

FOI Request – Portugal (FOI 0113 -15): Digest of information to be released

Email from British Embassy Lisbon to FCO London summarising Portuguese media coverage, 23 June 2004

SUBJECT: PORTUGAL: WEEKLY ROUND UP 17-23 JUNE 2004

PORTUGAL WEEKLY ROUND UP
17-23 June 2004

EU & External

- **Apprehension over reports of PM Barroso's possible candidature for Commission President; Govt denies.**

EU & External

Apprehension over reports of PM Barroso's possible candidature for EU Commission President; Govt denies

Rumours that Portuguese Prime Minister Durão Barroso might be the European Popular Party candidate to replace Romano Prodi as EU Commission President have taken domestic political circles by surprise and have caused general apprehension within the ruling PSD. The possibility of Durão Barroso stepping down as Prime Minister of Portugal half way through the Govt's term to take a European post is viewed by leading commentators as "suicidal" for the PSD; they argue that the PSD would be certain to lose upcoming elections if the head of Govt was seen to be abandoning his domestic responsibilities (inevitable comparison to former Socialist PM Guterres who resigned in 2001). The PM's office is still taking the line that Barroso "is not a candidate for any post", but the media insists that the possibility has not been completely ruled out. No matter how remote the possibility, media speculation has begun about possible successors to Barroso. PSD Vice President Santana Lopes inevitably emerges as an obvious potential candidate, but one which would meet with strong resistance from President Sampaio.

Diplomatic Telegram from Glynne Evans, UK Ambassador to Portugal, to FCO London, 21 June 2004

SUBJECT: EUROPEAN COUNCIL - PORTUGUESE REACTIONS

5. On the Presidency of the Commission, Barroso is quoted as saying he was surprised that none of the Heads of Socialist Governments had supported Vitorino. He acknowledged that he himself had been invited to run, but had told everyone his was not a candidate; the Portuguese Government supported Vitorino.

Diplomatic Telegram from Glynne Evans, UK Ambassador to Portugal, to FCO London, 26 June 2004

SUBJECT: EU: NEXT PRESIDENT OF THE COMMISSION: DURAO BARROSO?

1. Portuguese media report that following a telephone call from Chirac, Durao Barroso has received unanimous approval as next President of the Commission. Remodelling of the Government in gestation following likely formal appointment on 29 June.

[REDACTED]

DETAIL

2. Prime Minister Durao Barroso's imminent appointment as next Commission President has momentarily knocked football off the front pages. TV and press are reporting that following telephone calls from Chirac and Schroeder, Durao Barroso has secured unanimous approval as the next President of the Commission.

Telegram from FCO London to UK Representation to the EU, 30 June 2004

SUBJECT: EUROPEAN COUNCIL, BRUSSELS, 29 JUNE: NOMINATION FOR COMMISSION PRESIDENT: DURAO BARROSO

SUMMARY

1. European Council approves Portuguese Prime Minister Durao Barroso as next Commission President.

[REDACTED]

DETAIL

2. The European Council met briefly on the evening of 29 June to endorse, as widely trailed, Portuguese Prime Minister Durao Barroso as the next Commission President. Assuming approval by the EP of him and, later, his team, he will take up office on 1 November.

[REDACTED]

Next Steps

7. The European Parliament will vote on Durao Barroso's appointment at its plenary in the week beginning 19 July.

Email from British Embassy Lisbon to FCO London summarising Portuguese media coverage, 30 June 2004

SUBJECT: PORTUGAL: WEEKLY ROUND UP 24-30 JUNE 2004

PORTUGAL WEEKLY ROUND UP
24-30 June 2004

EU & External

- **PM Barroso confirms decision to stand for EU Commission President; promises to build strong Commission and to reinforce community method**

Domestic Politics & Defence

- **Reactions to Barroso's nomination as candidate for EU Commission President**

EU & External

PM Barroso confirms decision to stand for EU Commission President; promises to build strong Commission and to reinforce community method

