

Lining up to be EU's top foreign policy chief

The post of "high representative of the union for foreign affairs and security policy" is one of the key innovations of the Lisbon treaty, aimed at raising Europe's influence on the world stage

Massimo D'Alema, 60:

Former Italian prime minister seen as front-runner after British foreign minister David Miliband distanced himself from post. Member of Italian centre-left Democratic Party and spokesman for Socialist and Democrat group in European Parliament, faces opposition from member states formerly in Soviet bloc due to his communist past



Olli Rehn, 47:

EU Enlargement Commissioner has won admirers for his calm diplomacy and support regarding Turkey's bid to join EU. Mentioned as potential presidential candidate in Finland's 2012 election



Ursula Plassnik, 53:

Former Austrian foreign minister is prominent pro-EU voice in country where many people are eurosceptics. Quit coalition government after Social Democrats refused to rule out referendum on EU treaty



Carl Bildt, 60:

Swedish foreign minister and centre-right former prime minister has decades of diplomatic experience. Tough stance towards Russia and support for Turkey's membership bid could play against him

Other contenders

Franco Frattini: Italian foreign minister

Jaap de Hoop Scheffer: Former NATO secretary-general

Chris Patten: Former British EU commissioner and last Hong Kong governor
Michel Barnier: Former French foreign minister

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