

SPANISH PRESIDENCY

OF THE COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN
UNION

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01

Context of the Spanish EU Council Presidency



Spain is chairing the Council in demanding times. The European Union faces internal and external challenges which will shape the upcoming six months of the presidency. The Spanish President Pedro Sánchez acknowledged the geopolitical uncertainty caused by the war in Ukraine, a global pandemic and a rise in right-winged parties that the presidency will have to manoeuvre. Meanwhile, the EU is struggling to present a united front to tackle the upcoming international challenges. The war in Ukraine has drastically changed international political dynamics and European defense policy. During the first year of the invasion European member states have already sent aid worth billions to Ukraine. The EU is now working on a comprehensive recovery package to support the reconstruction. Some member states have increased their involvement into the conflict by delivering weapons, tanks and fighter jets to Ukraine, breaking with decades long taboos. Within the EU, the Spanish Council presidency is facing rising costs of living, high inflation rates and rising energy prices. Inflation has dropped in the past months but with an expected average of 5.4% for 2023, it is still far above the 2% mark the European Central Bank is hoping for.

Spain holds the last presidency before the European elections in 2024. A rise of Euroscepticism and populism is leading to concerns over fragmentation of the Union. The elections further put the presidency under increased time pressure to implement its priorities. As this will overshadow the subsequent Belgian presidency, no legal dossiers still open will be possible to close by then. After a landslide victory for the center-right People's Party (PP) in regional elections in May, incumbent President Pedro Sánchez from the center-left Socialist Worker's Party (PSOE) called for an early general election on July 23rd. Happening a mere three weeks after Spain assumes the Council Presidency, there are worries that domestic turmoil will overshadow Spain's European agenda and paralyze efficient presidency action during its term. Sánchez's party will be fighting for survival, and a weakened position for his party, or even an outright election loss could turn the envisioned plans on their head. While the President ensured the outcome of the election would not influence the presidency's program, critics remain rightfully skeptical.

If you want to know more about our German perspective on politics, have a look at our weekly bit "**In a Krautshell**".



02

Facts & Figures

DEMOGRAPHICS

POPULATION¹

47.4 Million (2021)

LIFE EXPECTANCY²

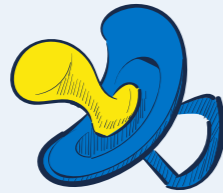
83.07 years (average)

♀ 85.8 years

♂ 80.3 years

BIRTH RATE³

1.2 children (2021)



OFFICIAL LANGUAGES⁴
CASTILIAN, CATALAN,
GALICIAN, BASQUE,
ARANES

MINORITY LANGUAGES⁵

Aragonese, Asturian, Benasquese, Cantabrian, Eonavian, Extremaduran, Fala, Leonese, Murcian Spanish, Silbo Gomero

RELIGIONS⁶

67.4% ROMAN CATHOLIC

15.6% IRRELIGIOUS

12.2% ATHEIST

4% ISLAM

All footnotes are included on the last page of this #THEÜBERSICHT

ECONOMY

CURRENCY: EURO EUR

GDP

€ 1 329.9 billion

↑ +5.5%

Annual GDP (2022)⁷ GDP growth⁸

€ 24 580

GDP per capita (2022)⁹



TRADE¹⁰

€ 316 609 billion



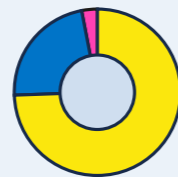
exports (2021)

MAIN TRADING PARTNERS¹¹



FRANCE, GERMANY,
ITALY, PORTUGAL,
UNITED KINGDOM

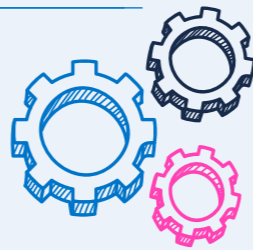
ECONOMIC SECTORS BY REVENUE¹²



- Services (67.43%)
- Industry (20.36%)
- Agriculture (2.61%)

MAIN INDUSTRIAL SECTORS¹³

Automobile,
Refined Petroleum,
Packaged Medicaments,
Motor vehicles (parts and accessories)



UNEMPLOYMENT RATE¹⁴
13.26%

POLITICAL SYSTEM

Spain is a

Constitutional Monarchy

The president, **Pedro Sánchez**, is the head of government and appointed by the King, after consultation with the Cortes



Generales.¹⁵ The **King Felipe VI.** is the head of state and the highest representative of Spain in international relations. His role is strictly neutral and apolitical.

