

Interview with António Vitorino: preparations for a Council Presidency (Lisbon, 24 October 2007)

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[Miriam Mateus] And how does a country like Portugal prepare to take on the Presidency of the EU Council for six months?

[António Vitorino] For a small or medium-sized country, that undoubtedly requires a great effort that has to be based very much not only on the quality of national diplomacy — which I believe is indisputable — but also on very effective political commitment: obviously by the Prime Minister, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the State Secretary for European Affairs. Now, in some ways, a Presidency is undoubtedly a high-profile period for the country, but it is based on continuing day-to-day work. That's because issues governed by European decisions now have a lasting impact on the political agenda of all the Member States. The focus on European issues is not restricted to the six-month period alone, so the experience acquired, the contacts established, the capacity to engage in dialogue with other points of view argued by other States, all of this subsequently works in favour of the Presidency during the six months.