On 29 June, PM Barroso formally confirmed in Lisbon his decision to accept the invitation to stand for President of the EU Commission. He made the formal announcement after a series of meetings with President Jorge Sampaio aimed at finding a solution to the domestic political situation which preserves political stability. In his formal statement Barroso underlined that this was a particularly important moment for the EU, following enlargement and approval of the Constitutional Treaty. He argued that the PM of an EU MS had responsibilities at national, but also at the European level, and that no national leader should refuse to contribute towards an increasingly strong and social Europe. He believed leadership of the EU Commission was the most important position any Portuguese had ever occupied. He was confident that he was serving both the interests of Portugal and of the EU. Speaking to foreign journalists later in the evening in Brussels, Barroso said Europe needed a strong Commission which would promote the community method within the Union. He also undertook to seek a balance between the larger and smaller, richer and poorer, central and peripheral MSs. He was prepared to respect all the sensitivities concerning the European project, reconcile these with the Lisbon Agenda objectives while simultaneously safeguarding the social dimension of Europe.

Reactions to Barroso's nomination as candidate for EU Commission President

Domestic reactions have been divided between those that support Durão Barroso's decision to stand for EU Commission President and the importance for Portugal as a small EU MS, and those that regard his decision as grabbing an opportunity to "abandon ship" at a particularly difficult moment for the Government. The PSD/CDS coalition Government is exactly halfway into its four year term and is suffering from the negative impact of highly unpopular budget deficit control and financial constraint policies, reflected in the disastrous electoral result at the recent EU Parliamentary elections. All recent opinion polls indicate that the PSD popularity has plummeted and suggest that the largest opposition party, the PS, is set to obtain an absolute majority if elections were held at the present moment. There has been the inevitable comparison between Barroso and former PS PM António Guterres, who resigned in December 2001 after a massive electoral defeat at the local government election and who was accused of dodging his responsibilities towards the electorate. Leading editorialists in the main quality dailies however highlighted the positive impact that Barroso's European nomination would have in terms of enhancing Portugal's visibility and underlined

key qualities held by Barroso to do a good job in Brussels: his vast diplomatic experience during 10 years at the Foreign Ministry; his good relationship with President Bush allowing for an improvement of EU/US relations; the fact that he lived through the transition from dictatorship to democracy in Portugal and therefore was well positioned to understand the problems faced by the new East European MSs; his determination; and his foreign languages ability. More recent reactions, in face of the political turmoil surrounding his decision, reflect strong criticism of Barroso who is blamed for plunging Portugal into a political crisis and for provoking economic crisis through restrictive policies. Some have argued that the position of EU Commission President was not as important as being PM of Portugal, and that Barroso was chosen because he came from a small MS and could be easily manipulated by the more powerful countries in the EU.

Email from British Embassy Lisbon to FCO London summarising Portuguese media coverage, 7 July 2004

SUBJECT: PORTUGAL: WEEKLY ROUND UP 1-7 JULY 2004

PORTUGAL WEEKLY ROUND UP
1-7 July 2004

EU & External

- **Barroso begins preparations for new Commission; EPP and Socialists likely to support Barroso as President**

EU & External

Barroso begins preparations for new Commission; EPP and Socialists likely to support Barroso as President

