
EPP GETS ANOTHER TOP JOB: FINLAND'S İTALA TO HEAD OLAF

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Finlands Ville İtälä will be the new director-general of OLAF, the EUs anti-fraud office. He comes from the Finnish Kokoomus party, affiliated with the centre-right European Peoples Party (EPP) and will move to Olaf from his current post with the European Court of Auditors.

OLAF has been seeking a new boss since Giovanni Kessler was appointed the head of the Italian Customs and Monopoly Agency last July. Nicholas İlett has been the acting Director- General.

There had been a few dozens of candidates initially. Following a long procedure covered by confidentiality, two candidates emerged in April, İtälä, and Bulgarias İvailo Kalfin, a former S&D MEP.

On Wednesday (20 June), the Commission appointed İtälä, who will take the post as of 1 August.

İtälä served as the interior minister in Paavo Lipponens cabinet from September 2000 to April 2003. He was elected chairman of the National Coalition Party (Kokoomus) in 2001. Following his resignation as party leader in 2004, he was succeeded by Jyrki Katainen. İtälä was a member of the European Parliament from 2004 until 29 February 2012 and has since been a member of the European Court of Auditors.

In May, Kalfin complained that he had had no support from Bulgarias ambassador to the EU, Dimitar Tzantchev. The latter explained that pushing for a Bulgarian candidate would have been inappropriate because his country was holding the EU presidency [from January to July this year].

EPP is often accused of winning too many top jobs in European institutions. In an op-ed for the Guardian, Natalie Nougayrède, a former chief editor of Le Monde, wrote that pressure was building in Europe against the ubiquitous EPP, which has dominated the European Parliament for years.

The most important task for the new OLAF chief will be to improve relations with the European Parliament, which deteriorated seriously under Kessler in the Dalligate case, a corruption affair involving the EU.

EU anti-fraud chief loses immunity in Dalligate row

The Director-General of the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) has been stripped of his diplomatic immunity and could face questioning by Belgian investigators in a case linked to the 2012 resignation of a European Commissioner in a lobbying scandal, officials said Thursday (10 March).

Kaynak/Source: