

**STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION
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The position in the European Union regarding the colours of ambulance beacon lights shows that it is Spain and not Gibraltar that is out of step and out of tune with the rest of Europe. This follows the recent fine imposed on a Gibraltar ambulance by the Guardia Civil because its beacon lights were flashing blue and not amber.

The EU standard for ambulances and medical transportation vehicles is CEN1789:2007. This voluntary code was published by the European Committee on Standardisation on 29 June 2007 and it is applicable to road ambulances capable of transporting at least one person on a stretcher. The European standard includes the requirements for the design, testing, performance and equipping of road ambulances used for the transport and care of patients.

The European standard makes it clear that all ambulances should be equipped with flashing blue beacon lights. The Opposition understands this was taken on board by most countries of the European Union in relation to new ambulances except for Spain and Greece who opted to keep the amber flashing lights instead. Indeed, in most EU countries the lights are blue for all emergency service vehicles including the police and fire-fighters as well. The amber lights are used by slow vehicles like large trucks, cranes or tractors.

However, the position in the Spanish traffic code is that only police cars can use flashing blue lights and the rest must use the flashing amber. One of the reasons for the standardisation recommendations in the EU is to allow an ambulance from one country to possess sufficiently common characteristics to be recognizable in another. In any case, the Guardia Civil must have immediately recognised the ambulance from Gibraltar when it was stopped and fined so that it is not clear what purpose was served by such an unnecessary action. Indeed, when ambulances from Spain cross into Gibraltar common sense dictates that these are not fined simply because their beacon lights flash a different colour.

Commenting on the matter, Shadow Health Minister Neil Costa said: "The treatment of this ambulance, its crew, the nurse and the patient was nothing if not shameful. Whereas it is for Spain to decide how to regulate its own internal affairs, she should not penalise ambulances from other parts of the EU which, in fact, comply with EU guidelines. The CEN1789 standard dates back to June 2007, which is nearly three years ago. The reality is that Spain does not have any excuse for the actions of the Civil Guard, which reflect the continued attempts to antagonise Gibraltar. "