

WEEKLY ROUND-UP

TOP STORIES: 6–12 September 2014

1

Commission portfolios revealed, VPs to lead teams: The President-elect of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, has revealed the new structure and portfolio assignments for his College. Juncker will be supported by seven vice presidents, five of whom will be responsible for guiding and coordinating smaller teams of commissioners within their broad policy fields. Frans Timmermans, the Dutch foreign minister, will be First Vice President and Juncker's 'right-hand man'. Commissioners will need the support of a VP to bring an initiative to the agenda of the Commission, with Timmermans having a powerful role filtering initiatives to assess whether they are necessary. Within their policy area, vice presidents may decide which commissioner represents the Commission towards other institutions. Several portfolios have been broken apart or merged. The commissioners-designate face hearings in the European Parliament from 29 September, with the vote on the College as a whole scheduled for the Parliament's 20-23 October plenary session. *Links:* [European Voice](#); [Europolitics](#); [EurActiv](#); [European Commission](#); [European Commission](#); [Europe Decides Twitter](#); [European Voice](#); [Europe Decides Twitter](#); [EurActiv](#)

2

Hill among nominees expecting challenge as Juncker appointments raise eyebrows: Jonathan Hill, the British nominee, was given the financial stability portfolio – a key issue for Britain. His decision is seen as a conciliatory gesture to David Cameron, but Glenis Willmott, leader of the group of British Labour MEPs, questioned the appointment, saying that Hill “cannot be Commissioner just for the City of London”. Other countries' nominees were also given portfolios reflecting national priorities, such as France's Pierre Moscovici (economic affairs), Greece's Dimitris Avramopoulos (migration), and Romania's Corina Crețu (Regional Policy). Spain's Miguel Arias Cañete, who was appointed to the climate and energy portfolio, is likely to be questioned over his views on man-made climate change and links to oil companies, while Slovenia's Alenka Bratušek (Vice President for the Energy Union), Malta's Karmenu Vella (environment and fisheries) and Hungary's Tibor Navracsics (education and culture) will face intense questioning. *Links:* [European Voice](#); [Greens/EFA](#); [eureporter](#)

3

Kopacz takes reins in Poland: Poland's ruling coalition has agreed to put forward Ewa Kopacz, the Speaker of the Parliament and a former health minister, to replace Donald Tusk as Prime Minister. The country's current Foreign Minister, Radosław Sikorski, is likely to become the new speaker of the Polish Parliament. *Links:* [New Europe](#); [EUObserver](#); [EUObserver](#)

4

Swedes vote as opinion poll gap narrows: On Sunday (14 September) Swedes will go to the polls for parliamentary elections. Current Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt is campaigning for a third term, and recent surveys shows that his centre-right alliance is making gains on the poll leader, the 'red-green' coalition led by Social Democrat leader Stefan Löfven. On 9 September Reinfeldt announced that he is ready to make deals with the opposition if he does not win. *Links:* [Reuters](#); [Reuters](#); [EUObserver](#); [Reuters](#)

5

Shock new poll suggests Scots will vote for independence: The latest YouGov poll on the Scottish independence referendum put the pro-independence 'Yes' campaign on 51%, with the pro-Union 'No' campaign on 49% (undecided voters were excluded). Shocked by the poll, British Prime Minister David Cameron, Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg, and Opposition leader Ed Miliband all travelled to Scotland in a final push to help the No campaign. Former British PM Gordon Brown announced a timetable for Scotland to have more powers over taxes, social and economic affairs if it votes no. Alex Salmond, Scotland's pro-independence First Minister, said he was confident of a Yes vote on 18 September. *Links:* [Guardian](#); [EurActiv](#); [New Europe](#); [Guardian](#); [Bloomberg](#).

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ALSO IN THE NEWS

Departures for Commission open doors for replacement MEPs: European People's Party Group MEPs Inese Vaidere (Latvia), Tom Vandenkendelaere (Belgium), Carlos José Iturgaiz Angulo (Spain), Lefteris Christoforou (Cyprus), and Socialist Emilian Pavel (Romania) will replace five MEPs appointed to the European Commission (respectively Valdis Dombrovskis, Marianne Thyssen, Miguel Arias Cañete, Christos Stylianides and Corina Crețu). No replacement has yet been identified for Estonian Liberal Andrus Ansip. *Link:* [European Voice](#)

Miro Cerar on course to become Slovenia's prime minister: The Slovenian parliament is expected to approve on 18 September a new centre-left coalition government led by Miro Cerar. The new coalition government has a strong anti-corruption stance, but former Ljubljana mayor Janez Janša, who was jailed for corruption, becomes the opposition leader. One of the previous government's final moves was to nominate the current PM, Alenka Bratušek, to the European Commission. *Link:* [European Voice](#)

Bulgaria's centre-right GERB extends lead ahead of October vote: Just weeks before the 5 October elections, an opinion poll shows that Bulgaria's centre-right GERB (Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria) has extended its lead over the Socialists. According to the results, 36.2% of voters will back GERB, while 22.5% intends to vote for the Socialist Party. *Link:* [Reuters](#)

Poll finds Le Pen would win in Presidential election: Marine Le Pen, the leader of France's National Front, would win the first round of France's next presidential election according to a new opinion poll, and would defeat the country's current President, François Hollande, in a run-off. Le Pen reacted to the poll by calling for early elections and suggesting she could become Prime Minister in a deal with Hollande. *Links:* [Telegraph](#); [EUObserver](#); [Reuters](#)

Speculation on Băsescu impeachment: On 8 September the leader of the Romanian Senate, Călin Popescu Tăriceanu, announced that the country's President, Traian Băsescu, could be impeached just months ahead of the next presidential elections. The current frontrunner to succeed Băsescu is the Socialist Prime Minister, Victor Ponta. Other candidates include Elena Udrea, a former tourism minister whose newly-formed centre-right party (PMP) is allied to Băsescu. There is speculation that Ponta and Udrea have made a deal under which Udrea splits the right-wing vote, handing Ponta the presidency, in return for the new president granting immunity to Băsescu. *Link:* [European Voice](#)