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# THE HERALD

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## BRUSSELS PLANS RADICAL ASYLUM OVERHAUL

FT.COM

Brussels will propose centralising control of asylum claims in the EU as part of a radical overhaul of refugee policy in response to Europe's biggest migration crisis since the second world war.

News of the sweeping initiative from the European Commission risks inflaming Eurosceptic sentiment in Britain ahead of the EU referendum in June, with critics likely to see it as a further power grab by Brussels.

The commission has gone to great pains to hold back new rules that could alienate British voters. But the commission's decision to present its asylum initiative ahead of a summit of EU leaders on March 17 is a measure of how concerns over migration have trumped concerns about Brexit in Brussels – a reality that UK officials faced repeatedly during Mr Cameron's "new settlement" negotiation last year.

The commission is examining ways to overhaul the bloc's rules on who is responsible for asylum claims after the system collapsed amid an influx of 1.3m applications in 2015.

Under the current system, known as the "Dublin regulation", refugees have to claim asylum in the first EU country they enter. That heaps pressure on the countries at the EU's borders, such as Greece and Italy, but shields others that are further away. The Dublin rule fell into disarray when Angela Merkel opted not to enforce it last autumn, triggering a rush of people trying to reach Germany.

According to draft reform options seen by the Financial Times, responsibility for all asylum claims could be shifted to the European Asylum Support Office.

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The meeting of EU heads of state or government is being held with Turkey in Brussels today. It is devoted to the refugee crisis.



## SLOVAK PM FICO WINS ELECTION BUT FACES TOUGH TASK TO FORM MAJORITY

REUTERS.COM



Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico won Saturday's parliamentary election, nearly complete results showed, but gains by opposition parties including the far right will make it very hard if not impossible to form a new government. If Fico fails to put together a government led by his leftist Smer party, a group of center-right parties could try to form a broad but possibly unstable anti-Fico coalition, a repeat of the 2010 election.

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## TWICE AS MANY TORY LOCAL CHAIRMEN BACK BREXIT THAN STAYING IN EU

TELEGRAPH.CO.UK



Almost twice as many Conservative local chairmen will vote to leave the European Union than stay in, according to the most extensive survey of Tory grassroots since the referendum. Full scale of grassroots rebellion revealed as survey shows 42 per cent of constituency Tory chairmen want to leave the EU while just 24 want to stay, BBC survey reveals.

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## EUROSTAT: RECORD NUMBER OF OVER 1.2 MILLION FIRST TIME ASYLUM SEEKERS REGISTERED IN 2015

EUROPA.EU

In 2015, 1 255 600 first time asylum seekers applied for international protection in the Member States of the European Union, a number more than double that of the previous year. The number of Syrians seeking international protection has doubled in 2015 compared with the previous year to reach 362 800, while the number of Afghans has almost quadrupled to 178 200 and that of Iraqis has multiplied by 7 to 121 500. They represent the three main citizenships of first time asylum applicants in the EU Member States in 2015.

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## COMMISSION AWARDS €3.5 MILLION IN EMERGENCY FUNDING TO GREECE

EUROPA.EU

The European Commission has awarded €3.5 million in emergency funding to Greece. The funding will help cover the running costs for human resources in the First Reception Centres that will be set up on the Greek islands of Kos, Lesbos, Samos, Chios and Leros. The money comes from the Internal Security Fund and should strengthen Greece's capacity to effectively manage the unprecedented migratory flows into the country.

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## EU ANNOUNCED FIRST PROJECTS UNDER THE FACILITY FOR REFUGEES IN TURKEY

EUROPA.EU

On Friday, the European Commission announced the first projects under the Facility for Refugees in Turkey, pledging €55 million to address the immediate needs of Syrian school-children in Turkey for access to formal education, and €40 million in humanitarian aid through the World Food Programme working in close cooperation with the Turkish Red Crescent.

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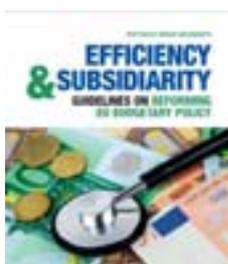


## COMMISSION PROPOSES ROADMAP FOR RESTORING FULLY FUNCTIONING SCHENGEN SYSTEM

EUROPA.EU

On Friday, the Commission presented a detailed Roadmap of the concrete steps needed to return order to the management of the EU's external and internal borders. The European Council of 18-19 February set the clear mandate of restoring the normal functioning of the Schengen area, and to do so in a concerted manner, while giving full support to Member States facing difficult circumstances.

