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BRUSSELS WARNS ENFORCING US VISAS WOULD COST EU BILLIONS

FT.COM

Forcing US visitors to apply for a visa would cost the EU billions, damage its tourism industry and threaten a prospective transatlantic trade deal, the European Commission has warned.

Its assessment came as a near decade-long fight with the US over its refusal to waive visas for eastern European citizens reached a crunch point on Tuesday when the commission called on national capitals and the European parliament to make a decision on a possible response by July.

The dispute stems from the fact that citizens of Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Poland and Romania have to apply for a visa before heading to the US. But EU rules demand that all citizens – whether from Paris or Poznań – be treated equally in terms of visas. If they are not Brussels can suspend visa waivers for any country that refuses to comply – in this case, the US.

But any move by Brussels to make it difficult for US citizens to enter Europe risks tit-for-tat retaliation from Washington, raising the prospect of all EU citizens losing their right to easily enter the US – and triggering an internal row between EU member states in the process. “German, French and Dutch citizens would not be very happy to [have to] apply for visas because of eastern Europe,” said one EU diplomat.

The growing diplomatic fracas with Washington comes as transatlantic relations between the EU and the US are fragile, after months of diplomatic sparring over the tax treatment of big technology groups, such as Apple and how to manage trade relations with China

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The agreement to return migrants and asylum seekers from the Greek islands to Turkey, reached at the meeting of heads of state or government on 18 March in Brussels, will be at the centre of a EP debate with Council President Donald Tusk and Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker today at 9:00 .



IMF WARNS BREXIT COULD WREAK ‘SEVERE’ DAMAGE IN UK AND BEYOND

FT.COM



The International Monetary Fund has warned that Britain's economy will suffer, as will other countries, if the UK votes to leave the EU in its June 23 referendum. The fund said a British departure from the bloc threatened to impose “severe” damage on the UK and the world economy, citing the referendum as one of the main risks to world economic stability.

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CONSERVATIVE DONORS PREPARE TO SINK £5MILLION INTO BREXIT CAMPAIGN

TELEGRAPH.CO.UK



Major Tory donors are preparing to fund a grassroots campaign to leave the EU following David Cameron's decision to spend millions of pounds on a pro-EU leaflet. Members of the Midlands Industrial Council, a group of businessmen which have bankrolled the Conservative party for 20 years, are planning to donate between £4million and £5million to the anti-EU campaign over the next 10 weeks.

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BRUSSELS GIVES GREECE TWO WEEKS TO TIGHTEN BORDERS

EKATHIMERINI.COM

The European Commission on Tuesday gave Greece two weeks to determine how it plans to tighten control of its borders, noting that although progress has been made, the process of registering thousands of migrants streaming through the country remained inadequate. The Commission criticized an action plan submitted by Athens, noting that it lacked "detailed time frames" for fixing problems. It also demanded guarantees that EU funding for migration will be used properly.

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EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT TO PUSH FOR TOUGHER ACTION ON POLAND

POLITICO.EU

Poland should face the next level of scrutiny from the European Commission in its probe of the country's rule of law, according to a draft motion that is being readied for debate in the European Parliament on today. The resolution, prepared by the European People's Party and the Socialists and backed by the Liberals and Greens, warns that the Polish government should end the fight over the country's Constitutional Tribunal in line with recent recommendations from the Venice Commission.

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BRUSSELS AIRPORT SHUT DOWN BY UNANNOUNCED CONTROLLERS' STRIKE

ATWONLINE.COM

A work action orchestrated by the guild of Belgian air traffic controllers brought flights to a halt at Brussels Airport less than 10 days after the airport restarted services following the March 22 deadly terrorist attacks. The air traffic controllers staged an unannounced sickout on April 12 to protest Belgocontrol making changes to employees' retirement benefits.

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BELGIANS PAID MOST TAX IN 2015, SAYS OECD

POLITICO.EU

Single, childless Belgians paid more tax on their wages last year than in any other OECD country, according to a report released Tuesday. The OECD report shows Belgium had the highest tax burden for childless, single workers who earn the national average. The 55.3 percent those workers pay in tax is 19.4 percentage points above the average for the 34 OECD member countries. Austria ranks second (49.5 percent), followed by Germany (49.4 percent) and then Hungary (49 percent).

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EU'S NEW TAX HAVEN BLACKLIST DOOMED TO FAILURE, WARN CAMPAIGNERS

EURACTIV.COM

New European Union rules to force multinational companies to publish their tax bills were criticised on Tuesday (12 April) by campaigners for being too weak to stop tax-dodging corporations hiding their profits. While the European Commission said the new laws proved the EU was leading the world in the fight against tax avoidance, critics warned that a new tax haven blacklist was doomed to fail.

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THE AGENDA

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EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

- 9:00 the plenary session continues in Strasbourg. On the agenda: **KEY DEBATE:** Conclusions of the European Council meeting of 17 and 18 March 2016 and outcome of the EU-Turkey summit - European Council and Commission statements.
- 12:00 **FORMAL SITTING** - address by **Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa**, President of the Portuguese Republic. 12:30 **VOTES** followed by explanations of votes: Mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund: application EGF/2015/009 SE/Volvo Trucks (report by **Victor Negrescu**, S&D), Mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund: EGF/2016/000 TA 2016/Technical assistance at the initiative of the Commission (report by **Andrey Novakov**, EPP), Draft Amending Budget No 1/2016 : New instrument to provide emergency support within the Union (report by **José Manuel Fernandes**, EPP), Nomination of a member of the Court of Auditors - **Samo Jereb** (report by **Bart Staes**, Greens/EFA), Nomination of a member of the Court of Auditors - **Mihails Kozlovs** (report by **Igor Šoltes**, Greens/EFA), Nomination of a member of the Court of Auditors - **Jan Gregor** (report by **Igor Šoltes**, Greens/EFA), Nomination of a member of the Court of Auditors - **Ladislav Balko** (report by **Igor Šoltes**, Greens/EFA), Nomination of a member of the Court of Auditors - **Janusz Wojciechowski** (report by **Igor Šoltes**, Greens/EFA), Objection pursuant to Rule 106: renewal of the approval of the active substance glyphosate - motion for a resolution, The EU in a changing global environment - a more connected, contested and complex world (report by **Sandra Kalniete**, EPP), Implementation and review of the EU-Central Asia Strategy (report by **Tamás Meszerics**, Greens/EFA), Motions for resolutions - Zika virus outbreak, Situation in Poland - motions for resolutions.
- 15:00 **DEBATES: Joint debate - Data protection:** Protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data (recommendation for second reading by **Jan Philipp Albrecht**, Greens/EFA), Processing of personal data for the purposes of crime prevention (recommendation for second reading by **Marju Lauristin**, S&D), Use of Passenger Name Record data (EU PNR) (second report by **Timothy Kirkhope**, ECR), 2015 Report on Turkey - Council and Commission statements, 2015 Report on Albania - Council and Commission statements, 2015 Report on Bosnia and Herzegovina - Council and Commission statements, Protection of trade secrets against their unlawful acquisition, use and disclosure (report by Constance Le Grip, EPP), Parliament's estimates of revenue and expenditure for the financial year 2017 (report by Indrek Tarand, Greens/EFA), Review of the SME supporting factor - oral questions.
- 11:15 President Schulz officially welcomes **Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, President of Portugal**.

TODAY CELEBRATING BIRTHDAYS



**Róza Gräfin von THUN
UND HOHENSTEIN**
EPP
(63)



Liliana RODRIGUES
S&D
(43)