The King appoints the ministers which are proposed by the **President.** The president, the deputy president, and the ministers of the cabinet form the government. The **government** is responsible for the domestic and foreign policy, including the defense and economic policies.

The parliament, the **Cortes Generales**, is a bicameral system. It consists of the Congress of Deputies and the Senate. The **Congress of Deputies** has 350 members and examines all government and non-government bills. The **Senate** has the right to veto or amend the texts produced by the Congress. It consists of 266 senators. 208 of whom are elected by direct universal suffrage and a further 58 are appointed by the Legislative Assemblies of the Autonomous Communities. The communities appoint one senator each and an additional one for each million inhabitants. Both chambers are elected every four years.¹⁶

Spain is a **unitary state**, composed of 17 autonomous communities and 2 autonomous cities. Each Autonomous Community has its Statute of Regional Autonomy, approved by framework law.¹⁷

Spain is currently governed by a minority coalition government of the Partido Socialista Obrero Español and the Unidos Podemos.¹⁸

MAIN POLITICAL PARTIES¹⁹

- **Partido Socialista Obrero Español** (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party, centre-left)
- **Partido Popular** (People's Party, centre-right)
- **Ciudadanos** (Citizens, centre-right)
- **Unidos Podemos** (United We Can, Left Wing)
- **Vox** (Right-wing)
- **Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya** (Republican Left of Catalonia, left)
- **Junts per Catalunya** (Together for Catalonia, centre-right)
- **Partido Nacionalista Vasco** (National Basque Party, centre-right)

HISTORY²⁰

1492 ● Military victory of the Christians in pursuit of Spanish unity

16th-17th century ● Height of the Spanish Empire

18th century ● Spain loses its European possessions outside the Iberian Peninsula in the War of the the Spanish Succession

1807-1814 ● France occupies Spain, which has been a French satellite since 1795

1921-26 ● Rif War

1931 ● Declaration of 2nd Spanish Republic

1936-39 ● Spanish Civil War

1939 ● General Francisco Franco leads the Nationalists to victory and purges the country of all remaining Republicans

1946-50 ● Francoist Spain

1968 ● West African colony of Spanish Guinea gains independence as Equatorial Guinea

1975 ● Franco dies. He is succeeded as head of state by King Juan Carlos

1977 ● First free election in four decades

1982 ● Spain joins Nato

1986 ● Spain joins the European Economic Community

03.2004 ● Terrorist attacks in Madrid

2009 ● Economic Crisis

06.2014 ● King Juan Carlos abdicates, succeeded by the Crown Prince Felipe VI

11.2014 ● Spanish government dismisses the result of a symbolic independence referendum in Catalonia

2017 ● Madrid imposes direct rule in Catalonia after voters in a referendum back separation from Spain

CULTURE & SCIENCE

Spain has more **bars** than any other EU Country.

Around 44% of the world's **olive oil** is produced in Spain.²¹



Spain was the 3rd country in the world to legalize **same-sex marriage** (in 2005). In the same year they also legalized **same-sex adoption**.

Spain hosts the world's biggest **Food Fight Festival**.²²

03

Priorities for the Presidency

Priority 1

REINDUSTRIALIZE THE EU AND ENSURE ITS OPEN STRATEGIC AUTONOMY

The Spanish presidency wants to increase European autonomy and reverse dependencies on other countries, which became apparent during the COVID pandemic and the Russian invasion in Ukraine. It wants to promote the development of strategic industries and technologies, expand trade, and strengthen supply chains. Special attention will be given to Latin America and the EU-CELAC Summit. The Spanish Council Presidency also wants to propose a comprehensive, forward-looking strategy aiming at economic security and global leadership of the EU by 2030. This includes establishing European dominance in the fields of digital security and Artificial Intelligence.

