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THE HERALD

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EU heads of state or government meet today and tomorrow in Brussels to discuss further steps to address the migration crisis and priorities for the 2016 European semester.



EU AGREEMENT WITH TURKEY HANGING IN THE BALANCE

EKATHIMERINI.COM

A crucial two-day European Union summit gets under way in Brussels on Thursday aiming to finalize a draft deal hammered out last week with Turkey to stem the flow of migrants into Europe, but its outcome remains uncertain as it seeks to overcome objections raised by member-states.

The EU said on Wednesday there was still a lot of work to be done, warning that a deal would depend on Turkey's stance on the peace talks over the divided member-state of Cyprus.

"Work is progressing but there is still a lot to do," European Council President Donald Tusk said in a letter to EU leaders ahead of today's summit.

He added that a deal would be an opportunity for Turkey "to support settlement talks in Cyprus. Only if this is possible can we move forward."

Cyprus had raised objection this week to Turkey's demand to speed up its membership negotiations as one of the conditions it set to take back refugees that illegally enter Greece from its shores. But Cyprus President Nicos Anastasiades said he will veto any deal that expedites Turkey's bid unless Ankara recognizes Cyprus as a state and fulfills its obligations to open up its ports and airports to Cypriot ships and planes.

But objections were also raised by other member-states that reject the idea that they will have to accept quotas of refugees to unburden countries such as Greece that have borne the brunt of the crisis.



MERKEL: TURKISH EU-MEMBERSHIP 'NOT ON THE AGENDA'

EURACTIV.COM



Angela Merkel stressed Wednesday that brokering a deal with Turkey will "demand a lot from us" and sought to quell domestic fears that EU membership would be offered to Ankara, during a speech in the Bundestag ahead of a decisive European Council summit.

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SUGAR TAX SURPRISE IN BUDGET - BUT GROWTH FORECASTS CUT

BBC.COM



George Osborne has unveiled a tax on sugary drinks in a wide ranging Budget dominated by gloomier growth forecasts. The chancellor blamed the slowdown on a "dangerous cocktail" of global risks and said the UK had to "act now so we don't have to pay later".

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EU LEADERS SIGN LETTER OBJECTING TO NORD STREAM-2 GAS LINK

REUTERS.COM

Eight EU governments have signed a letter objecting to the Nord Stream-2 project that would double the amount of gas shipped directly from Russia to Germany, according to a document seen by Reuters.

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KIRKHOPE: TEN REQUIREMENTS FOR AN EU-TURKEY AGREEMENT ON MIGRATORY FLOWS

ECRGROUP.EU

European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) group Home Affairs Spokesman Timothy Kirkhope MEP called for EU Leaders to go back to the drawing board on the EU-Turkey deal on the table. On Tuesday he set out ten requirements for any agreement reached this Thursday and Friday.

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MEPS ADOPT 'LOWEST COMMON DENOMINATOR' REPORT ON MIGRATION

ECRGROUP.EU

The justice and home affairs committee of the European Parliament yesterday adopted a 'lowest common denominator' set of proposals on a 'holistic' approach to resolving the migration crisis, according to European Conservatives and Reformists shadow rapporteur, Helga Stevens MEP.

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GREEK MINISTER 'BLUNDERS' IN MACEDONIA NAME DISPUTE

POLITICO.EU

Greece's migration minister came under pressure to resign Wednesday for calling neighboring Macedonia by its name – in violation of Greece's official position that the Balkan nation has usurped the name used by a region in northern Greece.

