament's committee chairs explain what they believe are the biggest issues for the Spanish presidency in 2010

*The Spanish presidency comes at a key moment in European history, says **Gabriele Albertini***

Coming just a month after the entry into force of the Lisbon treaty, the EU now has a new level of decision making in the institutions. Dealing with issues such as defence and security can help spur the bloc towards great things, he says. The major priority for Spain will be to follow the excellent work of the Swedes, says Albertini. The last presidency worked on building international dialogue with the emerging powers such as Brazil, he says, and he is in no doubt that Spain will work on

building bridges with Latin America. The decision by Spain to put external relations high on the agenda is not a big surprise, he explains, as the country has a rich tradition of being a world player.

Talking of the world, the EPP member says the Lisbon treaty also begins the birth of EU foreign relations. He quotes Henry Kissinger, "Who do I call if I want to speak to Europe?" as the American politician is supposed to have said. Now we have a foreign affairs representative who can speak for the entire bloc, says Albertini, it's the beginning of the dream of the united states of Europe.

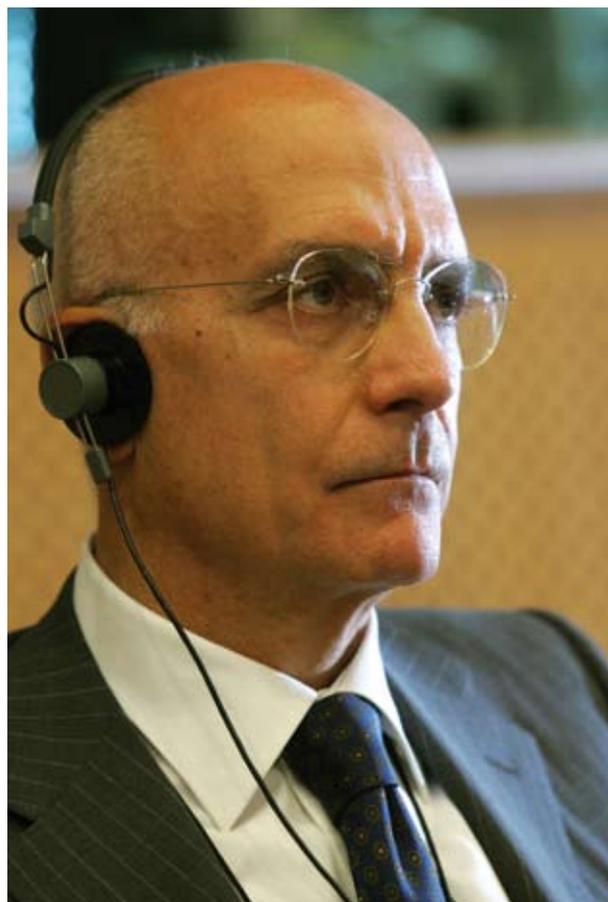
*Spain will have to take an innovative approach in setting a post-Copenhagen climate package and successfully implementing the Lisbon treaty, according to veteran MEP **Jo Leinen***

German Socialist Leinen says Madrid will "have to be visionary", with Spain's presidency coming at the start of a new decade. Leinen wants the top priority to be climate protection and the low carbon economy for the EU, with the follow-up to the UN Copenhagen conference high on the agenda. "It might be that we have to review the climate package and maybe even add additional elements to our climate legislation," he says. "Post-Copenhagen the headline goal is a low-carbon economy. We have to go for more efficiency in the activities of our industrialised societies."

Another priority in environmental terms will be completing the internal energy market, he says. Pointing out competition between France's nuclear lobby and the solar lobby in Spain and Germany, Leinen says the presidency should "make concrete points that the huge reservoir of solar power can be used in the coming years".

A highlight for Leinen, a former chair of parliament's constitutional affairs committee, will be the implementation of the European external action service, established by the Lisbon treaty, which he says would help prepare the EU for more "outward looking activity".

Spain's EU state secretary Diego López Garrido said the country would also focus on implementing a new 'Europe 2020' strategy, aimed at avoiding a repeat of the economic



Gabriele Albertini is chair of parliament's foreign affairs committee



Jo Leinen is chair of parliament's environment, public health and food safety committee

crisis by promoting green jobs. This strikes a particular chord with Leinen, who adds, "We have to get a vision for the EU about what our objectives, what are our headline goals in this new decade are and because Spain has the first presidency in the new decade they have to be visionary. I think that green growth, green jobs, research and development and these new technologies is something that we want to find in the new Lisbon strategy."

Pervenche Berès hopes that the Spanish presidency will be successful in coordinating crisis exit strategies

Spain must put the EU 2020 strategy on track to set the target and the tools for a more social and sustainable development model for the EU and the world. It will only be successful in this enterprise if it manages to define this new strategy in an open and inclusive way with the other institutions, namely the European parliament and civil society, which raises the question of the timetable of this whole process. The presidency has said it will focus on social issues over the free market. Financial

markets and trade have to serve the strategic objectives that we set ourselves as a society, instead of pursuing their own and disconnected logic. I very much welcome the fact that the next G20 will focus on employment issues and believe that these should be central to all our discussions on the crisis exit and future models, instead of being dealt with as last item on the agenda. I hope that the Spanish presidency will be a strong ally in this strategy.

Although the implementation of Lisbon begins under the Spanish presidency, I believe that implementation is everybody's job. The parliament will have to meet the expectations raised by its new role and the commission must consider its monopoly of initiative not as a privilege, but as a duty. The main advice I would give to council in this new context is to realise that playing collectively pays off and is in everybody's interest. During its presidency, Spain should send Europe a call for solidarity within three dimensions: within the member states, amongst them and with an external dimension towards developing countries.



Pervenche Berès is chair of parliament's employment and social affairs committee