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## MEPS PUBLISH A BLUEPRINT FOR EU BUDGETARY REFORM

ECRGROUP.EU

The ECR Policy Group on Budgets has published a paper setting out reform proposals that would make the EU budget better able to meet the challenges of the future. Three MEPs from the policy group - Bernd Kölmel (DE), Anders Vistisen (DK), and Richard Sulik (SK) produced the guidelines that aim to deliver a better balanced budget, with money targeted on solving the EU's challenges, rather than simply building on the status quo.

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7 MARCH, 2016

# THE AGENDA

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## EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

- 9:30 Parliament President **Martin Schulz** meets Turkey's Prime Minister **Ahmet Davutoglu** first in a bilateral, and then, at 11:00, together with European Council President **Donald Tusk** and European Commission President **Jean-Claude Juncker**.
- 17:00 **the plenary session starts in Strasbourg**. On the final draft agenda: Resumption of session and order of business, Aid scheme for the supply of fruit and vegetables, bananas and milk in the educational establishments (report by **Marc Tarabella**, S&D), Animal health (recommendation for second reading **Jasenko Selimovic**, ALDE), Market access to port services and financial transparency of ports (report by **Knut Fleckenstein**, S&D), Annual report 2014 on the Protection of the EU's financial interests - Fight against fraud (report by **Benedek Jávor**, Greens/EFA), Towards a thriving data-driven economy - oral questions. Short presentation of the following report: Gender mainstreaming in the work of the European Parliament (report by **Angelika Mlinar**, ALDE). One-minute speeches.
- 21:00 **Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development**. On the agenda: Discussion with **Phil Hogan**, Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, on the state of play of the situation on the agricultural markets (Strasbourg, LOW - N1.3).

## EUROPEAN COUNCIL

- At the European Council of 18-19 February, leaders agreed to organise a **special meeting with Turkey**. The full and speedy implementation of the EU-Turkey action plan remains a priority, in order to stem migration flows and tackle networks of traffickers and smugglers. On 24 February, **President Tusk** announced that the meeting with Prime Minister **Ahmet Davutoglu** will be held on 7 March in Brussels. It will be followed at 15.00 by a **meeting of the members of the European Council**. EU leaders will discuss with Prime Minister Davutoglu their cooperation on migration. Even if there is progress to report on a number of actions in the EU-Turkey Action Plan, the number of illegal entries from Turkey to Greece remains far too high.

## COUNCIL OF THE EU

- 9:30 the **Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council** meets in Brussels. The Council will hold a policy debate on the 2016 European Semester exercise. Ministers will adopt the joint employment report as well as conclusions dealing with this report and the annual growth survey. They are also expected to reach a general approach on a decision on the employment guidelines of the member states. The Council will hold a policy debate on the new skills agenda that the Commission will probably submit to the Council at the end of this semester. It will also take note of the state of play about the labour mobility package. Ministers will also be called on to endorse the key messages on the implementation of the youth guarantee. The Commission and the Presidency will inform the Council on the latest developments on relaunching the social dialogue at European level. The Council will be invited to adopt the conclusions on equality.
- 15:00 the **Eurogroup** meets in Brussels. The Eurogroup will exchange views on the ongoing implementation of Greece's economic adjustment programme, focusing on the reforms required for the successful completion of the first review. The Eurogroup will discuss the Cyprus programme, financed by the European Stability Mechanism. The Eurogroup will hold a follow-up debate on the implementation of the draft budgetary plans for 2016 and will explore the possibility of making further use of benchmarking in the context of its regular thematic discussions. Ministers will continue the discussion on the transparency of Eurogroup meetings.

## EUROPEAN COMMISSION

- The European Commission has proposed for the European Union to **ratify the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention**, a comprehensive international treaty on combatting violence against women and domestic violence.
- The European Investment Fund and Fondo di Garanzia per le PMI have signed a COSME counter-guarantee agreement to provide €1 billion of financing to 20,000 SMEs in Italy. This transaction benefits from the support of the European Fund for Strategic Investments, the heart of the Investment Plan for Europe.

## WHO WHEN WHERE

- The Netherlands EU Presidency 2016 hosts a two-day conference " **Crossing Borders: Jurisdiction in Cyberspace**" (Europe Building, Amsterdam).

## TODAY CELEBRATING BIRTHDAY



**Julie WARD**  
S&D  
(59)