

## WEEKLY ROUND-UP

### TOP STORIES: 7-13 June 2014

- 1 **Four EU leaders meet in Sweden – ‘policies before personalities’:** German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the Dutch and British prime ministers, Mark Rutte and David Cameron respectively, joined the Swedish PM, Fredrik Reinfeldt, at his official residence near Stockholm to discuss the future direction of the European Union on Monday and Tuesday. In a concluding press conference, the leaders – who, with the exception of Angela Merkel, are thought to oppose to varying degrees the nomination of Jean-Claude Juncker to the European Commission presidency – stated that the priority for the EU must be to agree on its policy direction for the next five years before deciding on who will take the top jobs. *Links: [Guardian](#); [Reuters](#)*
- 2 **Van Rompuy meets Parliament leaders:** The President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy met the leaders of the main political groups in the European Parliament on 12 June to gauge their support for Jean-Claude Juncker to head the new Commission. Van Rompuy will report to the European Council on 26-27 June. The newly-elected President of the European People’s Party (EPP) Group, Manfred Weber, reasserted his support for Juncker and urged Van Rompuy to stick to the envisaged timetable for an appointment. Leaders of other groups, with the exception of the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), also pledged their support for Juncker as the candidate of the leading party in the Parliament. *Links: [European Voice](#); [EUObserver](#); [EUObserver](#); [EUObserver](#); [S&D news](#); [EUObserver](#); [EurActiv](#)*
- 3 **Juncker sets out programme and pledges to resolve ‘British question’:** Jean-Claude Juncker has put forward a five-point programme for the new Commission. The digital single market, including copyright and telecoms regulation and data protection, is the centerpiece, with a European Energy Union, a five-point plan on immigration and a stronger High Representative also in his plans. Juncker also vowed to work towards a ‘fair deal’ with Britain that “accepts the specificities of the UK in the EU, while allowing the eurozone to integrate further”. *Link: [European Voice](#)*
- 4 **Lagarde: ‘No EU, I have a job to do’:** Christine Lagarde, the head of the International Monetary Fund, has rejected the idea of becoming the new president of the European Commission. She has been mooted as a possible compromise candidate with some European leaders still opposing Jean-Claude Juncker. *Links: [European Voice](#); [Sky News](#)*
- 5 **UK PM hits out at *Spitzenkandidaten* system:** David Cameron has criticised the lead candidates system used by the main EU political parties in the European election, arguing that this system stops acting heads of government standing for the Commission presidency. In an article published in several European newspapers, Cameron said that voters throughout Europe had actually not voted for any of the presumed ‘*Spitzenkandidaten*’ and that the system had been agreed neither with the European Council nor national parliaments. The article did not specifically criticize Jean-Claude Juncker and it is rumoured that London would accept Juncker in return for a powerful vice-presidential role in the Commission, having a British Secretary-General of the Commission, and other concessions. *Link: [Irish Times](#); [European Voice](#); [EurActiv](#)*

### ALSO IN THE NEWS

**AfD joins Conservatives:** The European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) Group has narrowly voted in favour of granting membership to the seven MEPs from the Alternative for Germany (AfD) party in a move that is likely to create tensions between the British Prime Minister and the German Chancellor. Despite claims by the British

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Conservatives and Polish Law and Justice party, together comprising 38 members, to oppose the accession, AfD membership was accepted by 29 votes to 26 according to reports. The Conservative Party criticized the decision, which helps bring the ECR Group up to 63 members. *Links:* [Financial Times](#); [Spiegel](#); [Reuters](#); [EurActiv](#); [European Voice](#); [Tim Montgomerie Twitter](#)

**Presidency and nomination for two British Conservative Muslims:** Saijad Karim has been nominated by the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) Group as a candidate for the European Parliament presidency. Karim, formerly a Liberal Democrat, became the first British Muslim MEP in 2004. A fellow British Conservative, Syed Kamall, has been **elected ECR Group Chairman. The MEP, who represents London, said “I am proud to lead the ECR Group – one of the EU’s fastest growing political families”.** *Links:* [EurActiv](#); [EUReporter](#); [AECR news](#); [ECR news](#)

**Greens pick leaders:** The Greens/EFA Group has elected Rebecca Harms (Germany) and Philippe Lamberts (Belgium) as its co-presidents for the first half of the legislative term (2014-17). Lamberts replaces Daniel Cohn-Bendit while Harms retains her post with the intention of handing over to fellow German Ska Keller in 2017. Catalan deputy Josep Terricabras, becomes the first vice-president, with other VPs including Bas Eickhout (Netherlands), German Pirate Julia Reda, Heidi Hautala (Finland) and Peter Eriksson (Sweden). Austrian deputy Ulrike Lunacek was named as the Green candidate for Vice-President of the European Parliament. *Links:* [Europolitics](#); [Europolitics](#); [Greens-EFA news](#); [Johannes Hillje Twitter](#); [Greens in the EP Twitter](#); [Greens-EFA news](#); [Greens-EFA news](#); [Reinhard Bütikofer Twitter](#); [Julia Reda news](#)

**52 MEPs in GUE-NGL group:** The radical left group in the EP has re-formed with 52 members – 26 men and 26 women. The elections saw GUE/NGL increase in size and take it closer in numbers to the ALDE, the Greens/EFA and the ECR groups. *Links:* [Europolitics](#); [GUE/NGL news](#); [GUE press release](#)

