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EU AND TURKEY REACH REFUGEE DEAL

POLITICO.EU

European leaders signed a sweeping refugee pact with Turkey Friday, securing a hard-fought deal they hope will reduce the flow of asylum-seekers into the EU and calm a crisis that has tested the bloc's unity like nothing in its 65-year history.

"The talks were tough but fair, not everything that was said was to our liking," European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker said afterward, but "the agreement... is in accordance with the law, there can be no doubt about that. It meets all EU and international law requirements."

Under the agreement, Ankara will take back Syrian migrants who reach Greece illegally in return for the relocation in Europe of Syrian refugees now in Turkey. Europe hopes forcing refugees back to Turkey will dissuade them from crossing the Aegean, while also upending the human-smuggling trade. Nearly all the refugees arriving in Europe from Syria do so via Turkey.

In return for Turkey's agreement, the EU will grant visa-free travel to Turkish citizens, as soon as this summer, accelerate Ankara's EU membership application and increase financial aid to help Turkey manage the refugee crisis by €3 billion to €6 billion.

The deal took effect on Sunday. The starting date was crucial because leaders wanted to avoid unleashing a rush of refugees trying to reach the EU before it went into force.



EU heads of state or government meet Ahmet Davutolu, Prime Minister of Turkey, for a specific working session on EU-Turkey cooperation, in Brussels on 18 March 2016.



INFLUX CONTINUES DESPITE EU-TURKEY DEAL

BBC.COM



Hundreds of asylum-seekers have arrived in Greece by sea despite the start of a deal between the EU and Turkey to tackle the influx of migrants. On the Greek islands, at least 875 migrants, mostly Syrians, landed on packed flimsy boats between Saturday night and early Sunday, when the agreement came into effect.

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GERMANY, FRANCE PLEDGE HUNDREDS OF STAFF TO SUPPORT GREECE

POLITICO.EU



Eager to implement swiftly the EU's migration deal on Friday with Turkey, Germany and France have pledged to send 600 police officers and asylum experts to Greece, according to a letter sent to the European Commission within hours of the conclusion of the summit in Brussels devoted to migration.

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PRESIDENT JUNCKER APPOINTS EU COORDINATOR IN GREECE

EUROPA.EU

President Juncker appointed Maarten Verwey to act as the EU Coordinator to implement the EU-Turkey statement on Friday. This follows the agreement by Heads of State or Government meeting in the European Council that "the Commission will coordinate and organise together with Member States and Agencies the necessary support structures to implement it effectively."

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COMMISSION RELEASES €200 MILLION FOR CROSS-BORDER ENERGY NETWORKS

EUROPA.EU

The European Commission has opened a call for proposals under the Connecting Europe Facility to help finance key EU energy infrastructure projects. €200 million will be made available for projects which aim at eliminating bottlenecks preventing the free flow of energy across EU countries. Once finalised, the projects will help complete the EU internal energy market and create a resilient Energy Union with a forward-looking climate change policy, a priority of the Juncker Commission

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EIF: ANOTHER €150 MILLION FOR ITALIAN SMES

EUROPA.EU

The European Investment Fund (EIF) and Credito Valtellinese s.c. (CREVAL) have signed an InnovFin agreement in Italy to provide €150 million in loans to innovative small and medium sized businesses in Italy

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NEW DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION AND AWARENESS RAISING PROGRAMME ANNOUNCED

EUROPA.EU

EU Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica, announced a new Development Education and Awareness Raising (DEAR) programme call for proposals, following wide consultations with civil society organisations across Europe. €90 million of funding to European Civil Society Organisations and Local Authorities, including small and grassroots organisations, were made available.

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FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER DIES AFTER BATTLE WITH CANCER

THELOCAL.DE

Former German foreign minister Guido Westerwelle died Friday, aged 54, after a long battle with leukaemia, his charity foundation said. Westerwelle, a trained lawyer and gifted parliamentary debater, had been a fixture in German politics for decades, initially in opposition. Under his leadership, the FDP won just under 15 percent of the vote, its best-ever result, in 2009 elections.