Priority 2

ADVANTAGE IN THE GREEN TRANSITION AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL ADAPTATION

In light of climate change and the war in Ukraine, the Spain wants to focus on reducing energy and raw material dependency by promoting a reform of the electric market. It wants to accelerate the use of renewable energy to reduce electricity prices and improve the system's stability. This measure is also aimed at creating jobs. Additionally, the Spanish presidency aims at accelerating legislative files that are related to Fit for 55 and promote measures for the reduction of waste.

Priority 3

PROMOTING GREATER SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

The Spanish Council Presidency aims at reducing inequality and improving living conditions for ordinary people. To achieve this, it advocates the establishment of minimum and common standards on corporate taxation in all European member states. This measure is also aimed at fighting tax evasion by large multinationals. To increase transparency, overcome austerity and combine the financing of the green and digital transition with the sustainability of public finances, the presidency pushes for a reform of the fiscal rules. To this end, it will advocate for a proper revision of the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027. The Spanish presidency further aims at extending workers' rights.

Priority 4

STRENGTHENING EUROPEAN UNITY

Faced with growing uncertainty and political tensions, the Spanish Council Presidency makes European Unity one of its priorities. It wants to make Europe one of the architects of the new global order. To this end, the presidency aims at consolidating common instruments. It will work for a deepening of the internal market and the completion of the banking and capital markets union. The presidency will advocate a more efficient and coordinated management of the migration and asylum processes. Furthermore, it seeks to coordinate the support for Ukraine and its neighboring states.



04

Program of the Spanish Presidency

” Europe as a Task:

” Rethink Rebuild Repower

GENERAL AFFAIRS

The Spanish Council Presidency wants to strengthen the European values, reinforcing democracy and the rule of law. It will initiate legislation on transparency, political advertising and the right to vote. Spain will strengthen local autonomy and channels for citizen participation, increasing the visibility of the cohesion policy and the Next Generation EU funds. As a follow-up of the Conference on the Future of Europe, the Spanish will advance the debate to extend the use of qualified majority voting. The presidency will adopt a 2.0 cohesion approach to strengthen economic, social and territorial cohesion. It wants to create incentives for digital transformation and green transition, as well as promoting the negotiations of the Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP). The Spanish presidency wants to counter depopulation by generating opportunities in areas with declining populations and addressing convergence between rural and urban areas. Concerning enlargement, the presidency will boost the accession process and push for the inclusion of Ukraine and Moldova into the Annual Report on progress towards accession. Spain will pay attention to the relations with the United Kingdom. It seeks to establish negotiations for association agreements with Andorra, Monaco and San Marino.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The Spanish presidency aims to prioritize the rules-based international order, peace, stability, and development. One of the key priorities is to provide unwavering support to Ukraine. The presidency plans to contribute to the EU's collective efforts to counteract Russia's aggression by isolating Russia and

providing further assistance to Ukraine. The Spanish presidency places great importance on strengthening relations between the European Union and Latin America. It plans to hold the third EU-CELAC Summit to renew political commitment and strengthen the bi-regional partnership. It will also focus on areas of shared interest, such as sustainable and inclusive economic recovery, the green and digital transitions, and the EU-LAC Digital Alliance. Relations with the US are considered crucial. Spain aims to further strengthen ties to support Ukraine and address international challenges. It will maximize the EU-US Trade and Technology Council to advance agreements on Critical Raw Materials. The Presidency emphasizes the importance of the EU's relationships with its southern neighbourhood. It seeks to strengthen cooperation, stability, security, and development in these regions through various initiatives and dialogues. Other key areas of focus include trade diversification, reform of the World Trade Organization, climate change mitigation, and the promotion of European values worldwide.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

The Spanish Council Presidency expect a term determined by international economic instability, with however more positive growth prospects for the European economy than in recent months. To respond to the uncertainties in the international context, the presidency aims to work towards a new European framework of economic and financial governance. It will boost strategic autonomy and the green and digital transition by – among other – prioritizing the revision of the Stability and Growth Pact. To adapt the European fiscal rules, the Presidency will work towards new European financial resources and reinforce the bank crises management framework. Further priorities include the digital euro file and the sustainable finance package, the regulatory package on the prevention of money laundering and the financing of terrorism as well as files on taxation reforms. To react to international economic uncertainties, the presidency additionally prioritizes the revision of the competitiveness and state aid control policies and cohesion regulations to foster competitiveness and autonomy and seeks to strengthen the multilateral financial framework and financial collaboration with Latin America and the Caribbean.



JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

The Spanish presidency will prioritize creating a more cohesive area of freedom, security and justice, paying particular attention to the convergence of national legislations, the digitalization of the justice system, the protection of victims of criminal offences as well as the protection of the Schengen Area. Spain will work on new instruments to replace the current European e-Justice Strategy and Action Plan and propose Council conclusions on digital capacity-building for the protection of fundamental rights. Moreover, it will prioritize concluding the negotiations on the proposals for environmental protection, confiscation and asset recovery as well as the dossier on abusive lawsuits against journalists and human rights defenders. The presidency will also prioritize the conclusion of negotiations on the dossiers that make up the Pact on Migration and Asylum before the end of the parliamentary term. Political, operational and economic collaboration with the countries of origin and transit will be an important tool to increase voluntary returns and reintegration. In this context, the presidency also aims to support two proposals for directives that should streamline procedures, protect migrant workers, strengthen their migratory status, and facilitate intra-EU mobility for long-term residents. Spain will also seek to conclude the negotiations with Romania and Bulgaria to enable their full accession to the Schengen area.

EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL POLICY, HEALTH

CARE AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS

The Spanish Council Presidency above all wants to support an inclusive Europe in light of the last decades of crises. In terms of employment policy, the Presidency follows the priorities aligned with the European Pillar of Social Rights and will focus on social dialogue, decent work, and the social economy. An agreement on remote work and the right to disconnect as well as Council conclusions on democracy at work and green collective bargaining are to be fostered. The Presidency also aims to support the launch of the Social Imbalances Framework Initiative as well as the adoption of an EU Disability Card. Efforts to protect woman and girls will be further supported by advancing the proposal for a Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence and the European Care Strategy will be advanced. Regarding health policy, the Spanish presidency will focus on improving the protection of vulnerable groups, fostering preparedness, and aligning the European health agenda with the 2030 Agenda and the One Health approach. The fostering of a European Health Data Space (EHDS) will be a key objective. Consumer affairs will be guided by the principles of circular economy, product reparability, and measures combatting planned obsolescence.

COMPETITIVENESS

One of the central goals for the Spanish presidency is to improve European businesses' competitiveness and boost the EU's reindustrialization. It plans to achieve this through strengthening "open strategic autonomy," reducing risks and mitigating dependencies in key sectors like industry, energy, mobility, and digital. Moreover, Spain will assign greater importance to industrial policy and give priority to the Critical Raw Materials Act, the Net Zero Industry Act, and the Ecodesign Regulation. To deepen the internal market, Spain strives to finalize negotiations on the Single Market Emergency Instrument and act on the European Council's recent publication on the internal market's impact on long-term EU competitiveness. Regarding tourism, Spain will pay special attention to its sustainability – partially through improving digitalization of services to gather data on the social impact of the sector. Additionally, the Presidency will strengthen the EU Intellectual Property Network and enforcement of industrial property rights. Furthermore, research and innovation will be bolstered by strengthening its role in policy-making – and advancing Commission proposals on European missions and research projects. Finally, in space policy the Presidency will seek to adopt Council conclusions on space traffic management and the Space Strategy for Security and Defense.

