

Interview with António Vitorino: the programme of the Portuguese Presidency of the Council in 2007 (Lisbon, 24 October 2007)

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[Miriam Mateus] You have held, and still hold, positions of responsibility at European level. You are a former Member of the European Commission, and at the moment, if I'm not mistaken, a special adviser to the Portuguese Presidency. In your opinion, what are the current challenges facing the Presidency? And what are the key aspects of the European Union's agenda in these six months?

[António Vitorino] In terms of the internal European agenda, the great challenge was without doubt to reach agreement on the Reform Treaty, which we did a few days ago in the European Council on 18 and 19 October, here in Lisbon, when the Treaty of Lisbon was adopted. At external level, the Portuguese Presidency has a very full programme. Besides the summits in the second half-year with China, India, and Russia, Portugal attaches great importance to two summits in particular: one that has already taken place with Brazil, the first in the EU's history, which we hope will be the launch-pad for new relations between Europe and that great Latin American power, and the second at the end of the Presidency involving the African countries.

As regards the external agenda, I'd also like to highlight two ministerial meetings with the Euro-Mediterranean countries on political dialogue and emigration, which are very important issues for both shores of the Mediterranean. And, finally, going back to the internal agenda, the planned opening-up of the Schengen area borders with the eight countries of Central and Eastern Europe that joined the European Union in 2004.