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THE HERALD

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MEPs debated on Wednesday the possible consequences of the UK referendum. Most MEPs said the country would be better off in the EU, while others insisted it would benefit from leaving.



HUNGARY TO HOLD REFERENDUM ON EU MIGRATION PLAN

EUOBSERVER.COM

Hungary will hold a referendum on European Union plans for a system of mandatory quotas, prime minister Viktor Orban said on Wednesday at a press conference.

Voters will be asked to answer the question: "Do you want the EU to be able, without the consent of the Parliament, to prescribe the mandatory settlement of non-Hungarian citizens into Hungary?". Orban did not specify when the plebiscite would be held.

The Hungarian prime minister said that nobody has asked the European people so far if they support, accept or reject the migrant quota system, which could fundamentally change their lives.

"You cannot make decisions over people's heads, against the will of the European people on issues that seriously affect their lives and that of future generations," he said, arguing it is a question of European democracy.

Orban also said the migrant quotas would redraw the ethnic, cultural and religious map of Hungary and Europe.

"The government is bowing to public sentiment. We feel that introducing resettlement quotas for migrants without the backing of the people amounts to an abuse of power," he argued.

The maverick PM said he would recommend holding a referendum in other countries as well.

Orban added that this is a fundamental and unavoidable question: "can anyone else decide for Hungarians who we Hungarians should or should not live with?"



SOCIALIST MEPS CAST DOUBT ON UK'S EU MIGRANT BENEFIT CURBS

EURACTIV.COM



Members of the European Parliament yesterday cast doubt on Prime Minister David Cameron's deal to curb EU migrant benefits, raising the possibility of voting down the emergency brake after the 23 June referendum on Britain's membership of the bloc.

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EU REFORMS CANNOT BE REVERSED, DONALD TUSK SAYS

BBC.COM



The package of reforms negotiated by David Cameron cannot be reversed by European judges, according to the EU Council president Donald Tusk. It comes after Justice Secretary Michael Gove told the European Court of Justice could throw out some measures without EU treaty change.

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GREEK PM PLEDGES TO FIGHT AUSTRIAN-LED BORDER SHUTDOWN

EKATHIMERINI.COM

Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras threatened Wednesday to reject European Union agreements if other countries continue to take action that would lead to refugees and migrants becoming trapped in Greece.

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GERMANY, AFGHANISTAN WORK TOGETHER TO RETURN REFUGEES TO KABUL

REUTERS.COM

A chartered airplane carrying 125 Afghan refugees back from Germany landed in Kabul on Wednesday, with officials on hand eager to assure the returnees that they have a future in Afghanistan.

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STOLTENBERG: DIALOGUE IS NOT A SIGN OF WEAKNESS. DIALOGUE IS A SIGN OF SELF-CONFIDENCE

ECRGROUP.EU

At the Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) the 23rd of February, NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, emphasized the importance of NATO's role in the current refugee crisis, especially in the areas of the Aegean Sea, Turkey, Greece, and Syria.

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SPAIN'S SOCIALISTS ANNOUNCE POLITICAL DEAL WITH CENTRIST CIUDADANOS PARTY

DW.COM

Nearly ten weeks after elections in Spain, the country's Socialists have announced a deal with the centrist Ciudadanos party. The political stalemate in the country is far from over, however.

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EU BANKING WATCHDOG REVEALS 2016 STRESS TEST SCENARIOS

FT.COM

Banks across the EU will be tested to see if they could survive the perfect storm of an emerging market shock, stagnant profitability and increasingly unmanageable public and private sector debt.

