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## European Union or mean girl?



Top US official tells Europe to love itself.

By ZOYA SHEFTALOVICH 03/06/15

Is the European Union that awkward kid in class with low self-esteem who bullies her frenemy to feel better about herself?

That may be the perception in the US.

Catherine Novelli, the US under secretary for economic growth, energy and the environment, sought to sooth Europe's bruised ego on a trip this week to Brussels.

**"There are some that are saying that Europe is behind America in the digital space and that the EU therefore needs to promulgate policies that hold back US companies so European ones can catch up," she said at a Lisbon Council event Tuesday. "But the truth is that Internet-related companies are already one of the most dynamic areas of the European economy so there is no need to feel insecure."**

Of course, one of the people who has disagreed with Novelli's assessment is President Barack Obama, who earlier this year hinted that the European Union was the class loser pulling on America's pigtales.

"In defense of Google and Facebook, sometimes the European response here is more commercially driven than anything else," Obama told Re/Code.

"We have owned the Internet. Our companies have created it, expanded it, perfected it in ways that [European companies] can't compete. And oftentimes what is portrayed as high-minded positions on issues sometimes is just designed to carve out some of their commercial interests," he added.

US ambassador Daniel Sepulveda, the coordinator for international communications and information policy, expressed a similar on his visit to Brussels in April.

Asked whether he thought European authorities were targeting US tech companies as part of an effort to bolster Europe's tech sector, Ambassador Sepulveda said that while the US government did not have specific examples, the administration had heard "concerns from our firms that they may face a challenging environment" in Europe.

**Novelli spoke at the Lisbon Council event after meeting with Margrethe Vestager, the competition commissioner who has formally accused Google of antitrust.**

Vestager has denied an anti-US bias. "Any business, no matter the flag, no matter the ownership, is warmly welcome if they play by the rules," she said in an April interview.

On Tuesday, Novelli had nothing but praise for Commissioner Vestager.

"We had an excellent meeting. She is an asset to the Commission," Novelli told a gathering of reporters after her speech.