

#TRENDY THURSDAY

EUROPEAN UNION

Germany to start checks at Polish, Czech border despite fierce opposition

Germany's interior ministry is planning to reintroduce border controls with Poland and the Czech Republic as a measure to combat irregular migration. Critics argue that random checks would be more effective and that the issue should be addressed at the EU level. Business groups are also concerned that border controls could disrupt trade and cause economic damage. This issue may be discussed at the EU summit of interior ministers, as other EU countries have implemented similar internal checks.

ENVIRONMENT

EU's controversial packaging waste law facing delays

The Parliament is facing delays in overhauling packaging rules aimed at increasing sustainability and reducing waste. The draft Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation, proposed in November, has divided the Parliament, with left-leaning members pushing for more environmental ambition and those on the right advocating caution. There are concerns that time constraints before the 2024 elections could lead to a rushed, less effective law. Industry and environmental groups are worried about potential exemptions and delays, calling for a swift and credible set of rules for the packaging sector.

DEFENSE

Chinese hackers stole emails from US State Department in Microsoft breach

Chinese hackers, breached Microsoft's email platform, stealing around 60,000 emails from 10 U.S. State Department accounts. Nine of the compromised accounts were related to East Asia and the Pacific, while one dealt with Europe. The breach has raised concerns about Microsoft's role in providing IT services to the U.S. government, prompting the State Department to adopt measures like multi-factor authentication. The hackers gained access through a compromised Microsoft engineer's device. The incident has further strained U.S.-China relations, with China denying involvement.

ENERGY

EU looking to invest massively in electricity storage

"The Commission emphasizes the urgent need for substantial investment in electricity storage to support the green transition. The transition to renewable energy requires effective storage solutions since electricity from wind and solar sources cannot be stored at scale like fossil fuels. The Commission has recognized the current lack of resources devoted to energy storage and advocates for increased attention to this issue. Polish electricity company Tauron proposes the creation of a European energy storage bank as a means to incentivize investment in this crucial sector.

ENERGY

European governments agree to soften Euro7 car emissions rules

The Council have agreed to work on easing the conditions and implementation timeline for the "Euro 7" regulation aimed at reducing vehicle emissions. This decision comes in response to challenges faced by the automotive industry. The EU ministers have proposed delaying the implementation of these regulations from the original 2025 to 2027 for cars and 2029 for trucks. However, the overall emissions reduction goals and the ban on the sale of combustion engine vehicles by 2035 remain intact. The next steps involve negotiations with the European Parliament to finalize the regulations.

HEALTH

Green MEP advocates for keeping paper medicine leaflets

The Commission's proposed pharmaceutical strategy will allow member states to choose whether drug package leaflets are in paper format, electronic, or both. However, concerns have been raised by MEP Tilly Metz that relying solely on electronic leaflets may jeopardize patient safety. Concerns about the potential misuse of digital leaflets for commercial purposes have also been raised. While some see environmental benefits in QR codes, Metz argues that the overall environmental impact must be considered, including the energy needed for servers and smartphones, as well as continued paper use for those requesting it.