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THE AGENDA

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EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

- The 5th session of **Euronest Parliamentary Assembly**, which brings together MEPs and MPs from Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, will be held in Parliament's premises from today until Wednesday 23 March. Agenda items include common security threats, reacting to Russian disinformation, ways forward for energy cooperation and the movement of skilled labour.
- 15:00 **Committee on Foreign Affairs**. The agenda includes: Discussion on the situation in the region and inter-parliamentary cooperation with **Tsetska Tsacheva**, Bulgarian Speaker and Chair-in-Office of the Parliamentary Assembly of the South East European Cooperation Process (SEEPC PA), and the delegation of the SEECP PA, Presentation of the outcomes of the AFET-commissioned study "Assessment of the EU cooperation with Tunisia over the last decade and of the consequences of policy support" (JAN - 2Q2).
- 15:00 **Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety**. The agenda includes: Exchange of views with the Commission on the application of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive 2011/92/EU to projects with transboundary impacts, Objection pursuant to Rule 106: renewal of the approval of the active substance glyphosate (consideration of motion for a resolution) (JAN - 4Q2).
- 15:00 **Committee on Fisheries**. On the agenda: **Hearing on the 'New framework for technical measures'** (ASP - 1G2).
- 15:00 **Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs**. The agenda includes: European Agency for Fundamental Rights report "Professionally speaking: challenges to achieving equality for LGBT people" - presentation by **Ioannis Dimitrakopoulos**, FRA's Head of Equality and Citizens' Rights Department, The situation of the Schengen area, Application of the Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation ("Employment Equality Directive") (adoption of draft opinion of **Helga Stevens**, ECR) (JAN - 6Q2).
- 15:00 **Special Committee on Tax Rulings and Other Measures Similar in Nature or Effect (TAXE 2)**. On the agenda: Exchange of views with European banks (JAN - 4Q1).

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

- The European Commission has published **initial findings on the prevalence of geo-blocking** which prevents consumers from purchasing consumer goods and accessing digital content online in the European Union. The information was gathered by the Commission as part of its ongoing antitrust sector inquiry into the e-commerce sector, launched in May 2015. In particular, the replies from more than 1400 retailers and digital content providers from all 28 EU Member States show that geo-blocking is common in the EU for both consumer goods and digital content. 38% of the responding retailers selling consumer goods and 68% of digital content providers replied that they geo-block consumers located in other EU Member States.
- The European Commission adopted a **series of rules applicable to road hauliers and road passenger transport operators**. They include a common classification of serious road safety infringements under transport legislation, as well as new specifications for smart tachographs (the device that records driving times of lorry, bus and coach drivers) making the best use of new digital technologies such as Galileo. The objective is to enhance road safety, contribute to a fairer competition between road transport operators and to facilitate a consistent enforcement of EU rules across borders.
- The European Commission has found that Finland's plans to grant €28 million to build a small scale liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal at Hamina, on Finland's South-East coast, are in line with EU state aid rules.

COURT OF JUSTICE OF THE EU

- The Court held that the **Dublin III Regulation** allows Member States to send an applicant for international protection to a safe third country, irrespective of whether it is the Member State responsible for processing the application or another Member State. That right may also be exercised by a Member State after it has accepted that it is responsible for processing the application pursuant to that regulation and within the context of the take back procedure. (C-695/15)

WHO WHEN WHERE

- **European Robotics Forum 2016** starts in Ljubljana, Slovenia, today.
- 9:00 the European Commission holds an **Annual convention for inclusive growth 2016**. The Convention is opened by the Commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs, **Marianne Thyssen**, and by **Jetta Klijnsma**, Secretary of State for Social Affairs and Employment of The Netherlands and closed by **Valdis Dombrovskis**, Vice-President for the Euro and Social Dialogue (Crowne Plaza Hotel, Brussels).
- 9:30 the European Commission holds a **Business and practitioners' workshop on financial opportunities and legislative barriers for the circular economy** (Borschette Conference Centre, Brussels).
- 10:00 the Publications Office of the EU hosts a **conference on access to and reuse of EU legal information** (Charlemagne building, Brussels).

TODAY CELEBRATING BIRTHDAYS



Angel DZHAMBAZKI
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(37)



Pál CSÁKY
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(60)