TRANSPORT, TELECOMMUNICATIONS

AND ENERGY

In light of the evolving geopolitical realities following the Russian war in Ukraine, the on-going core objective is to reduce the EU's dependencies on raw materials and technology and achieve energy autonomy. This entails updating and revising national planning instruments and modernizing the electricity market. Renewable hydrogen is identified as a crucial element in fully decarbonizing the EU's economy, and the Spanish presidency emphasizes economic initiatives to foster investment and innovation, such as the European Hydrogen Bank. Regarding digital topics, the presidency aims to complete the European digital economy model by tackling various legislative files. This includes advancing the AI Act, establishing a European Digital Identity with the eIDAS 2 file, working on the Cyber Resilience Act, addressing the revision of the Cybersecurity Regulation, and promoting Interoperable Europe. Additionally, the EU-LAC Digital Alliance will be launched to strengthen relations with Latin American and Caribbean countries. In the transportation sector, the Spanish presidency aims for substantial progress in negotiations with the European Parliament to revise the regulations of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) and the Single European Sky (SES2+) initiative. Efforts will



be intensified to implement the Greening Transport Package, aligning with the Fit for 55 initiatives and playing a key role in decarbonizing transport. Additionally, Enhancing the Maritime Safety Package is also a focus area.

AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES

The Spanish presidency will promote agri-food technologies for sustainable production, reducing imports, and addressing climate change. Another focus will be on new genomic techniques, and negotiations will intensify for revising EU legislation on plant and forest reproductive material. The Presidency will initiate debates on animal welfare and the competitiveness of European livestock farming, while working on strengthening and guaranteeing food security, animal and plant health, and environmental protection. Efforts will continue for sustainable plant protection and pest control. Reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) will support best practices and sector stability. Geographical indications and quality schemes for agri-food products will be advocated. Rural areas and the EU Rural Pact will be highlighted. The Informal Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture in Cordoba will address new genomic technologies. Decarbonization and sustainability of the fishing industry will be promoted, along with a level playing field for EU external fishing operations and market balance. Streamlining decision-making on Total Allowable Catches and socioeconomic analyses in scientific reports will be pursued. These priorities will be discussed at the Informal Ministerial Meeting on Fisheries in Vigo.

ENVIRONMENT

The Spanish presidency aims to advance the multilateral climate agenda and foster cooperation. The upcoming COP-28 conference in Dubai will mark the completion of the first global stocktaking, assessing the progress towards to goals of the Paris Agreement. To achieve its ambitious objectives, the EU needs to adopt more ambitious climate actions. For this, legislative progress is crucial, particularly in restricting emissions and use of fluorinated gases and substances depleting the ozone layer. Another priority of the Spanish presidency is to achieve the Zero Pollution goal, focusing on improving air quality, controlling hazardous chemical substances, reducing industrial emissions, and transitioning to a circular economy. Water management, including wastewater treatment, pollution reduction, and drought prevention, is another key area. Also, biodiversity protection is a central objective. Therefore, Spain aims to implement the outcomes of COP-15 and ensure the Natura 2000 Network's environmental protection goals are maintained.

Additionally, the Presidency aims at maintaining the European leadership in the protection of the maritime environment. It will seek a global consensus on policies such as adapting coastal activities to climate change, establishing protected maritime areas, and reaching a global agreement on plastics. The Spanish presidency will hold an informal ministerial meeting on the environment followed by a joint session of the energy ministers to address these critical issues.

EDUCATION, YOUTH, CULTURE AND SPORT

During 2023, the European Year of the Skills, the Spanish presidency will aim to foster an inclusive, digital, and competitive educational framework. The educational dimension of the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan will be developed, and the mid-term review of the European Education Area 2025 completed. To improve digital skills in education and training the Presidency will propose two Council Recommendations. The Presidency aims to strengthen the EU Youth Strategy and will pay particular attention to mental health issues. Regarding sports, the focus will lie on improving equality, creating safe spaces, and eradicating hate acts. Cultural landscapes will be developed to address demographic and climate challenges. Additionally, the Spanish presidency aims to advance the European Media Freedom Act to promote and protect the pluralism, independence, and sustainability of the media. Thus, supporting the negotiations for the Regulation establishing a common framework for media services will be key for the Presidency.



05


Who is Who?

