

## "SURPRISING OUTCOME AFTER HORRIFIC EVENTS" - MARTENS ON SPANISH ELECTIONS

15-03-2004

In letters sent to acting Prime Minister Jose Maria AZNAR and PP Secretary General Mariano RAJOY, EPP Martens points out the need "to reflect on yesterday's surprising outcome in Spanish parliamentary elections against the circumstances of the very recent and horrific events in Madrid".

Yesterday, when the ruling Partido Popular was defeated in the Spanish parliamentary elections, would go down in history as "the day when Islamic fundamentalism was seen as dictating the outcome of a European election".

The horrific Atocha railway station bombings in Madrid last Thursday, which killed 200 people and injured 1,400 more had "effectively driving the Partido Popular from government in Spain", the EPP leader says of the outrage, which is now strongly suspected to be the work of Islamic radicals.

Martens reiterates the sympathy of all 64 EPP member parties for those who had died or been injured and their friends and loved ones.

"I hope that we can learn from this and build together a restoration of the Partido Popular's popularity majority in the upcoming European elections,"

Martens writes. The election is "a deeply sad outcome no matter what one's political beliefs," he goes on. "Let us hope that this setback in the struggle against terrorism will not unseat our determination to win the war despite this moral defeat in the battle in Madrid."

Socialists won 42% of the vote, while the EPP member party Popular Party won 38% in yesterday's general election, held in the wake of the Madrid train bomb attacks that killed 200 people.

The bombings did more than shock Spain to the core; they proved to be the decisive factor in the general election that ousted the government.