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OBAMA, MERKEL PUSH FOR TRADE DEAL AS FOREIGN CRISES WEIGH

REUTERS.COM

U.S. President Barack Obama said on Sunday he would do whatever he could to advance a controversial trade deal with the European Union in his last eight months in office, but warned that time was running short.

Obama has pushed to complete two trade agreements before his term ends on Jan. 20 - with Pacific nations and with the EU - but has run into a growing swell of populist concerns about the impact on jobs, consumer protections and the environment.

"Time is not on our side," he conceded to business leaders at the Hanover Messe, a massive industrial trade fair.

"If we don't complete negotiations this year, then upcoming political transitions in the United States and Europe would mean this agreement won't be finished for quite some time."

Obama is in Germany to promote the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, but the issue was overshadowed by discussions on the crises in Syria, Ukraine and Libya when the two leaders met.

Today, they are set to hold talks with British Prime Minister David Cameron, French President Francois Hollande and Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi on some of the same issues.

But first, they had dinner in a 17th century palace with chief executives of some of the largest U.S. and German companies such as Microsoft, Dow, Lockheed Martin, Honeywell, BASF, Bayer and Siemens.



US President Barack Obama and German Chancellor Angela Merkel presided over the opening ceremony of the Hannover Messe 2016, the world's biggest industrial fair in Hannover on Sunday, April 24. The United States is the partner country for this year's Hannover Messe fair, which expects to welcome around 200,000 visitors to showcase the latest technology from more over 6,000 different exhibitors.



FPÖ'S HOFER WINS 36.7% OF VOTE, RUNOFF LIKELY

THELOCAL.AT



Austria's anti-immigration far-right triumphed on Sunday in the first round of a presidential election, with candidates from the two governing parties failing to even make it into a May 22 runoff. Norbert Hofer of the Freedom Party (FPÖ) won 36.7 of the vote, followed by Alexander van der Bellen backed by the Greens on 19.7 percent and independent candidate Irmgard Griss on 18.8 percent, projections showed.

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THIRTEENTH ROUND OF TTIP NEGOTIATIONS

EUROPA.EU



Today, the thirteenth round of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership negotiations between the EU and the US starts in New York. The objective of this round will be to reach a sufficient level of maturity in all areas of negotiations to be able to move to the next stage, the so called 'end game'.

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HILLARY CLINTON BACKS UK IN A 'UNITED' EUROPE

POLITICO.EU

Hillary Clinton added her voice Saturday to those from across the Atlantic urging Brits to vote to stay in the EU in a June 23 referendum. "Hillary Clinton believes that transatlantic cooperation is essential, and that cooperation is strongest when Europe is united," Clinton's senior policy adviser, Jake Sullivan, said in a statement to U.K. paper, the Observer. "She has always valued a strong United Kingdom in a strong EU. And she values a strong British voice in the EU."

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FRESH MEDIA STRIKE OVER PENSION REFORMS

EKATHIMERINI.COM

Greece's journalists' unions have called a new strike over pension reforms, leading to a near-blackout of news coverage. The strike is due to last until 6 a.m. on Wednesday, although the Panhellenic Federation of Journalists' Unions (POESY) said that news could be broadcast on the radio from 1.15 p.m. to 1.30 p.m. and there could be TV bulletins from 8 p.m. to 8.15 p.m.

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SERBIA ELECTION: PRO-EU PRIME MINISTER VUCIC CLAIMS VICTORY

BBC.COM

Serbia's pro-EU PM Aleksandar Vucic has claimed victory in general elections after pollsters' projections showed his Progressive Party won 50% of the votes. He said Serbs "again gave us the honour to lead the government". Mr Vucic called the poll early seeking a mandate to continue with reforms required to join the EU.

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EUROSTAT: SEASONALLY ADJUSTED GOVERNMENT DEFICIT UP TO 2.3% OF GDP

EUROPA.EU

In the fourth quarter of 2015, the seasonally adjusted general government deficit to GDP ratio stood at 2.3% in the euro area (EA19), an increase compared with 1.8% in the third quarter of 2015. In the EU28, the deficit to GDP ratio stood at 2.4%, an increase compared with 2.2% in the previous quarter.

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NEW DIRECTION LAUNCH: NEXT GENERATION TELECOM POLICY AND THE DIGITAL SINGLE MARKET

EUROPEANREFORM.ORG

In the latest New Direction report on the Digital Single Market, renowned Internet policy expert, Roslyn Layton PhD provides policy recommendations for the EU's 2020 Digital economy strategy.

Location: Renaissance Hotel, Rue de Parnasse 19, Brussels.
Wednesday, 27 April 2016, 17:00.

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THE AGENDA

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EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

- 14:30 **Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs.** The agenda includes: Follow-up to the extraordinary meeting of the EU Ministers of Justice and Home Affairs of Thursday 24 March 2016 after the terrorist attacks in Brussels on 22 March 2016 and to the JHA Council of 21 April 2016 - exchange of views with **Jan Jambon**, Belgian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Security and the Interior as well as Mr **Koen Geens**, Belgian Minister of Justice, and with the Commission and the Council Presidency (JAN - 4Q2).
- 15:00 **Committee on Budgets.** The agenda includes: Preparation of the post-electoral revision of the MFF 2014-2020: Parliament's input ahead of the Commission's proposal (co-rapporteurs **Jan Olbrycht**, EPP, and **Isabelle Thomas**, S&D) (JAN - 4Q-1).
- 15:00 **Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs.** The agenda includes: **Green Paper on Retail Financial Services** (first exchange of views, rapporteur **Olle Ludvigsson**, S&D) (PHS - 3C050).
- 15:00 **Committee on Transport and Tourism.** The agenda includes: European Maritime Safety Agency (consideration of draft report by **Marie-Christine Arnautu**, ENF) (PHS - 1A002).
- 15:00 **Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development.** On the agenda: **Hearing on "European level playing field: Implementation of European legislation in the agricultural sector"** (JAN - 6Q2).
- 15:00 **Committee on Culture and Education.** The agenda includes: Exchange of views with Mr **Jens Geier**, the General Rapporteur on Budget 2017 (ASP - 1G3).

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

- The European Commission is inviting **comments from interested parties on commitments offered by Paramount Pictures to address competition concerns relating to contractual clauses preventing the cross-border provision of pay-TV services.** In particular, the Commission has concerns relating to clauses in certain bilateral agreements between six major film studios, including Paramount Pictures, and Sky UK under which the studios license their output of films over a certain period of time for pay-TV to Sky UK.
- **More EU support is being provided to help Ecuador in the aftermath of the recent earthquake**, through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. Several EU countries are offering various kinds of support. Rescue teams and relief items are now being dispatched by four EU Member States, France, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom. France is deploying specialised capabilities from the European Emergency Response Capacity to help provide more than 225 000 litres of fresh water per day. The European Commission is co-financing the transport costs of relief items. An EU civil protection team, made up from experts and engineers from Austria, Denmark, France, Italy, Portugal, Sweden, Spain and the United Kingdom, has been deployed in Quito, Ecuador to help with relief efforts.

GENERAL COURT OF THE EU

- The General Court confirmed the decision of the Commission ordering the repayment of the tax exemptions granted by France, Ireland and Italy for alumina production. The Court stated that the Commission correctly applied EU State aid rules and did not infringe the principle of protection of legitimate expectations (Judgments in Joined Cases T-50/06 RENV II Ireland v Commission and T-69/06 RENV II Aughinish Alumina v Commission, in Case T-56/06 RENV II France v Commission and in Joined Cases T-60/06 RENV II Italy v Commission and T-62/06 RENV II Eurallumina v Commission).