

The New European Commission frustrates Germany

“Germany and the newly appointed European Commission have different visions for Europe's future, which has caused tension between the two, according to global intelligence company Strafor.”

Read the full article:

<http://www.euractiv.com/sections/eu-priorities-2020/new-european-commission-frustrates-germany-313507>

Task 1 – EU institutions: key tasks and key players

Read the article and fill in the missing words.

Germany's frustrations with the European Commission have steadily grown.

The Commission is the (1) branch of the

European Union, and its influence has increased since the beginning of the European project. Though the

European Council, composed of the heads of (2)....., still

guides key decisions, the Commission keeps the Continent functional. The institution is made up of

twenty-eight (3), each **appointed by a member state** and put in charge

of a department by the (4) of the European Commission. The European Council

normally chooses the president, but a controversial new system enables the European Parliament to

produce the list of candidates from which the council chooses a leader.

Task 2 – Identifying incorrect information

The article says that ‘*each commissioner is appointed by a member state*’. Why is this statement inaccurate?

Proficiency level: B2 and above

With the help of this exercise, you will:

practice active reading

learn key terms and expressions related to the EU institutions & the role of the Commission

get the most out of your reading

Task 3 – Vocabulary

Find synonyms of the following expressions in the text below. Some expressions may have more than one synonym.

<i>again and again</i>	<i>to enter into office</i>	<i>to assign a task to someone</i>
<i>sanctions</i>	<i>main actor</i>	<i>to impose tougher fiscal rules</i>
		<i>budget deficit</i>

The new Commission, led by Juncker, took up duty on 1 November 2014. But Juncker's selection of 2 the new Commission was controversial because in trying to avoid conflict, he put country representatives in control of the issues that most affected them. For example, the United Kingdom's Jonathan Hill was put in control of financial services regulation when it could be argued that London was in the most need of regulation; Greece, with its porous eastern border, headed immigration; and former French Finance Minister Pierre Moscovici was placed in charge of economic affairs. Moscovici's first task was to propose appropriate penalties for government overspending, of which France and Italy were the main offenders. Germany, the driving force behind the tightening of budgetary rules in 2012, now saw responsibility for their enforcement handed to a man who had repeatedly broken the rules while finance minister of France.

Task 4 – Vocabulary

Fill in the blanks using a synonym of the words/expressions in brackets. The first letter of each missing word is given.

The German perspective

Germany's **s**..... (*opinion*) on fiscal responsibility is well known. From Europe's perspective, economic problems are the result of **f**..... **w**..... (*wrong use of public money*) in the peripheral countries. For Germany, part of the solution was pushing periphery countries to **u**..... (*launch*) reform and internal devaluation to regain competitiveness and to control high debt levels. Such conditions were attached to the **b**..... (*helping by lending money*) for Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Cyprus and Spain. But Germany was unable to directly influence the policies of France and Italy, which **d**..... (*avoid*) bailouts. For these countries, a tightening of the fiscal requirements **e**..... (*make people obey*) by the European Commission was the only option for bringing them into line, and the Fiscal Compact of 2012 did just that.

Task 5 – Reading for information

Read the last part of the article below. Look for the key message of the text and write down your ideas about it. Highlight the words you may need to look up later.

Task 6 – Vocabulary

Read the text again. Match the highlighted expressions to their synonyms.

The Commission's relaxed approach to these rules **lets Europe's second and third biggest economies off the hook** and pushes Germany one step closer to a so-called transfer union, a scenario in which it might be the one that ultimately **pays the bill for Europe's overspending**. The perceived European weakness when it comes to Greece **has caused splits within Germany's ruling parties**.

To understand the Commission's motives, it is necessary to understand its position in Europe. As an entirely European construct, its fate is tied to that of the European project. If the European Union collapses, the Commission ceases to exist, and, conversely, the more unified and powerful the union becomes, the more powerful the Commission. Thus the Commission, most notably under the presidency of Jaques Delors in the late 1980s, has historically been a strong voice for an ever closer union — **a key European tenet**. From the Commission's perspective, a "United States of Europe," where resources were allocated to where they were most needed within the union, would be ideal. Thus, Juncker's controversial Commission appointments **coupled with a wave of anti-austerity sentiment** in Europe have pitted it firmly against Germany, which is firmly against the idea of a transfer union.

If that occurs, the Commission will again find itself divided **between its more accommodative instincts and Europe's austerity brigade** led by Germany. Under such circumstances, the Commission would likely default to its more accommodative stance, inciting even more anti-EU backlash in Germany.

a belief or idea that is considered very important - be financially responsible for - be freed from an obligation – caused breaks – together with – a significant reduction in government spending



IMPORTANT

Commissioners are NOT appointed, only **designated** (nominated) by the Member States (hence the name *commissioners-designate* before they are, as a body, approved by the European Parliament, and then formally appointed by the European Council). Please also note that commissioners do NOT represent their states. They are supposed to act in the general interest of the European Union and NOT in the interest of their respective state.

Check out our book EU English: Using English in EU Contexts for more information on the role of the European Commission in the EU. For more info visit: www.euenglish.hu

ANSWER KEY

Task 1

- (1) executive (3) heads of state and government
(2) commissioners (4) president

Task 2

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Task 3

again and again – repeatedly

to enter into office – to take up duty

to assign a task to someone - to put in control of / to place in charge of / to hand responsibility to someone

sanctions – penalties

main actor – driving force

to impose tougher fiscal rules – to tighten budgetary rules (in the text: the tightening of budgetary rules)

budget deficit – government overspending

Task 4

stance fiscal waste undertake bailout dodged enforce