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25 FEBRUARY, 2016

THE AGENDA

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EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

- 9:00 **the plenary session continues in Brussels**. On the agenda: DEBATES: Activities of the European Ombudsman in 2014 (rapporteur **Soledad Cabezón Ruiz**, S&D), Tobacco agreement (PMI agreement) - oral questions. 11:30 VOTES followed by explanations of votes: Authorisation for Austria to sign and ratify, and Malta to accede to, the Hague Convention of 15 November 1965 (rapporteur **Viktor Uspaskich**, ALDE), EC-San Marino Agreement providing for measures on taxation of savings income in the form of interest payments (rapporteur **Cora van Nieuwenhuizen**, ALDE), Accession of Croatia to the Conventions on the protection of the EC financial interests (rapporteur **Tomáš Zdechovský**, EPP), European network of Employment Services, workers' access to mobility services and the further integration of labour (rapporteur **Heinz K. Becker**, EPP), Introduction of emergency autonomous trade measures for Tunisia (rapporteur **Marielle de Sarnez**, ALDE), Mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund: application EGF/2015/007 BE/Hainaut-Namur Glass (rapporteur **Tomáš Zdechovský**, EPP), European Semester for economic policy coordination: Annual Growth Survey 2016 (rapporteur **Maria João Rodrigues**, S&D), European Semester for economic policy coordination: employment and social aspects in the Annual Growth Survey 2016 (rapporteur **Sofia Ribeiro**, EPP), Single Market governance within the European Semester 2016 (rapporteur **Catherine Stihler**, S&D), Opening of negotiations for an EU-Tunisia Free Trade Agreement, Activities of the European Ombudsman in 2014 (rapporteur **Soledad Cabezón Ruiz**, S&D), European Central Bank annual report for 2014 (rapporteur **Notis Marias**, ECR), Opening of FTA negotiations with Australia and New Zealand - motions for resolutions, Introduction of compatible systems for the registration of pet animals across Member States - motions for resolutions, Humanitarian situation in Yemen - motions for resolutions.
- Eight years after the start of the economic crisis, recovery in the European Union is still weak and uneven, with member states struggling to put their debts under control and unemployment still too high. MEPs discuss the challenges during a plenary debate on the **annual cycle of economic policy coordination** within the EU.

COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

- 10:00 **Justice and Home Affairs Council** takes place in Brussels. The Council will aim to reach a general approach on **the proposed regulation to reinforce checks against relevant databases at external borders**. Ministers will also discuss the proposal for a European border and coast guard, presented by the Commission in December 2015 (Justus Lipsius Building, Brussels).

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

- Yesterday, the College held an orientation debate on **the economic and social challenges of Member States**, on the progress they made in addressing their 2015 country specific recommendations and in tackling macroeconomic imbalances.
- The College of Commissioners yesterday held an orientation debate on **the way forward for VAT in the EU**. The Commission plans to put forward an Action Plan on this issue in March.
- Yesterday, the EU and China formally launched the **EU-China Aviation Partnership Project**, a cooperation programme in the field of civil aviation. It will be jointly implemented by the **European Aviation Safety Agency** and the **Civil Aviation Administration of China**.

COURT OF JUSTICE OF THE EU

- The Court held **that adidas** may oppose the registration, as a Community mark, of parallel stripes placed on the side of sports shoes (C-396/15 P).
- The Court dismisses the action brought by **Coca-Cola** seeking registration of a contour bottle without fluting as a Community trade mark. According to the Court the mark sought is devoid of distinctive character (T-411/14).

WHO WHEN WHERE

- 9:40 the **'Digital4EU Conference 2016'** starts in Brussels. Commissioner for Digital Economy & Society **Günther Oettinger** gives a keynote speech there.
- 10:30 **'2016 European Social Innovation Competition'** is held in Amsterdam. The launch event is organised in partnership with the City of Amsterdam. The event will introduce this year's theme: social innovation for refugees and migrants.
- **'Conference CEPS Ideas Lab'** holds on Brussels. The Ideas Lab brings together about 500 high-level participants, half of them come from outside Brussels, including several delegates from third countries (in particular the United States, China and Canada).

TODAY CELEBRATING BIRTHDAYS



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(53)



Béla KOVÁCS
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