



Christos Doukeridis State Secretary of the Brussels Region for housing

For the next four years, the Brussels Region will be governed by 8 ministers under the presidency of Charles Picqui.

Christos Doukeridis (Ecolo) State Secretary of the Brussels Region responsible for housing and urban planning

Christos Doukeridis

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Of Greek Ancestry (from Rhodes), he was born in Brussels in 1968. Passionate with politics and their parliamentary aspect since 12 years old, he was interested in communication, social structures, journalism and cinema. He, a child of immigrant workers of Belgium, his father was a miner before turning to free-lance, he has wandered between economic-political sciences and law, without ever receiving a degree on any. Self-taught in politics, - he started as a secretary to the office of a parliament member of the Greens - he is at the top of the Ecological Movement and at the age of 31 he becomes a parliament member. Vice-president of the Parliament of Francophones at 1999, President of it since 2000 and leader of the Ecologists at Belgium's Parliament.

Fire evacuates 70 holidaymakers from Greek beach

ATHENS (Reuters) - Greek rescue boats and fire fighters evacuated about 70 holidaymakers trapped on a beach on the Ionian island of Zakynthos as a fire raged nearby, the merchant marine ministry said Sunday. Three coastguard boats carried around 20 people, mainly women and children, to safety on board a bigger vessel, while dozens of fire fighters opened the way through the flames for the rest to return to their cars. "We rescued them," said a merchant marine ministry official who declined to be named. "We transferred 20 people on a vessel and fire fighters helped the rest walk through the fire."

The official said no injuries or breathing problems had been reported although there was thick smoke in the area. Nine fire trucks and 30 fire fighters battled the blaze for more than three hours. The cause of the fire was unknown. Forest fires, mostly triggered by high temperatures, drought or arson, are frequent in Greece during the summer.

More than 320 fires have burnt large swathes of forest land across the country this week, so far without any loss of life or damage to homes.

Greek entrepreneur announces Bulgaria Coffee Shop plans

Greek entrepreneur Vassilis Mouchtaris has announced plans to open 30 coffee shops and develop shopping centres across Bulgaria by 2012, as part of his business expansion plans.

The outlets will be developed through Mouchtaris' local firms Welcome Holdings and Vita Mi Holdings, kamcity.com reported.

Welcome Holdings will develop coffee shops both under its own brand and as a franchisee of Canadian chain Coffee Time, which operates 450 outlets across the world. The 30 outlets are expected to generate sales of EUR 8-10 M in three years.

The first two outlets will be opened in the city of Varna in summer 2010, with another three-four outlets to open there later, followed by 10 outlets in the capital Sofia.

Mouchtaris added that he plans to use the Bulgarian chain of coffee shops as a springboard to enter the neighbouring Turkish market.

Meanwhile, Vita Mi Holdings plans to develop at least three shopping centres with a gross leasable area of at least 55 000 sq.m. each. The firm is currently in talks to buy four to six hectares of land in Sofia where it plans to build its first shopping centre.

Mediterranean rim battles to contain wildfires

Firefighters battled blazes in five countries along the northern Mediterranean rim Sunday, slowly gaining the upper hand after an exhausting week that left eight people dead.

Tens of thousands of hectares of countryside have been devastated mainly in Italy, Spain, France and Greece with initial estimates suggesting that the insurance bill may already run into hundreds of millions of euros

New fires were sparked Sunday in some of the worst hit areas, but also in Croatia, with the latest again blamed on arson following recriminations over criminal fire-starting elsewhere.

On the scorched Italian island of Sardinia, as many as 25,000 hectares (60,000 acres) have been razed by a flaming inferno fanned by high temperatures and an extra-strong Mistral, a fast and dry northerly wind.

Firefighters had extinguished late Sunday four fires that had earlier been burning on the island, a spokesman for Italy's civil protection corps said.

Indeed, since 6:00 am (0400 GMT) on Sunday, his teams had been called out on 17 occasions to fight wildfires -



- down from some 40 call-outs on Saturday.

Sardinia remained the Italian hotspot, with the damage there alone estimated at 80 million euros (115 million dollars).

Ten specialist water-dropping planes, including two Canadairs sent in by the European Union, were trying to douse flames with volunteers helping to rake through the embers of destroyed local livelihoods.

Amid the devastation, there have also been recriminations with mourners in Sardinia, where a shepherd and a farmer were killed trying to protect their animals, blaming some of its blazes on criminals and vandals.

"It is unacceptable that in our region there are still criminal minds capable of such acts," said the head of the Sardinian region, Ugo Cappellacci, at the funeral of one of the victims on Saturday.

In Spain, dozens of firefighters backed by two water-dropping aircraft were battling a blaze that broke out Sunday on farmland near the airport at Palma de Mallorca in the Balearic Islands, local officials said.

The wildfire was threatening several homes but did not disrupt air travel at the airport, Spain's third-busiest in terms of passenger traffic, they said.

Six firefighters have already died in Spain tackling infernos that changed course with sudden ferocity. The interior ministry said earlier that officials remained on maximum alert with about 20,000 hectares reduced to smouldering earth this past week.

In Croatia, the island of Ciovo, off

the coastal town of Split, was the latest to be hit. Firefighters said some 200 hectares of woodland had already gone up in flames. Once again, they suspected arson.

In France, where a French Foreign Legion officer was charged on Saturday with "involuntary fire-starting" over a blaze that reached the gates of Marseille, firefighters said the Mistral was easing.

The 43-year-old soldier -- just back from Afghanistan and responsible for the release of tracer rounds in training that sparked the blaze -- was released on bail, but left contemplating potential ignominy after 23 years in the world-famous regiment.

On the French island of Corsica, which practically touches Sardinia, two suspected arsonists, who have been remanded in custody and charged, were to be questioned by a magistrate on Monday, prosecutor general Paul Michel told AFP.

"The two farmers, aged 24 and 21, admitted to setting five blazes in three villages in the Rapale area," he said after police arrested the pair on Friday and Saturday after a tip-off.

A third suspect, arrested earlier, is still in custody.

Also on the island, a firefighter sustained an eye injury Sunday battling a blaze that had been raging near the southern village of Aullene since Thursday.

Meanwhile in Greece, firefighters were trying to put out three forest blazes in the south of the country amid high temperatures and strong winds.