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GERMANY, FRANCE CRITICISE ISRAEL FOR SEIZING WEST BANK LAND

REUTERS.COM

Germany and France on Wednesday criticised Israel's decision to appropriate large tracts of land in the occupied West Bank, saying the move violated international law and contradicted a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

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17 MARCH, 2016

THE AGENDA

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EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

- 9:00 **Committee on Budgets**. On the agenda: MFF mid-term revision - prospects for the EU budget for the second half of the MFF - public hearing (JAN - 4Q-1).
- 9:00 **Committee on Employment and Social Affairs** (PSH - 1A002).
- 9:00 **Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety**. The agenda includes: public hearing on Palm Oil and deforestation, Assessment of the outcome of COP21 on climate change - discussion with the European Commission and the Council Presidency, Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council regarding trans fats in foods and in the overall diet of the Union population - discussion with the European Commission (JAN - 2Q2).
- 9:00 **Committee on Industry, Research and Energy**. The agenda includes: TTIP negotiations - briefing by the European Commission, Election of the third Vice-Chair of the ITRE Committee, Civil Global Navigation Satellite System between the EC and its Member States of the one part, and the Republic of Korea, of the other part (adoption, rapporteur **Gianluca Buonanno**, ENF), New Energy Market Design - public hearing (JAN - 4Q2).
- 9:00 **Committee on Regional Development**. The agenda includes: Cohesion policy in mountainous regions of the EU (vote on a draft resolution, rapporteur **Michel Dantin**, EPP), Discussion with **Wilhelm Molterer**, Managing Director, European Fund for Strategic Investments, and Mr **László Baranyay**, Vice-President EIB (ASP - 1G3).
- 9:00 **Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs**. The agenda includes: **Combating terrorism and replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/475/JHA** (discussion on draft report by **Monika Hohlmeier**, EPP). 12:00 Short-stay visa waiver: agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Peru - discussion on the state of play with the Council Presidency and Commission (rapporteur **Mariya Gabriel**, EPP), High-Level Hearing on 'The new US Privacy Shield for commercial transfers of EU personal data to the US' - public hearing (JAN - 6Q2).
- 10:00 President of the European Parliament **Martin Schulz** will meet His Majesty King **Abdullah II**, King of Jordan (PSH - Grand Salon Protocolaire).

COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

- A two-day 'Informal meeting of the Athena Special Committee' takes place in Eindhoven and Amsterdam.

EUROPEAN COUNCIL

- 16:00 a two-day **European Council**, chaired by President of the European Council **Donald Tusk**, starts in Brussels. EU leaders will mainly discuss further steps to address the migration crisis and priorities for the 2016 European semester. On 18 March, **Ahmet Davutoglu**, Prime Minister of Turkey, will join them for a specific working session on EU-Turkey cooperation (Justus Lipsius building).

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

- Yesterday the Commission set out its contribution to Thursday's European Council and Friday's meeting of the EU Heads of State or Government with the Turkish Prime Minister. In a Communication on **the next operational steps in EU-Turkey cooperation in the field of migration**, the Commission outlines the legal, operational and financial details of how the deal agreed in principle at the 7 March meeting with Turkey could be feasible.
- On Wednesday the Commission increased its **humanitarian response to**

help people affected by the conflict in eastern Ukraine, with a new humanitarian aid package worth €20 million.

COURT OF JUSTICE OF THE EU

- The Court confirmed that **a number of health claims relating to glucose may not be authorised**. According to the Court the Commission did not err in finding that those claims encouraged the consumption of sugar, such encouragement being incompatible with generally accepted principles of nutrition and health (T-100/15)

WHO WHEN WHERE

- A two-day **European Mentoring Summit** takes place in Leeuwarden. Topic of the summit is 'Mentoring, a powerful tool for 21st century skills in an economic vital region' (University Campus, Rengerslaan 8).
- 9:30 High-level conference 'EU energy cooperation with the Eastern neighbourhood and Central Asia' holds on. (Metropole Hotel, Brussels).

- Friday, 9:15 'Trade defence conference' is held. EU Trade Commissioner, **Cecilia Malmström**, will make an opening statement, followed by a general presentation of the subject by **Leopoldo Rubinacci**, Director of the Trade Defence services of the Commission (Thon Hotel City Centre, Brussels).

TODAY CELEBRATING BIRTHDAYS



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(66)