

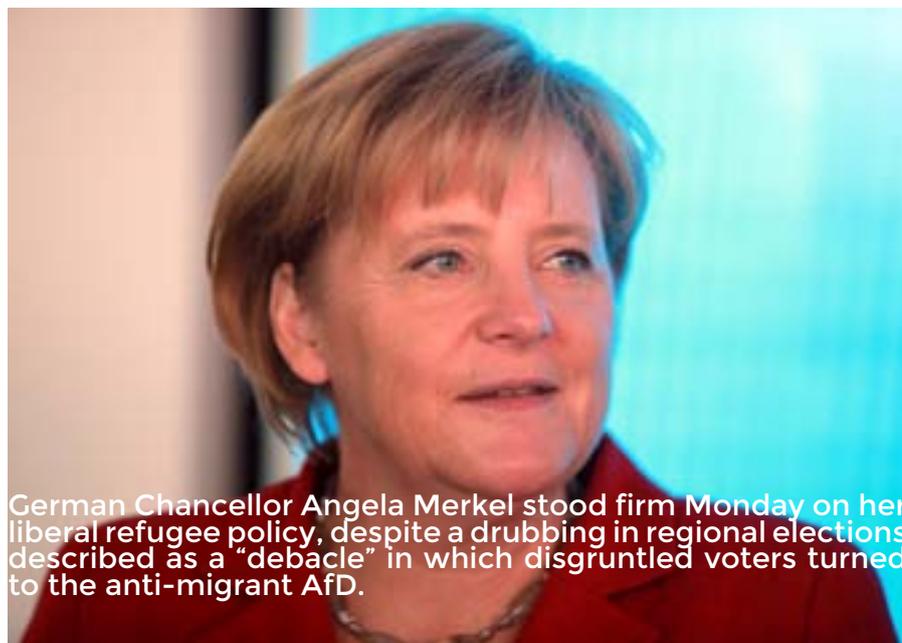


New
Direction

the foundation for european reform

THE HERALD

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German Chancellor Angela Merkel stood firm Monday on her liberal refugee policy, despite a drubbing in regional elections described as a "debacle" in which disgruntled voters turned to the anti-migrant AfD.



REFUGEES SCRAMBLE FOR WAY PAST EU'S CLOSED BALKAN DOOR

EKATHIMERINI.COM

Hundreds of desperate migrants were stopped by troops from the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) on Monday after managing to cross the border from Greece, where thousands have been left stranded after Balkan states slammed Europe's migrant door shut.

The migrants, who had set off from an overcrowded Greek refugee camp several hours earlier, waded through a surging river as they found an alternative route north into FYROM, bypassing the closed regular border crossing.

About 20 journalists who had followed the migrants from the Idomeni migrant camp were taken to a police station in Gevgelija, just over the border in FYROM.

As thousands of refugees scramble to find ways past the Balkan blockade, three Afghans drowned in a rain-swollen river in FYROM, while the Greek coastguard was searching for eight migrants missing in the Aegean.

The Greek-FYROM border -- and more specifically the mud-soaked Idomeni camp -- has become the focal point of the crisis in recent weeks, as thousands of migrants fleeing war in Syria and Iraq were blocked from heading further north.

Over 14,000 people have been stranded at Idomeni in increasingly desperate conditions after the main route to western Europe through the Balkans -- taken by over one million migrants since the start of 2015 -- was effectively shut down last week.



RUSSIA'S PUTIN ORDERS 'MAIN PART' OF FORCES OUT

BBC.COM



In a surprise move, Russian President Vladimir Putin has ordered his military to start withdrawing the "main part" of its forces in Syria from Tuesday. He told a Kremlin meeting the Russian intervention had largely achieved its objectives.

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TURKISH MILITARY BOMBS PKK TARGETS IN NORTHERN IRAQ

IRISHTIMES.COM



Turkish warplanes struck against Kurdish militant camps in northern Iraq on Monday after 37 people were killed in an Ankara car bombing that security officials said involved a female fighter of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK).

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BREXIT AND BRITAIN - WHAT WOULD IT MEAN FOR UK TRADE?

REUTERS.COM

The stakes will be high for Britain's historic role as a free-trading nation when it holds a referendum on whether to stay in the European Union on June 23. There is no precedent for an economy as big as Britain's leaving a trade bloc, and the rival campaigns paint contrasting pictures of what quitting the EU might mean for its trade.

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UNCERTAIN FATE OF TRADE DEALS IN HUMAN RIGHTS LIMELIGHT

EURACTIV.COM

A new legal world is emerging around the EU's trade policy. Scrutiny over the compatibility of trade agreements with human rights is increasing under recent Ombudsman and Court of Justice moves regarding the new trade agreement with Vietnam, and a 2012 agriculture agreement with Morocco.

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POLISH DEFENCE MINISTER 'TERRORISM' COMMENTS 'GROUNDLESS': KREMLIN

THENEWS.PL

Comments by Defence Minister Antoni Macierewicz suggesting the 2010 crash of a Polish presidential plane was caused by terrorism have been described as "groundless" by the Kremlin.