**Five Star Movement to join EFD, but group’s future still in balance:** Italy’s Five Star Movement (M5S), led by Beppe Grillo, is set to join the Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD) Group following an online ballot of party members. Voters were given the choice between the EFD Group, the ECR Group, or staying as a non-attached party. The overwhelming majority of the electors voted to ally with the UK Independence Party (Ukip) in the EFD Group. However, despite Ukip’s success in the UK, the EFD Group has lost members to the ECR Group and may struggle to re-form due to a lack of representatives from different EU countries. Rolandas Paksas, an EFD Group vice-president and leader of Lithuania’s Order and Justice (TT) party, was forced to write to Nigel Farage to deny media reports that TT would join Italy’s Northern League and quit the EFD Group to join the new extreme right group headed by Marine Le Pen (of France’s National Front, FN) and Geert Wilders (of the Netherlands’ Party for Freedom, PVV). *Links:* [EUObserver](#); [EUObserver](#); [EUObserver](#); [Gazetta del Sud](#); [EurActiv](#); [European Voice](#); [EUObserver](#); [EurActiv](#); [EurActiv](#); [EurActiv](#); [EUObserver](#); [EUObserver](#); [EurActiv](#)

**Le Pen in new anti-Semitism row:** Jean-Marie Le Pen, founder of the French National Front has provoked outrage with anti-Semitic remarks aimed at his critics. In a video, he stated that there will be “an oven load next time” when asked about Jewish singer Patrick Bruel. His daughter Marine, who now heads the party, argued her father’s comments were misinterpreted and said the FN condemns any form of anti-Semitism. *Links:* [EurActiv](#); [New Europe](#); [BBC news](#); [EUObserver](#)

**Far-right group claims it meets conditions:** Sources close to Marine Le Pen and Geert Wilders claim the pair have managed to rally enough parties to form a political group in the new European Parliament. The new parties are thought to be the Polish right-wing libertarian Congress of the New Right (KNP) and Lithuania’s Order and Justice (TT) party. However, the Poles’ backing for free markets and free movement of people is thought to be a stumbling block, particularly for Wilders, while TT has denied the rumours (see above). Parties from five member states are already planning to join the ‘European Alliance for Freedom’ Group, but parliamentary rules say that seven countries are needed. *Links:* [Europolitics](#); [Europolitics](#); [EurActiv](#)

**Wilders taking legal action to claim dual mandate:** Geert Wilders is claiming a dual mandate for his seats in the Dutch national parliament and in the European Parliament. The European Court of Justice ruled a dual mandate illegal in 2002 but Wilders has now started a legal procedure in order to take both seats. *Links:* [EurActiv](#); [EUObserver](#); [Chicago Tribune](#); [European Voice](#); [European Voice](#); [Dutch News](#)

**Belgian enemies seek common ground in EU parliament:** The New Flemish Alliance (N-VA), a Flemish separatist party, is on the verge of joining the liberal group in the European Parliament despite its rivalry with Belgium’s Open-VLD, the party of the ALDE Group leader, Guy Verhofstadt. The former Belgian prime minister is thought to

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be keen to maintain the Liberals' third place in the Parliament and is willing to extend the search for new members. According to Johan Van Overtveldt, an N-VA MEP-elect, the party has two options: ALDE or the ECR group. *Link: [EUObserver](#)*

**Portugal Socialists to pick new leader:** The Portuguese Socialist Party (PS) will hold a leadership election on 28 September with António Costa, the Mayor of Lisbon, challenging the incumbent, António José Seguro, who was criticised after the PS achieved only a narrow victory in the European election. *Link: [The Portugal News Online](#)*

**Court rules Jobbik cannot be called 'far-right':** Hungary's highest court has ruled that the ultra-nationalist Jobbik party cannot be labelled 'far-right' by newscasters. The ruling was triggered by a 2012 news programme on commercial channel ATV. *Link: [EUObserver](#)*

**New finance minister in Greek reshuffle:** Greek Prime Minister Antonis Samaras has named Gikas Hardouvelis, a well-respected professor of finance and banking at the Piraeus University and chief economist at Greece's Eurobank, as finance minister in a government reshuffle prompted by the European Parliament election results. In 2011-2012, Hardouvelis advised former PM Lucas Papademos on debt restructuring. Outgoing finance minister Yannis Stournaras was named as head of the central bank. *Links: [Wall Street Journal](#); [European Voice](#); [Euronews](#); [European Voice](#)*

**Orban replaces Martonyi in Hungary's Government:** In a reshuffle of the Hungarian government, foreign minister János Martonyi was replaced by justice minister Tibor Navracsics, who was in turn replaced by former constitutional court judge László Trócsányi. Navracsics is thought to be a likely nominee to the European Commission. *Link: [European Voice](#)*

**Grybauskaite not seeking Commission presidency:** Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaite has denied speculation in foreign media that she may seek the Commission presidency. On 25 May she was re-elected as Lithuanian President. *Link: [New Europe](#)*

**Bulgaria's government to collapse, elections foreseen:** Sergei Stanishev, the leader of the Bulgarian Socialist Party, which leads a governing coalition, said the government should resign 'immediately' and early elections should be held in July. Bulgaria has been politically unstable since street protests over corruption started last year. *Links: [EurActiv](#); [Reuters](#); [EUObserver](#); [Novinite](#); [Novinite](#); [Sofia Globe](#); [Sofia Globe](#); [Focus News Agency](#); [Focus News Agency](#); [TribTown](#); [Novinite](#); [EUObserver](#); [EUObserver](#)*