European Council	
Chair	SE Representative
	 Spanish Socialist Workers' Party
CHARLES MICHEL President of the European Union	PEDRO SÁNCHEZ President of the Spanish Government

COUNCIL CONFIGURATIONS

AGRIFISH	Agriculture and Fisheries
COMPET	Competitiveness
ECOFIN	Economic and Financial Affairs
ENVI	Environment
EPSCO	Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs
EYCS	Education, Youth, Culture and Sport
FAC	Foreign Affairs
GAC	General Affairs
JHA	Justice and Home Affairs
TTE	Transport, Telecommunications and Energy





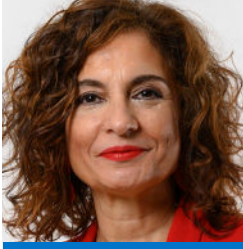


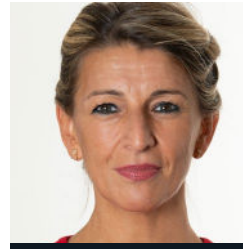

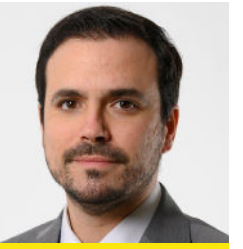
FAC		
Chair	SE Representative	Defence
	 Spanish Socialist Workers' Party	 Spanish Socialist Workers' Party
JOSEP BORELL FONTELLES High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy	JOSÉ MANUEL ALBARES Minister for Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation	MARGARITA ROBLES Minister for Defence

COREPER
Ambassador

MARCOS ALONSO ALONSO Permanent Representative of Spain to the EU

* Open for change due to Spanish general elections on July 23 this year





Who is Who?




COMPET		EYCS		ECOFIN
Internal Market / Industry	Research and Space	Education	Culture	Finance
				
Spanish Socialist Workers' Party	Spanish Socialist Workers' Party	Socialists' Party of Aragon	Socialists' Party of Catalonia	Spanish Socialist Workers' Party
HÉCTOR GÓMEZ	DIANA MORANT	PILAR ALEGRÍA	MIQUEL ICETA	MARÍA JESÚS MONTERO
Minister for Industry, Trade and Tourism	Minister for Science and Innovation	Minister for Education and Vocational Training	Minister for Culture and Sport	Minister for Finance and Public Function
AGRIFISH		EPSCO		
Agriculture and Fisheries	Environment	Employment and Social Policy	Health	Consumer Affairs
				
Spanish Socialist Workers' Party	Spanish Socialist Workers' Party	Sumar	Spanish Socialist Workers' Party	United Left
LUIS PLANAS	TERESA RIBERA	YOLANDA DÍAZ	JOSÉ MIÑONES	ALBERTO GARZÓN
Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	Third Vice-President of the Government of Spain and Minister for Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge	Second Vice-President of the Government of Spain and Minister for Work and Social Economy	Minister for Health	Minister for Consumer Affairs

* Open for change due to Spanish general elections on July 23 this year



Who is Who?

JHA		GAC
Justice	Home Affairs	Coordination
		
Spanish Socialist Workers' Party	Spanish Socialist Workers' Party	Spanish Socialist Workers' Party
PILAR LLOP	FERNANDO GRANDE-MARLASKA	JOSÉ MANUEL ALBARES
Minister for Justice	Minister for Home Affairs	Minister for Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation

TTE		
Transport	Tele-communications	Energy
		
Socialists' Party of Catalonia	Independent	Spanish Socialist Workers' Party
RAQUEL SÁNCHEZ	NADIA CALVIÑO	TERESA RIBERA
Minister for Transport Mobility and Urban Agenda	First Vice-President of the Government of Spain and Minister for the Economy and Digital Transformation	Third Vice-President of the Government of Spain and Minister for Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge

* Open for change due to Spanish general elections on July 23 this year



06

Further Information

OFFICIAL WEBSITE OF THE COUNCIL PRESIDENCY

<https://www.eu2023.es/>

5 OTHER SOURCES (ALL ACCESSED JULY 2023):

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<https://euroweeklynews.com/2023/07/01/what-to-expect-as-spain-assumes-rotating-presidency-of-the-eu-council/> (July 2023)

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