



El Embajador de España

DISTINGUISHED SENATORS AND TD'S
Madainn mhath

It is an honour to present our EU Presidency here today. Thanks for the opportunity.

We are 5 days into the Spanish Presidency. This will be the 5th time that Spain takes on this role since 1986, when we joined the European communities, the forerunner of the EU. As we did the first time, we will spare no efforts to make it a success.

Spain is one of the most pro-European countries. There is ample awareness among my countrymen that if Spain is a modern, open, confident and democratic country, it is largely thanks to our membership of the EU.

Our country will take over the over the EU presidency at a **crucial and critical time**. Elections to the European parliament will be held in June 2024. After that a new commission will be elected. The terms of both the **European parliament** and the **commission** will **soon** come to an **end**. The Spanish presidency will be the last full presidency of the current commission. This comes with the heavy **responsibility** of trying to wrap up a huge number of dossiers, but at the same time present us with the unique **opportunity** of putting forward fresh new initiatives for the next commission to develop.

The Spanish presidency is a **nationwide project**. We have all been working on it for almost two years, putting in place all the necessary supporting structures.

The foreign ministry has all along been in close contact with the other **21 ministries or departments, all political parties and civil society**.

This dialogue has enabled us to identify the most relevant EU dossiers and have a clear understanding of each one of them. The upshot of that effort is a set of 370 documents with an outline of each specific dossier, the position of each member state (including Spain's) and each EU institution, the leading ministry or agency in my country and so on and so forth. Of those 370 files **122** are categorised as **priority files**.

Our programme for the Presidency has received inputs from all the Spanish regions (**autonomous communities**, to call them properly). They submitted to the government a consolidated document, adopted by consensus, on their priorities for the presidency.

Likewise, an open discussion was recently held in the parliament, in both chambers, **with the entire political spectrum. All political parties have got their say** in the shaping of a consensual Spanish presidency.

Finally, with a view to involve the wider public, the foreign minister launched in April, alongside vice-president of the EU commission, Ms. Dubravka Suica, a **civil society forum**. This forum has produced a number of reports that have proven extremely helpful to fine-tune our overall approach to the presidency.

Firstly, a political disclaimer. Our programme is flexible. It has to be so if we are to be able to respond quickly and powerfully to a war crisis in which our values and security are at stake. During their presidency, the French had to deal with the Russian aggression against Ukraine, as much as the two previous EU Presidencies took on the pandemic. A black swan should not be ruled out. Should that black swan materialize (migration, financial turmoil, who knows), a number of adjustment mechanisms would be set off to both confront the challenge and drive forward priority files.

Secondly, a reference to the Ukraine. We will keep on supporting its brave resistance against the criminal Russian aggression. Military support, financial support, humanitarian support, political support. Our unity is our main strength.

And thirdly, a word on the people. A cross-cutting concern of the presidency will be to deliver to our citizens, to help them with their daily lives. The motto of this presidency is «Europa, más cerca» (Europe, closer to you).

Those three points having been made, I can now say that **four priority lines of action will inspire our presidency**: a) reindustrialisation and open strategic autonomy, b) the green and digital transitions, c) greater social and economic justice and d) strengthening European unity and cooperating with our like-minded democratic allies worldwide.

1. Reindustrialisation and open strategic autonomy

This will be the main point of the agenda of the **informal European Council** that will be held in Granada on 4th and 5th of October.

Many of the difficulties that our citizens have experienced in recent years have a common denominator: **our excessive dependence on a small number of third countries**. We need to de-risk our economies.

We have to strengthen our autonomy in sectors that are fundamental to the **day-to-day lives of our citizens**: energy, health, food, the digital and the AI (artificial intelligence).

To this end, it is essential to support the **reindustrialisation** of our continent, together with the **diversification** of our sources of supply towards our most reliable international partners.

This is why **Latin America and the Caribbean has become a crucial region** in geopolitical terms, not only for Spain, but for the wider European Union.

Spain will like to see the EU and Latin American countries agree on an agenda for the future, based both on shared interests and strategic partnerships. An agenda driven forward and regularly updated by a structured and permanent dialogue that serves as the backbone to a reenergized bi-regional relationship. This is our transatlantic vision, incomplete without Latin America. And this will be our approach to the **EU-CELAC Summit** on 17th and 18th July in Brussels.

Furthermore, Spain will propose a forward-looking, comprehensive **strategy to ensure the economic security and global leadership** of the EU, in line with the work of the European institutions and the roadmap agreed in Versailles (March 2022) by the leaders of all the 27 member states.

