



H.E. Dr Riina Kionka, EU Ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

Dr Riina Kionka served as EU Ambassador in South Africa from 2019 to 2022. Previously she served as chief foreign policy advisor to the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk (2014-2019). Prior to this Dr Kionka led the Central Asia Division at the European External Action Service (EEAS). Before this she led on Human Rights for the EEAS and earlier at the EU's Council Secretariat (from 2007), serving as Secretary General/High Representative Javier Solana's Personal Representative for Human Rights. Predating this, Dr Kionka deputised for the Director dealing with the United Nations, the Americas, counterterrorism and human rights at the Council Secretariat (from 2004).

Before her move to the EU Institutions, Dr Kionka worked at the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Following a number of years at the ministry in Tallinn, which saw her start off as Chief of Policy Planning (1993) and then move onto the role of political director (1995), Dr Kionka's first external posting was as Estonia's Ambassador to Germany (2000).

In 2004 she returned to Estonia to take up the reins at the foreign ministry as Undersecretary for EU Affairs.

Dr Kionka started her working career as a research analyst on Estonian affairs at Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty in Munich, Germany (1989–1993).

Dr Kionka earned a Ph.D. in International Relations from Columbia University in New York City, having started with a BA in International Relations and German Literature at Michigan State University.

Dr Kionka is married to Ambassador Lauri Lepik, a former Estonian Ambassador to the United States, NATO, Ukraine and Moldova. They have two grown children who live abroad, while their two cats have accompanied them to Pakistan.

Last but not least, Dr Kionka is a serious amateur musician who enjoys winding down at the end of the day with her trumpet in hand.