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EURO ZONE INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT RETURNS TO STRONG GROWTH IN JAN

EUROPA.EU

In January 2016 compared with December 2015, seasonally adjusted industrial production rose by 2.1% in the euro area (EA19) and by 1.7% in the EU28, according to estimates from Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union.

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UNDER-FIRE FRENCH GOVERNMENT WATERS DOWN LABOUR REFORMS

THELOCAL.FR

Under pressure from unions and student groups the French government has come up with a watered down version of its original labour reforms bill. The French government presented a watered-down version of its contested labour market reform on Monday and Prime Minister Manuel Valls appealed to unions to give it their backing.

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15 MARCH, 2016

THE AGENDA

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EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

- 9:00 **Committee on Foreign Affairs**. The agenda includes: Discussion with **Pavel Filip**, Prime Minister of Moldova - in association with the Delegation to the EU-Moldova Parliamentary Association Committee. 16:00 2015 Report on Turkey (adoption of amendments, rapporteur **Kati Piri**, S&D) (JAN - 2Q2).
- 9:00 **Special Committee on Tax Rulings and Other Measures Similar in Nature or Effect** (TAXE 2). The agenda includes: Discussions with representatives of Andorra, Liechtenstein and Monaco (ASP - 3E-2).
- 9:00 **Committee on International Trade**. The agenda includes: EU-Mercosur: The way forward in the Association Agreement's trade negotiations - adoption of question for oral answer. 15:00 Public hearing: Trade and economic relations with Latin America - Implementing the trade agreement with the Andean countries (PSH - 1A002).
- 9:00 **Committee on Budgetary Control**. The agenda includes: Partial renewal of members of the Court of Auditors - SK nominee '**Ladislav Balko**' (rapporteur **Igor Šoltes**, Verts/ALE) (ASP - 5G-3).
- 9:00 **Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection**. The agenda includes: Unfair trading practices in the food supply chain (consideration of amendments, rapporteur **Edward Czesak**, ECR), Non-Tariff Barriers in the Single Market (adoption of draft report by **Daniel Dalton**, ECR). 15:00 Public hearing: Control of the acquisition and possession of weapons (rapporteur **Vicky Ford**, ECR) (JAN - 6Q2).
- 9:00 **Committee on Transport and Tourism**. The agenda includes: European Union Agency for Railways and repeal of Regulation (vote on a draft recommendation for second reading, rapporteur **Roberts Zile**, ECR) (JAN - 4Q2).
- 9:00 **Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development**. The agenda includes: Discussion with Vytenis Andriukaitis, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, in the framework of the Structured Dialogue (PSH - 3C050).
- 9:00 **Committee on Culture and Education**. The agenda includes: Discussion with **Stefano Dominioni**, Director of the European Institute of Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe (ASP - 1G3).
- 9:00 **Committee on Legal Affairs**. The agenda includes: Request for waiver of the parliamentary immunity of **Hermann Winkler** (adoption of draft report by **Angel Dzhambazki**, ECR) (ASP - 5E2).
- 9:15 **Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs**. On the agenda: jointly with the PETI, the JURI and the AFCO in cooperation with the European Commission - Union Citizenship in Practice: Our common values, rights and democratic participation (JAN - 4Q1).
- 9:00 **Committee on Constitutional Affairs**. The agenda includes: Transfer to the General Court of the EU of jurisdiction at first instance in disputes between the Union and its servants (consideration of draft opinion by **Danuta Maria Hübner**, PPE) (PSH - 4B001).
- 9:00 **Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality**. The agenda includes: The fight against trafficking in human beings in the EU's external relations (rapporteur for the opinion **Catherine Bearder**, ALDE) (ASP - 3G2).
- **Conference of Presidents meets in Brussels**. The EP President **Martin Schulz**, the leaders of political groups and European Council President **Donald Tusk** will discuss the results of the 7 March **EU-Turkey Summit** and prepare the upcoming **EU Summit** (17-18 March).

COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

- 10:00 **General Affairs Council** holds on Brussels. The Council will prepare **the European Council on 17 and 18 March 2016** by discussing draft conclusions

covering notably migration. **Bert Koenders**, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands will chair the Council (Justus Lipsius building, Brussels).

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

- Yesterday the EU signed a reciprocal **short-stay visa waiver agreement with Peru**. The agreement has applied from 15 March 2016, allowing visa-free travel for Peruvian nationals to the EU for short stays of up to 90 days as well as for EU citizens travelling to Peru.
- Following a recent increase in contributions to support the country via **the EU Civil Protection Mechanism**, Greece will receive additional deliveries of aid this week to support refugees in the country.

WHO WHEN WHERE

- 17:30 New Direction launches a new report '**Boosting EU Trade with South East Asia**' (Renaissance Hotel Brussels).
- A three-day '**2016 Conference on big data from space**' starts in Auditorio de Tenerife, Spain.

TODAY CELEBRATING BIRTHDAYS



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S&D
(65)



Stefano MAULLU
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(54)