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## **ESTONIA FORFEITS SEAT IN JUNCKER'S OUTGOING COMMISSION**

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EurActiv (10 September 2019)

Estonia has decided not to retain a European Commissioner for the rest of the current EU executives mandate, instead allowing nominee Kadri Simson to prepare for her duties under President-elect Ursula von der Leyen.

Estonian Prime Minister Jüri Ratas announced on Monday (9 September) that his country will make do with no representation in Jean-Claude Junckers outgoing Commission, which ends its mandate on 31 October.

Ratas had initially proposed former economy minister Kadri Simson for the interim role, following Andrus Ansips decision to up sticks from the Berlaymont and serve as an MEP.

But after Juncker said that neither Simson nor her Romanian counterpart, Ioan Mircea Paşcu, would be allocated portfolios, the Estonian government decided to forgo its Commissioner for the last two months.

Paşcus name was put forward after Corina Creţu also stood successfully as an MEP.

Estonias prime minister added in a statement that a delay in Simsons European Parliament hearing and confirmation from von der Leyen that she would indeed be a part of the next Commission had helped him make the call.

It is more reasonable to use the remaining time to prepare for the work in new Commission, Ratas explained, adding that Simson is in line to get a substantial portfolio.

Von der Leyen will reveal who has been given what job later on Tuesday (10 September).

### **Commissioners assemble: Von der Leyen's list released**

National governments across the EU have named their candidates for the next European Commission, which will be headed by Germanys Ursula von der Leyen. Here is a rundown of the names on the table so far.

The Estonian leader said he proposed Simson back in June because it was likely that the new Commission might not take office within the prescribed time frame, given the ongoing difficulties at the time in appointing Junckers successor.

It is unclear whether Romania will follow Estonias lead in forfeiting its seat in the outgoing college, due to the fact that Paşcu will not be a part of von der Leyens team. Pending MEP approval, that accolade will go to former EU funds minister Rovana Plumb.

The Parliaments budget control committee recently wrote to the EU assemblys president, David Sassoli, protesting at the idea of appointing two Commissioners that will allegedly serve no functional purpose.

Monika Hohlmeier said in the letter that endorsing the two candidates would contradict the principles of sound financial management and protection of the EUs financial interests. A hearing is still reportedly scheduled for Wednesday (11 September).

Hohlmeiers EPP group leader, Manfred Weber, welcomed Estonias decision and called on Romania to do the same.

Juncker is a notable advocate of a smaller EU executive, commenting in the past that there is not enough work for 28 Commissioners. He has also pointed to the financial burden of interim appointments, who are eligible for hefty EU pensions.

[Edited by Zoran Radosavljevic]

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