José Manuel Barroso (as he now prefers to be called), candidate designate for the position of EU Commission President and now care taker Prime Minister of Portugal, held talks in Lisbon on 5 July with the Italian Commissioner for Competition, Mario Monti. This is seen as an initial move in the context of the composition of the future EU Commission. Monti visited Lisbon at Barroso's invitation. Meanwhile the latest reports from Brussels-based correspondents of Portuguese newspapers speculate about the prospect of agreement between the European Popular Party and the Socialist Group within the EU Parliament over leadership of EU Parliament committees, which would pave the way for guaranteed election of José Manuel Barroso as new Commission President. Portuguese Socialist MEPs had initially indicated that their support for Barroso would depend on his proposals for the Commission and for the future of Europe. Portugal's Communist MEPs and the BE Left Block member, meanwhile, have indicated clearly that they would reject Barroso as EU President. They have criticised him as a "terrible Prime Minister of Portugal" who would be disastrous for the EU if he tried to implement at EU level the same sort of policies which he implemented in Portugal. Barroso visited the European Parliament last week in what the media described as a "campaign of seduction". He is reported to have created a good impression with foreign journalists there. Barroso is due to face questions by Members of the EU Parliament on his proposals for the Commission and for the future of Europe on 14 July.

Email from British Embassy Lisbon to FCO London summarising Portuguese media coverage, 14 July 2004

SUBJECT: PORTUGAL: WEEKLY ROUND UP 8-14 JULY 2004

PORTUGAL WEEKLY ROUND UP
8-14 July 2004

EU & External

- **Barroso struggling to persuade Euro MPs of his ideas for the future of Europe; support for Iraq war the most difficult decision in his life**

Barroso struggling to persuade Euro MPs of his ideas for the future of Europe; support for Iraq war the most difficult decision in his life

The Portuguese President designate of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, is holding talks with all political groups represented at the European Parliament this week, in what is being interpreted as an effort to charm Euro MPs and convince them of the merits of his ideas for the future of Europe, in advance of the 22 July election. Despite the denial by the European Socialists, there is continued speculation about an agreement reportedly being negotiated by the European Socialist Group and the European Popular Party in terms of distribution of committees and portfolios, with a view to securing support for Barroso for President. Speaking in Brussels yesterday (13 July) Barroso justified his Government's support for the Iraq war with the information he had received from allied countries. However, he refused to elaborate about whether he would take the same attitude at the present moment in face of the latest information about the inexistence of WMD. He refused to respond retrospectively to hypothetical questions and said his position at the time of allied intervention in Iraq was regarded as the most appropriate in the interests of Portugal. But he admitted that this had been the most difficult decision in his life. In principle Barroso rejects the concept of preventive war, but made it clear that if required to choose between US and Saddam Hussein, he would not hesitate, the same logic applying if this happened with Germany or France. He described his position during the Iraq crisis as moderate and established a clear difference between the role of a Prime Minister of a national govt and that of President of the EU Commission. In the latter capacity, he would try to adopt a multilateral position, taking into account all nationalities. This morning (14 July) Barroso undertook to contribute towards the promotion of European ideas and values throughout the world and underlined the need to combat the image of Europe as an economic giant but as a political dwarf in terms of world wide impact. He promised to establish bridges between the various sensitivities within the EU, but expressed the view that it will be essential for Europe to work in cooperation with the US.

Diplomatic Telegram from Glynne Evans, UK Ambassador to Portugal, to FCO London, 05 July 2004

SUBJECT: PORTUGAL: SUCCESSION TO DURAO BARROSO
SUMMARY

1. Durao Barroso to resign today but will remain acting Prime

Minister until around 12 July when he begins consultations in Brussels. Mayor of Lisbon confirmed as PSD Party President and PM in waiting. President's consultations likely to continue to the middle of this week.

DETAIL

2. Durao Barroso will see President Sampaio again today 5 July and is expected formally to offer his resignation. The indications are that he will remain acting Prime Minister, while the President formally consults the parties about whether or not to have elections.

Diplomatic Telegram from Glynne Evans, UK Ambassador to Portugal, to FCO London, 9 July 2004

SUBJECT: NOSEC: PORTUGAL: THE SUCCESSION TO DURAO BARROSO GOES CRITICAL

SUMMARY

1. Government in caretaker mode following Durao Barroso's formal resignation.

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DETAIL

2. Following Durao Barroso's formal resignation and that of his government on Monday 5 July, President Sampaio has spent the week formally taking soundings from Party leaders.