

WEEKLY ROUND-UP

TOP STORIES: 31 May – 6 June 2014

1

Merkel backs Juncker but EU member states still at odds: National leaders are still discussing who should lead the new European Commission following the European elections. While the EPP Group is the strongest in the Parliament, it is still unclear as to whether the EPP candidate for Commission presidency, Jean-Claude Juncker, will be nominated by member states, after several of them expressed misgivings about his appointment. The UK's Prime Minister, David Cameron, has allegedly indirectly threatened British exit from the EU should Juncker become President, telling Germany's Chancellor, Angela Merkel, that the move may force him to bring forward his planned referendum on EU membership. Meanwhile, Juncker has received support from the rival candidate of the European Socialists, Martin Schulz, and Greek left-wing leader Alexis Tsipras. They say that the EPP's win in the elections means Juncker should be first in line to attempt to win a majority. *Links:* [EurActiv](#); [EurActiv](#); [Gulf News](#); [Gulf News](#); [New Europe](#); [EUObserver](#); [EUObserver](#); [European Voice](#); [Guardian](#); [European Voice](#); [Euronews](#); [EurActiv](#); [EUObserver](#); [European Voice](#); [Tagesschau](#); [FAZ](#); [Bloomberg](#); [EUObserver](#); [Irish Times](#); [KTVL news](#); [Deutsche Welle](#); [Europolitics](#); [EUObserver](#); [European Voice](#); [Sunday Times](#); [Sunday Times](#); [Guardian](#); [Twitter](#); [Europolitics](#); [European Voice](#); [Guardian](#)

2

Leaders and contenders consider Juncker alternatives: With question marks hanging over the candidacy of Jean-Claude Juncker, Angela Merkel has reportedly asked French President François Hollande whether he would consider nominating the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, Christine Lagarde, to be the next President of the European Commission. French sources say that Hollande did not support the idea. Also in France, the name of Michel Barnier, who Juncker defeated to the EPP nomination, still circulates as a possible compromise candidate. Meanwhile Olli Rehn's expected departure to the European Parliament is likely to see Finland's current Prime Minister, Jyrki Katainen, head to Brussels as a commissioner. He is also under consideration as a possible successor to José Manuel Barroso, although Katainen is still backing Juncker's candidacy. *Link:* [EurActiv](#); [Reuters](#); [EurActiv](#); [Le Monde](#)

3

Le Pen and Farage compete to attract MEPs as ECR numbers surge: Despite his victory in Britain's European Parliament election, the leader of the UK Independence Party (Ukip), Nigel Farage is struggling to secure the existence of his Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD) group. Farage is being squeezed by France's far-right leader, Marine Le Pen, who is trying to cobble together a far-right group called the 'European Alliance for Freedom' and has already wooed Italy's Northern League away from the EFD, and the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) Group. The ECR this week added ten members (going to 55 MEPs), including former members from the Danish People's Party and the Finns, both parties having been previously aligned to the EFD. Slovakian, German and Greek members also joined the ECR, with decisions pending on Bulgaria Without Censorship and the Alternative for Germany (whose admission to the group of David Cameron's Conservatives could anger Germany's Chancellor, Angela Merkel, at a sensitive time in negotiations on the Commission presidency). Meanwhile Farage is trying to forge links with Italy's Five Star Movement, but risks not having enough nationalities to re-form the EFD. *Links:* [European Voice](#); [EUObserver](#); [European Voice](#); [Novinite](#); [European Voice](#); [Europe Decides](#); [Twitter](#); [Twitter](#); [Reuters](#); [EurActiv](#)

4

Bavarian to head EPP: The EPP Group, which now counts 221 members, has elected Manfred Weber of Bavaria's CSU as its new chairman. Weber, whose election was unopposed, identified Europe's main challenges as economic growth, youth unemployment and stabilising financial markets. He also promised continued support for Jean-Claude Juncker's bid to become Commission President. The EPP numbers were boosted by the

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defection from ALDE of six MEPs from Romania's National Liberal Party. *Links:* [EurActiv](#); [Europolitics](#); [EPP](#); [Twitter](#); [Golden Post](#); [EPP](#); [Europolitics](#); [Europolitics](#); [EurActiv](#); [European Voice](#); [European Voice](#);

5

Schulz to give up Presidency to bid for Socialists and Democrats leadership: Martin Schulz, the President of the European Parliament and the Socialist candidate for the Commission presidency, has announced that he will quit as Parliament President on 18 June to run for the leadership of the Social and Democrats (S&D) Group. Schulz was also given a mandate by leaders of the S&D national delegations leader to negotiate on the Commission presidency. *Links:* [European Voice](#); [Twitter](#); [EUObserver](#); [European Voice](#); [S&D](#)

ALSO IN THE NEWS

Poland keen on economic post in EU commission: Although it has put forward its Foreign Minister, Radek Sikorski, as a candidate to be High Representative, Warsaw is thought to be keen on a weighty economic portfolio in the next European Commission as an alternative. *Link:* [EUObserver](#)

Latvia wants ex-PM to get Commission economy or finance portfolio: The Latvian government has confirmed its plan to nominate former Prime Minister Valdis Dombrovskis to the next European Commission. Dombrovskis stated that his desired portfolio would be "in the direction of economy and finance". *Link:* [The Baltic Course](#)

Blair urges EU leaders to heed lessons of elections: In the wake of the success of extremist parties in the European elections, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair has urged leaders to understand this 'wake-up call'. Blair called on the European Council to develop a true 'manifesto for change' and increase subsidiarity. *Links:* [New York Times](#); [Yahoo News](#); [Huffington Post](#); [EurActiv](#)

Swedish FM against Scottish independence: Sweden's Foreign Minister, Carl Bildt, has declared that Scottish independence would encourage future "unforeseen chain reactions" in both the UK and Europe, and result in a "Balkanisation of the British Isles". *Link:* [EUObserver](#)

Slovenia's Bratusek forms new party ahead of July election: Slovenia's outgoing Prime Minister Alenka Bratusek has formed a new political party called the 'Alliance of Alenka Bratusek'. The PM's failure to secure re-election as President of the Positive Slovenia party in late April triggered the current political crisis. The snap parliamentary election will be held on 13 July. *Links:* [Reuters](#); [New Europe](#); [EUObserver](#)

Bulgaria's Socialist-backed government survives fourth confidence vote: Bulgaria's centre-left government won a confidence vote on 30 May by 116 votes to 93. The opposition stated failed policies in the energy sector as the reason for the vote. *Links:* [New Europe](#); [Sofia Globe](#); [Focus information Agency](#)

Dutch populist Wilders makes U-turn, wants EU seat: Despite the ban on dual mandates, Geert Wilders, leader of the Dutch anti-EU Party for Freedom (PVV) has said he also wants to sit as an MEP. He is now seeking legal advice and plans to take the case to the European Court of Justice. *Links:* [Global Post](#); [European Voice](#)

Greek government announces cabinet reshuffle: Greece's Prime Minister, Antonis Samaras, is set to announce his new cabinet early next week. Samaras, of the centre-right New Democracy (ND) and Evangelos Venizelos, the Deputy Prime Minister and Socialist leader, have come to an agreement after days of negotiations. The reshuffle was announced after radical left party Syriza outperformed ND in the European elections. *Link:* [European Voice](#)

Greek communists quit GUE/NGL: The Central Committee of the Greek Communist Party (KKE) has announced that its MEPs will quit the European United Left / Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL) Group, saying that it was too pro-EU. There have been differences within the group over the leadership's backing for Jean-Claude Juncker's bid for the European Commission presidency. *Links:* [In.gr](#); [Proto Thema](#); [Twitter](#)

ANO says 'yes' to liberal wing of European Parliament: The newly elected heads of delegation of the ALDE group have formally agreed to accept the application of the Czech ANO 2011 party as member of the group. Meanwhile German Pirate Julia Reda will join the Greens/EFA Group. *Links:* [Prague Post](#); [ALDE](#); [Senficon](#)