

WEEKLY ROUND-UP

TOP STORIES: 1–9 May 2014

1

EPP extends lead as smaller groups scramble for seats: The latest PollWatch 2014 puts the European People's Party (EPP) in an 11-seat lead over the Socialists and Democrats (S&D). The EPP's projected haul of 216 seats re-opens the gap with the S&D, who had looked to be narrowing the difference between the two parties in previous forecasts. The Green, Conservative and Eurosceptic groups are in a tight battle for fifth place behind the Liberals (63 seats) and radical left (which fell under the 50-seat mark for the first time in a PollWatch 2014 prediction). *Links:* [PollWatch 2014](#); [Europe Decides](#)

2

Slovenia PM Bratušek formally resigns, urges snap election: Slovenia's Prime Minister, Alenka Bratušek, handed in her resignation on Monday 5 May and called for an early election to be held in June. She said it would be the best way out of the political crisis, which was triggered by her removal as leader of Positive Slovenia by the party's founder. Meanwhile, ex-PM and current opposition leader Janez Janša was sentenced to two years in prison for bribery related to a 2006 arms deal. Janša's conviction, delivered last June, was upheld by an appeal court. *Links:* [New Europe](#); [EUObserver](#); [Bloomberg](#); [Reuters](#); [Bloomberg](#); [Daily Journal](#); [Washington Post New Europe](#); [EurActiv](#)

3

Oettinger frontrunner as next German Commission nominee: The Energy Commissioner Günther Oettinger, is set to be named as Germany's nominee to the European Commission for a second time, according to a report in *Der Spiegel*. Since the German Social Democrats (SPD) are expected to lose support in the European election, it is reported that the Chancellor, Angela Merkel, will send a Christian Democrat to the Commission. Oettinger's only competitor for the post is reported to be David McAllister, former prime minister of Lower Saxony and lead candidate for Merkel's Christian Democrats (CDU). *Link:* [Der Spiegel](#)

4

Schulz vows to tackle gender pay gap: The Socialist candidate for the presidency of the European Commission, Martin Schulz, has announced that narrowing the gender pay gap would be among his top priorities if elected to the position. In a press conference called to unveil his election programme, Schulz identified other key priorities as introducing new measures to boost economic growth and launching a crackdown on tax avoidance. *Link:* [EurActiv](#)

5

Hollande and Merkel to discuss future Commission president: On 9-10 May Angela Merkel will meet the French President, François Hollande, for an informal discussion on current European issues. The discussion will include an exchange on the future President of the European Commission. Whilst Merkel has been sceptical about the nomination of lead candidates, Hollande has not been very vocal on the subject so far. *Link:* [EurActiv](#)

ALSO IN THE NEWS

Van Rompuy prepares government leaders for dates with EU's destiny: The President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, will ask government leaders to identify policy priorities for the EU in the immediate aftermath of the European Parliament elections. He has also convened the leaders for two informal meetings to discuss the EU more broadly in the next five years, leading to the possible revision of the Lisbon Treaty and a decision on a nominee to be the next President of the European Commission. *Link:* [European Voice](#)

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TV duel becomes TV duet and Juncker and Schulz struggle to differentiate themselves: Jean-Claude Juncker and Martin Schulz, the lead candidates of the EPP and the PES in the European elections, met in a TV debate jointly hosted by German and Austrian public service broadcasters on 8 May. Subjects discussed included the crisis in Ukraine, EU enlargement, immigration and the US-EU trade agreement (TTIP), but there was a lack of policy differences expressed by the two men. Further debates will be held in the coming two weeks, including a debate with five lead candidates on 15 May, organised by the European Broadcasting Union. *Links:* [Europolitics](#); [EUObserver](#)

More French candidates than in 2009: The French Interior Ministry has released information on all candidates for the European elections. There are 193 lists competing for 74 French seats in the European Parliament. This is a significant hike from 2009, where only 168 lists competed for the same number of seats in the Parliament. *Link:* [Euractiv](#)

Three runners for Finnish PM race: Alexander Stubb, Finland's minister for European affairs and foreign trade is one of three candidates to lead the country's centre-right National Coalition Party (NCP) and become prime minister. The economy minister, Jan Vapaavuori, and the health minister, Paula Risikko, are also running in a closely-fought contest. The current PM, Jyrki Katainen, will quit his post in June to seek an international or EU position. *Links:* [YLE News](#); [YLE News](#); [Twitter](#); [European Voice](#)

Merkel's number two supports EU lead candidates idea: Germany's Social Democrat Vice Chancellor, Sigmar Gabriel, has backed the idea of lead candidates for the European Commission presidency and warned against choosing someone else for the position. Gabriel underlined that it would destroy European democracy as it undervalues the voice of European citizens. *Links:* [EUObserver](#); [EurActiv](#)

Hungarian president asks PM Orban to form new government: Hungarian President Janos Ader has asked current Prime Minister Viktor Orban to form a new government. Orban's Fidesz Party won two thirds of the seats in April's parliamentary elections and so will be able to unilaterally change the constitution. The Parliament will hold its inaugural session on Tuesday while the new government should be announced by the end of May. *Link:* [Reuters](#)

Half of French have negative image of EU: A poll conducted by Viavoice and published in the French daily paper *Libération* suggests that 49 per cent of French people have a negative image of the EU, while 45 per cent see the EU positively and six per cent remain neutral. *Link:* [EUObserver](#)

French far-Left divided for European elections: Despite the efforts of France's New Anticapitalist Party (NPA), they will not be allying with other French far-left parties (the Communists, Workers' Struggle and the Left Party) for the European elections. The NPA has presented its own lists and will focus its European campaign on the fight against austerity. *Link:* [EurActiv](#)

61 candidates in Cyprus vie for six seats: A record number of candidates will fight it out for Cyprus' six seats in the European Parliament election. Among the registered candidates are five Turkish Cypriots. The ruling Democratic Rally (DIKO) is widely expected to win two seats with the other four likely to be split between the opposition AKEL party, the Democratic Party and the joint Socialist Party/Greens platform. *Link:* [Financial Mirror](#)

Far-right Dutch leader seeks links with Ukip: Geert Wilders, founder of the far-right Party for Freedom in the Netherlands, has declared that he hopes to join forces with Nigel Farage's UK Independence Party (Ukip) in the European Parliament. Wilders has already agreed an alliance with Marine Le Pen's National Front, which leads the polls in France. Farage, the Co-Chair of the Europe of Freedom and Democracy group, has previously refused to ally with National Front because of the "anti-Semitism and general prejudice in its DNA". *Links:* [Sky News](#); [The Telegraph](#)

Pasok chief warns that poor election result for Olive Tree could undermine coalition: Greek Socialist leader and Deputy Prime Minister Evangelos Venizelos has warned that poor electoral results for the centre-left Olive Tree coalition could undermine both his party, Pasok, and the legitimacy of the government as a whole. However, he stressed that a distinction ought to be made between the European and the local elections results, where Elia is predicted to perform better. *Link:* [Ekathimerini](#)