We have been working on this strategy since September 2022, in close cooperation with 80 ministries from all member states. There is no precedent in Europe to this exercise in foresight.

2. Progress in both the green transition and environmental resilience

Also, curbing climate change and environmental degradation is both an urgent need and a unique **opportunity to**:

- Drastically reduce our dependency on fossil fuels via renewables.
- Lower electricity bills, making European companies more competitive.
- Create jobs.

In this regard, we will promote a **reform of the electricity market design**, aimed at speeding up the deployment of renewable energies, the reduction of electricity prices, and the improvement of the system's overall stability. In the energy field, we will also work on important dossiers such as the gas and hydrogen package.

Not only that, we will promote legislation for the reduction of waste and micro plastics, the design of sustainable products and the generation of green fuels.

And all this so that the EU will remain at the forefront of **the global fight against climate change**, while creating wealth and new opportunities.

3. Promoting greater social and economic justice.

Spain will foster **social and economic justice** in the EU. An ever more competitive economy is needed, but also an economy that is fairer and more compassionate. Both objectives are compatible. We need to **strengthen** the foundations of our **welfare state**.

We will work hard on the review of the **multiannual financial framework 2021-2027** and an adequate **reform of the economic governance rules** to increase transparency and combine the sustainability of public finances with the proper financing of social services and the green and digital transitions.

Finally, Spain will advocate for stronger **protection of vulnerable groups** such as children, women suffering from violence, and people with disabilities. Among the various files in the social field, it is worth noting the European disability card.

4. Strengthening European unity.

In an international context marked by growing geopolitical tensions, strengthening European unity is a must. The EU **must remain united**. There is **huge strength in our unity**. Member states must continue to develop tools that enable us to act together. In so doing, we will stand a better chance of successfully confront the challenges of our time.

Again the Ukraine. It is as critically important that we continue to support **Ukraine** as it is that we do so jointly, in seamless solidarity.

It is for the same reason –because our unity is our main strength– that Spain will strongly advocate for the **deepening of the internal market**, for a genuine banking union and capital market union, and for the improvement of our common financial instruments, such as nextgenerationEU funds.

We will also advocate for better, simpler **decision-making processes** in the EU.

We will build upon the recent agreement reached by the council on the **asylum and migration** rulebook. This position will now be the basis of negotiations by our Council Presidency and the European Parliament over the coming months. We will do our best to steer those negotiations to a successful end. Migrants are needed in an ageing Europe, but we need to stop trafficking and avoid humanitarian catastrophes.

In short, we will devote all our efforts to advance and conclude **dozens of ongoing dossiers** that will directly impact the **well-being of European citizens**.

Summits and priority geographical areas

1. EU-CELAC Summit.

As mentioned, **Latin America and the Caribbean is a region** of overriding importance in geopolitical terms for the European Union.

We share fundamental values and interests.

Tapping into the potential of our bilateral relations will be vastly beneficial to both sides.

Again, **Spain will strive to agree on a wide-ranging bi-regional agenda** for the future, supported by a **structured and permanent dialogue**.

The next EU-CELAC Summit, on the **17th and 18th of July, in Brussels**, is not as an end in itself, but rather the beginning of a renewed partnership.

2. Southern neighbourhood Summit.

Spain knows only too well to what extent our stability and prosperity depend on the stability and prosperity of EU neighbouring countries. The eastern neighbourhood is now, understandably, the focus of our attention. But let us not be tempted to rob Peter to pay Paul.

During our Presidency, we will convene a Southern neighbourhood Summit and boost the dialogue between the EU and its southern partners on key issues (**migratory flows, food and energy security, environmental issues**, to name but a few).

The Summit should also serve to strengthen the foundations of our **partnership** with our southern neighbours.

3. European Political Community.

With a similar goal, we are also working on the **European Political Community**. We will host a Summit of the EPC in Granada, on October 5th.

We support this forum, such as it is now, in an open format. It has proven a useful framework to enhance open exchanges on key **geopolitical issues** in Europe.

4. Transatlantic ties.

Last but not least, the Spanish Presidency will build upon the new momentum in EU-US relations and keep on reinvigorating **transatlantic ties from Canada to Chile.**

Conclusion

To sum it all, over the last two years Spain has done its homework and it is now looking forward to take over the EU Council Presidency and confident that it will live up to the expectations placed on it to make the UE safer, fairer, more competitive and more sustainable.

THANK YOU

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