

Movers and Shakers | 15 March 2019

Written by Dods People EU on 15 March 2019 in News
News

Keep track of developments in the European institutions and public affairs with our movers and shakers column.



Today's Movers & Shakers are about: **Highlights** from this week's plenary session, **a former European commissioner is running in the European elections, top level changes at the European Commission, more significant changes in Slovenia's government, controversial developments in Estonia's coalition negotiations, Brexit and more...**

European Parliament

Monika HOHLMEIER (EPP, DE), **Jean-Marie LE PEN** (NA, FR) and **Dominique BILDE** (ENF, FR) have had their immunity from prosecution lifted. **HOHLMEIER** is currently being investigated in relation to an incident in which she hit a parked car and failed to pay for damages. **LE PEN** is under investigation based on allegations that he illegally claimed millions of euros in Brussels to pay for staff based in France of what was then known as the National Front Party. **BILDE** is also implicated in the same case.

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Plenary Highlights

In the midst of Brexit events, MEPs approved on Wednesday a series of contingency measures to mitigate the potential effects of a withdrawal of the UK from the EU without an agreement. These measures cover the fields of travel, transport, social security, Erasmus and fisheries.

On Tuesday the European Parliament approved rules to penalise political parties whose members infringe data protection rule to influence the outcome of elections. On the same day, MEPs adopted the EU Cybersecurity Act which establishes an EU-wide Cybersecurity certification scheme for products, processes and services.

Parliament also adopted a resolution by 402 votes to 163, with 89 abstentions, assessing the current state of EU-Russia political relations and MEPs agreed that the EU should remain open to imposing further sanctions if Russia continues to violate international law.

The European Accessibility Act (EAA), was approved by Parliament with 613 votes to 23 and 36 abstentions. The act aims to improve the daily lives of disabled and elderly people by making products and services such as ATMs and smartphones more accessible.

European Elections

Former European commissioner **Neelie KROES**(NL) is running in May's elections after being named on **Guy VERHOFSTADT**'s Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats (ALDE, BE) candidate list. **KROES** has been described as a 'list-pusher' for the campaign, a candidate to draw attention and add credibility, although she is unlikely to end up in the European Parliament given that the party is on track to win just two seats.

Would you like essential European Election updates as they happen? [Get in touch](#) [2] to find out more.

European Commission

Commissioner Cabinets

Cabinet of Andreas ANSIP:

Tauno TÕHK has been appointed to the Cabinet of Andreas ANSIP, with portfolio responsibilities including media policy and other communication activities.

Cabinet of Christos STYLIANIDES

Alexis PANTELIDES has been appointed as a Member of Christos STYLIANIDES' cabinet, covering areas such as the refugee and migration crisis and sustainable development.

Directorates-General

Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI)

Gijs SCHILTHUIS is the new Head of Unit C1 (Policy Perspectives), replacing former Acting Head of Unit Ricard RAMON I SUMOY.

Research and Innovation (DG RTD)

Ana ARANA ANTELO has been appointed as an Adviser on Open Science and Citizens, filling a vacant position.

Translation (DGT)

Anastassios ANAGNOSTU has been appointed Head of the Greek Language Department, after serving as Acting Head of Unit.

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European Council

Legal Service (JUR)

Thérèse BLANCHET (FR) has been appointed as Director General, replacing **Hubert LEGAL** (FR).

European Banking Authority

José Manuel CAMPA (ES) has been appointed as Chair replacing **Andrea ENRIA** (IT).

European Stability Mechanism

Single Resolution Board (SRB)

Susan CARROLL (IE) has joined as spokesperson and head of communications.

Public Affairs

Got a new appointment you would like us to include in our next newsletter? [Click here](#) ^[4] to let us know about it!

European State Forest Association (EUSTAFOR)

Reinhardt NEFT has been elected as the new President, replacing **Per-Olof WEDIN**.

National News

Brexit

In the second meaningful vote on the EU Withdrawal Agreement on Tuesday, [MPs voted against the deal by 391 votes to 242](#) ^[5], an opposition majority of 149.

Following the UK House of Common's rejection of the Brexit deal, [major European officials urged Westminster to clarify their objectives](#) [6] at the opening of the Parliament plenary session. EU Brexit chief negotiator **Michel BARNIER** underlined that there would be no further 'interpretations or assurances' and that an extension to Article 50 would have to be strongly justified; while **Guy VERHOFSTADT**, the Parliament's lead Brexit representative, rejected any Article 50 extension unless assurances were given over why extra time would be needed.

On Wednesday, [MPs voted by a 321 to 273 margin](#) [7] to rule out leaving the EU without an exit deal under any circumstances. Several cabinet ministers defied the government line and abstained on an amendment that rejected No Deal under any circumstance, with Work and Pensions minister **Sarah NEWTON** resigning in order to vote in favour. The decision, however, is not legally binding and the default position, should no agreement be reached, is still to leave on 29 March without a deal.

On Thursday, [MPs voted by 412 votes to 202](#) [8] in support of a motion calling for the extension of Article 50. Several amendments to the motion were defeated; including an amendment introduced by Chair of the Brexit committee **Hilary BENN** for parliament to take control of the Brexit process and hold indicative votes, which failed 314-312 and an amendment by Labour MP **Lucy POWELL** calling for Article 50 to only be extended to the 30 June, which failed 314-311.

Estonia

Following the inconclusive general election several parallel coalition negotiations are ongoing. After originally committing to not do so the Centre Party (ALDE) of Prime Minister **Jüri RATAS** entered into coalition negotiations with the nationalist Conservative People's Party, along with current junior coalition partners Pro Patria (EPP). The three parties came to an agreement on sports, culture and youth issues on Friday.

The Reform Party (ALDE) of former MEP **Kaja KALLAS** are in parallel discussions with both Pro Patria and the Social Democrats (PES) and remain committed to the exclusion of the Conservative People's Party from government. Centre's negotiations with the nationalist party is very controversial, with **Raimond KALJULAID** resigning from the party's board over it.

Slovenia

Slovenian Health Minister **Samo FAKIN** has resigned due to his health condition. This is the fourth government resignation since its formation in September last year.

Zoran POZNIČ has been appointed as Slovenia's new Minister for Culture. He is replacing **Dejan PREŠIČEK**, who was forced out of office in January amid bullying allegations.



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[Movers and Shakers](#) [9]



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- [Editorial Calendar](#)
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[4] <mailto:dpeu.proofs@dodsgroup.eu?subject=RE:%20Movers%20and%20Shakers%20-%20NEW%20APPOINTMENT>

[5] <https://www.politicshome.com/news/uk/political-parties/conservative-party/theresa-may/news/102481/government-crisis-mps-vote-down>

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[7] <https://www.politicshome.com/news/uk/foreign-affairs/brexit/news/102510/fresh-blow-theresa-may-mp-vote-permanently-rule-out-no>

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