

We gotta nominate women – Fiat Euro! 36/2014

Women are problem for the Commission. And not the only one.

Donald Tusk became our president. No, Andrej Kiska did not resign – former Polish prime minister became president of the European Council, familiarly called “EU President”. If you have problem remembering who the leaving president is I will help you. His name is Herman van Rompuy. The most exciting moment of his 5-year presidency was being called a damp rug by Nigel Farage publicly in European parliament. His obscureness does not have to be a bad thing. Politician doing nothing is often better than politician full of initiative. And this is especially true for politicians in Brussels.

Federica Mongherini from Italy became new EU foreign minister. One of few women in European, pardon me, government. While the outgoing Commission had nine women, member states have nominated only seven women (out of 28 Commissioners) to the new Commission. This is an unpleasant problem for whole EU since gender equality along with volume of flushing toilets is an extremely important topic in EU and Brussels pressures women by all means to nominate more women. It is starting to look like funny situation in Eastern Bloc where women working as combine harvesters drivers or cosmonauts were celebrated but no woman actually made it to the Politburo. It is even bigger blow for J-C Juncker, the incoming president of the Commission. In addition to PR consequences he will have to face the possibility that EU Parliament simply won't vote for the new Commission due to low number of women. Women are meant to be loved – and nominated.

So he begs and bullies. The last nominating country was Belgium. They [were allegedly promised](#) the important post of Commissioner for Competition. But since they nominated a guy they can end up with insignificant Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth. The best thing is that this position (under slightly different name) was held by Slovakia since 2004 to 2010. You had no idea, did you?

This senseless war about gender of the new Commissioner overshadowed the cloudy sky on the eastern border of the Union. In addition to military problems Ukraine is facing economic problems, too. [According to IMF](#), Ukraine is going to need help of at least 19 billion dollars if we fail to stop the conflict soon. In this May Ukraine already received 17 billion from IMF. This year, country's economy will fall by 6 percent. The size of the budget deficit is 10 percent GDP and Ukrainian hryvnia has lost 40 percent against US dollar since the beginning of the year. Russia is holding better thanks to solid reserves from selling hydrocarbons but is also on the edge of recession. Even if we cancelled sanctions right away, eastern countries are pulling down economy of the Union.

At least there will something to blame. War is enough for most, Slovak minister added [Ebola just to be sure](#). And boy, we will need the excuses. As expected, mostly in France. Minister of finance [announced](#) that the original plan to reduce spending by 21 billion euros in 2015 would probably (thus certainly) fail. Euro supposedly devalues too slowly. President Hollande [demands Eurozone meeting](#) where he wants to ask for more flexible budget rules. Like they can be any more flexible. But there is no problem that couldn't be solved at proper meeting.

As expected, his black horse, new minister of economy Emmanuel Macron, brought a breath of fresh air and [suggested cancelling](#) of 35-hour workweek which was introduced in 2000 by Lionel Jospin. The main argument was to reduce unemployment (Slovak unions sometimes have the [same argument](#)). Result could be expected. Unemployment didn't decrease because it has completely different causes than too hardworking employees. Typical French employee remained at work for almost the same time as before ([40.7 hours weekly](#) in 2013) and became more expensive for employers because of overtime.

At possible meeting, Holland would surely find an ally in the Italians. [Prime Minister Renzo declared](#) that "We stick with 3 percent limit but enforcing of fiscal compact should be more time-flexible." Unemployment in Italy rose in a month by 0.3 percent to 12.6 percent and like other politicians in Europe he has to worry about his popularity. Five Star Movement in Italy, SYRIZA in Greece, Le Pen in France and [Podemos party](#) in Spain. In addition to growing popularity that threatens the ruling parties these movements have in common rejection of budgetary and debt consolidation. That is kind of awkward for Slovakia because they owe us indirectly in many cases.

Motivation for saving is hard to find. Investors supported by ECB will lend money to governments even for a golden statue of Donald Duck and Brussels is no example, too. It approved "development assistance" for period 2014-2020 intended for African, Caribbean and Pacific mini-states. I used quotes because many of these countries (for example Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Barbados ...) are richer than eastern European EU member states. In that period, European Development Fund will spend up to 30 billion euros overall. Fact, that these beach paradise are coincidentally [favourite target](#) of MEPs missions paid from taxes, is perhaps needless to say.

Have you bought powerful vacuum cleaner? If you don't, bad luck, maybe you will catch some in stock. Ban is already in force. But don't worry. Ban of powerful hair dryers, kettle (they will probably become slow-boiling kettle) and other home appliances. There are enough clerks so the other ones are meantime working on [regulation of home pools](#) and pool equipment.

Have a nice weekend.

Martin Vlachynský

4.9.2014

Translated by Filip Piterka