

Movers and Shakers | 15 November 2019

Written by Mia Bartoloni and Megan MacDougall on 15 November 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: **Results of the Commissioners-designate hearings, Commission and the UK clash over nominating a candidate, committee and delegation composition changes, Spanish election results, latest Commission, public affairs appointments, and more!**

European Parliament

On Monday, the advocate general of the Court of Justice of the European Union issued an opinion stating that former Catalan vice-president **Oriol JUNQUERAS** has the right to be recognised as a MEP and said Spain's Supreme Court could not impede him from taking his seat. The Court is yet to make a final ruling and is expected to issue its final judgement in the next few months.

National political parties

Italian **Nicola DANTI** is the first MEP to join former Italian prime minister **Matteo RENZI's** new political party, Italy Alive (Italia Viva). Italy Alive was formed after **RENZI** split from the Democratic Party (S&D) to form a new centrist party, just weeks after the Democratic Party entered a coalition government with the Five Star Movement.

Committees and Delegations

Afghanistan Delegation (D-AF)

Richard CORBETT (S&D, UK) has been elected vice-chair.

Chile Delegation (D-CL)

Fabio Massimo CASTALDO (NI, IT) joins as a substitute, replacing **Marco ZULLO (NI, IT)**, who has left the committee.

Euronest Delegation (D-EPA)

Marco ZULLO (NI, IT) joins as a substitute.

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Mongolia Delegation (D-CAS)

Atidzhe Alieva-Veli (RE, BG) has been elected vice-chair.

Latin American Delegation (D-LAT)

Fabio Massimo CASTALDO (NI, IT) joins as a member.

Marco ZULLO (NI, IT), who was previously a substitute, has left the committee.

Moldova Delegation (D-MD)

Marco ZULLO (NI, IT) joins as a substitute.

Russia Delegation (D-RU)

Milan UHRÍK (NI, SK) joins as a substitute.

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European Commission

On Tuesday, the Parliament's legal affairs committee unanimously approved the financial declarations of Commissioners-designate **Olivér VÁRHELYI (HU)** and **Adina-Ioana VĂLEAN (RO)**. French Commissioner-designate **Thierry BRETON's** financial declarations were narrowly approved with MEPs voting 12 in favor and 11 against.

On Thursday, all three candidates faced hearings in Parliament. **VĂLEAN** secured MEP's support to become transport commissioner and **BRETON** also got the green light after convincing more than two-thirds of MEPs who grilled him that he was fit for the internal market and defence portfolio. However, **VÁRHELYI** failed to get approval from two-thirds of the coordinators in the Parliament's committee on foreign affairs and will have to answer extra written questions.

After sending UK prime minister **Boris JOHNSON** two unanswered letters requesting him to nominate a candidate for the next Commission, British Ambassador to the EU, **Tim BARROW**, answered late on

Wednesday stating that the UK would not nominate a Commissioner before elections on 12 December. On Thursday, the Commission responded to this unwillingness by launching an infringement procedure. In a letter of formal notice, the Commission outlined that the UK had breached its EU Treaty obligations by not suggesting a candidate and set a deadline of 22 November for the relevant UK authorities to “provide their views”.

President-elect **Ursula VON DER LEYEN** has agreed to rename some Commissioner portfolios, including the controversial ‘protecting our European way of life’ portfolio of Greek nominee **Margaritis SCHINAS. SCHINAS’** portfolio has been renamed ‘promoting our European way of life’. The future Commissioner for jobs, **Nicolas SCHMIT (LU)**, will have ‘social rights’ added to his title and ‘fisheries’ will be added to the title of **Virginijus SINKEVIČIUS (LT)**, the Commissioner-designate for environment and oceans. **Paolo GENTILONI (IT)** will also be coordinating the Sustainable Development Goals.

Commissioner-designates cabinets

Margrethe Vestager

Christiane CANENBLEY, who is currently Jean-Claude Juncker’s digital and EU budget adviser will be deputy head of cabinet. Head of Unit ‘E-Commerce and Online Platforms in DG CONNECT, **Werner STENGG**, will be in charge of drafting the Digital Services Act.

Secretariats-General

Communication (COMM)

Benoît WORINGER has left the post of Adviser for Communication, Concepts and Outreach in Directorate B (Strategy and Corporate Communication).

Human Resources and Security (HR)

Micheline ADAM-GERARD has left the post of Medical Adviser in Directorate D (Health and Wellbeing), leaving a vacant position.

Research and Innovation (RDT)

Renzo TOMELLINI, previously Head of Unit A4 (Missions and Partnerships) replaces **Kurt VANDENBERGHE** as Director of Directorate A (Policy and Programming Centre) in an acting capacity. Therefore **Manuel ALEIXO** becomes acting Head of Unit A4.

John BELL, previously Director of Directorate D (Clean Planet) replaces **Dyanne BENNINK** as Head of Unit C2 (Bioeconomy and Food Systems). Therefore, **Patrick CHILD** replaces **BELL** as Director of Directorate D in an acting capacity. **Bernd BIERVERT** replaces **Anastasios KENTARCHOS** as Head of Unit C5 (Ecological and Social Transitions).

Sebastiano FUMERO has been appointed as Adviser for Future Air Transport in Directorate D.

Anna PANAGOPOULOU replaces **Kurt VANDENBERGHE** as Director of Directorate G (Research and Innovation Outreach) in an acting capacity.

Nienke BUISMAN replaces **Maria-Cristina RUSSO** as Head of Unit H2 (International Cooperation II – Asia, Africa, Middle East and External Relations) in Directorate H (International Cooperation).

Translations (DGT)

Mareks GRAUDINS has replaced **Mareks KOVALEVSKIS** as Head of the Latvian language department in Directorate C (Translation).

Representations

Austria

Martin SELMAYR, who was until recently Secretary General of the Commission, became head of the representation. He succeeds **Jörg WOJAHN** who now heads the representation in Berlin, Germany.

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European Court of Auditors

Two new members – **Joëlle ELVINGER** and **Roger CAZALA**– were endorsed by the Parliament's Budgetary Control committee (CONT), while three current members, including the current president - **Klaus-Heiner LEHNE**, **Alex BRENNINKMEIJER** and **Nikolaos MILIONIS** – renew their mandates.

Public Affairs

Orgalim

The General Assembly has elected **Rada RODRIGUEZ** as the new president, succeeding **Tomas HEDENBORG**.

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National News

Austria

On Monday, Austrian People's Party (EPP) leader **Sebastian KURZ** announced his intention to hold formal coalition talks with the Greens (Greens/EFA). **KURZ** and the People's Party came first in the parliamentary elections on 29 September, but need a coalition partner to form a government that commands a majority in Parliament.

Romania

President **Klaus IOHANNIS** won the first round of the presidential elections, he will face former Prime Minister **Viorica DĂNCILĂ** in the second round of voting.

Spain

Caretaker prime minister **Pedro SÁNCHEZ**'s Social Democrat party (PES) won the most seats in Sunday's election with 28 per cent of the votes and 120 seats out of 350, but fell short of a majority. The People's Party (EPP) came in second with 88 seats and Vox (ECR) doubled its seats (52) to become Spain's third political force.

A preliminary agreement has been signed between **SÁNCHEZ** and Unidas Podemos leader **Pablo**

IGLESIAS, however the combined Social Democrat and Unidas Podemos result only yields 155 seats, well short of the 176 required for a parliamentary majority.

Albert RIVERA, the leader of Spain's Ciudadanos Party has resigned after poor election results.



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