
GERMANY, AUSTRIA, NETHERLANDS IMPEDE EURO ZONE REFORM - JUNCKER

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BERLIN (Reuters) - The Netherlands, Austria "and all too often Germany" are preventing deeper euro zone integration, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker told German newspaper Handelsblatt.

French President Emmanuel Macron has pushed for sweeping euro zone reforms but has met resistance from northern European countries loathe to bind themselves more closely to weaker economies in the euro zone's south.

"There is no progress with the deepening of the monetary union because the Netherlands, Austria and all too often Germany stand in the way when it comes to solidarity in action and joint responsibility," said Juncker.

"However I am still hopeful. Germany is not ready for it yet but many German politicians want to make progress in this area," he added in the interview to be published online on Thursday.

Asked whether so-called Eurobonds, or jointly issued debt for euro zone members, could be expected at some point, Juncker replied: "Yes, but in another form and with another name."

He declined to talk about failed merger talks between Deutsche Bank and Commerzbank. "But no one can claim that all is rosy in the German financial sector."

Juncker, whose term as president of the EU's executive expires this year, said he was "not advocating for or against" Jens Weidmann, the chief of Germany's national central bank, to succeed Mario Draghi as president of the European Central Bank.

"I wouldn't mind at all if there was a German president of the ECB or of the European Commission," he said. "I definitely do not share the view that is prevalent in parts of southern Europe that a German may not be president of the ECB."

Turning to trade relations with the United States, Juncker said the EU did not want to reach a comprehensive deal along the lines of the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), which failed to materialise after three years of talks.

"No, there will not be a TTIP II. But we will agree on a few key points," Juncker said, adding that he planned to talk about trade with U.S. President Donald Trump on the sidelines of a meeting of the G20 economic powers in Japan in late June.

He stressed that the EU did not want to include agricultural products in a deal, adding: "The

Americans keep trying but we have stood our ground. If the French government claims different then it is incorrect."

Brexit was a "warning shot, a continental wake-up call" for the bloc's other members, Juncker said. "It has become clear to EU citizens that they cannot take the EU for granted and that leaving it could have disastrous consequences."

Kaynak/Source: