

# Candidates for Europe's top job

Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair has emerged as the front-runner for the soon-to-be-created post of European president. The appointment could be made at the next EU summit on October 29-30, but only if Eurosceptic Czech president Václav Klaus signs the Lisbon treaty

**Tony Blair, 56:** British prime minister from 1997 to 2007. Big-hitter is on first-name terms with many world leaders. Has backing of French President Nicolas Sarkozy, but some EU leaders criticise Blair for his vigorous support for former U.S. President George W. Bush and the U.S.-led war in Iraq. Support could wane if Czech resistance pushes decision into next year



**Jan Peter Balkenende, 53:** Dutch Prime Minister who heads coalition government has proven record in brokering compromises. Christian Democrat currently enjoys support of Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel



**Paavo Lipponen, 68:** Finland's former Social Democrat prime minister (1995-2003) is potential consensus candidate who could block Blair. Opposed by Poland and Estonia over backing of Nord Stream gas pipeline from Russia to Germany



**Felipe González, 67:** Spain's former Prime Minister (1982-96) has been chairing panel of "wise men" assessing EU's longterm future. Candidacy hampered by fact that another Iberian, Jose Manuel Barroso, already holds a top post

**Other contenders – must be sitting or former head of government**

**Jean-Claude Juncker:** Current prime minister of Luxembourg

**François Fillon:** French PM

**Herman Van Rompuy:** Belgian PM  
**Martti Ahtisaari:** Former Finnish president

**Mary Robinson:** Former Irish president