



PEOPLE'S NEWS

News Digest of the People's Movement

www.people.ie | post@people.ie | facebook.com/peoplesmovementireland

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EU Rapid Deployment Capacity (EU RDC) approved – a (for now) mini-EU Army

Below: The Chairman of the EU Military Committee, inspecting an Eastern Command guard of honour in Dublin, on April 18th.



This EU military instrument for rapid reaction to crises would consist of up to 5000 troops and should reach full operational capability by 2025 at the latest. In a resolution adopted on April 18th MEPs supported the proposal to establish the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity (EU RDC).

This force, consisting of up to 5000 troops, with 'land, air and maritime' units would be deployed quickly to intervene anywhere in world and "should significantly improve our security and defence capacities for acting outside EU territory". The RDC would be designed to reflect the new geopolitical context and to "respond decisively... in order to assert itself as a credible security and defense actor". The plan is to start exercising this year and to reach full operational capability by 2025 at the latest. [Read this](#) and then decide for yourself whether we are well on the way to an EU Army.

No doubt but that the outcome of this summer's National Consultative Forum on Ireland's security policy will be directed towards facilitating Irish participation in this mini-EU Army. We would then be able to engage in neo-imperialist adventures with the former colonial EU members – up there with the worst of them!

[Read more here](#)



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The Triple lock



The requirements of the “triple lock” were formally set out in Ireland’s national declaration associated with the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty.

<https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2013-07-17/225/>

The ‘Solemn Declaration’ appended to the Lisbon Treaty does not have legally binding value, but is a restatement of EU policies as set out in that treaty and the existing treaties.

[Read more here](#)

April protest against EU militarisation



Eddie Cowman, Matt Carthy TD, Brian Campfield, Former President ICTU, Niall Farrell, Galway Alliance against War (GAAW), Mairead Farrell TD and Paul Murphy TD, at our April protest. The next protest will be held on May 17th.

National Consultative Forum



With this summer’s National Consultative Forum on Ireland’s security policy in view and an eye on a big job in Brussels, Tánaiste Micheál Martin has signalled support for dropping the ‘triple lock’ policy for deploying the Defence Forces overseas saying it is “morally wrong”

that an authoritarian power has a “de facto veto” over how Ireland reacts to international situations.

The forum will consider the triple lock, the system whereby any major Irish troop deployment abroad for peacekeeping or European Union missions requires the approval of the Government and the Dáil and a United Nations resolution.

Fine Gael has always favoured joining NATO and want an end to the triple lock. They highlight the ability of countries such as Russia – a permanent member of the UN Security Council – to veto potential Defence Forces missions, conveniently ignoring the fact that any other member of the Council such as China, Britain or the US could also exercise a veto.

[More details here](#)

PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT GLUISEACHT AN PHOBAIL



The next monthly protest against EU
Militarisation will be held on Wednesday 17th
May at Dáil Eireann, Kildare St. commencing at
1:00pm.

No to an EU army!

Withdraw from PESCO now!

Try to get along, if only for a short period.

The Pentagon leak and Ireland: what's the story?



While the analysis of the recent Pentagon leak has concentrated on the war in Ukraine, among the documents was a summary of EU government responses to Ukraine's requests for military training and lethal aid – weaponry. [Reuters reported](#) on a chart that divided the responses to the requests into four categories: a commitment to provide training and lethal aid; those that had already provided either or both, and those with the military ability and political will “to provide future lethal aid”.

Austria and Malta scored a “No” under the four headings and were the only countries to do so. So what about neutral Ireland? The government says that we are providing humanitarian aid but it would appear that the experts in the Pentagon take a different view. The only possibility is that Ireland has provided training or lethal aid, has trained military personnel or has indicated a willingness to do so.

Isn't it time we got the full story?

Smoking gun – the tobacco lobby



EU Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly found multiple instances of “maladministration” in the Commission's handling of meetings with tobacco lobbyists, based on a [preliminary inquiry](#) out this week.

Meeting with tobacco lobbyists isn't banned, but it's considerably restricted under the global [Framework Convention for Tobacco Control](#). The industry isn't allowed to push for things that would undermine anti-smoking policies. Yet discussions about things like packaging, taxes and illegal trade don't necessarily fall under this prohibition.

The “absence of a whole-of-Commission approach” is O'Reilly's first complaint, outlined in a [letter](#) to Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and published by *Politico*. The “failure to keep and make available minutes on all of the Commission's meetings with tobacco interest representatives,” is a further bone of contention. O'Reilly gave the Commission three months to reply to her preliminary inquiry.

EU mulls coordinated ECT withdrawal



The EU Commission appears to have shifted its strategy on the Energy Charter Treaty (ECT). This follows from the failure in the Council of a proposed reform of the Treaty, last November.

According to a recently leaked non-paper, the Commission now prefers a coordinated withdrawal of the EU and all EU member states from the treaty without prior adoption of the proposed reform. The Commission views a partial withdrawal of some member states, or a withdrawal with prior adoption of the reform, as having serious implications for an EU harmonized approach to energy and investment policy.

Meanwhile, seven member states have either announced or already notified their withdrawal. Discussions in the Council on how to limit the adverse effects of the treaty's 20-year sunset clause through a so-called *inter se* agreement among withdrawing states are currently ongoing. A draft of this agreement was published last year. You can sign the Uplift petition here: [Ireland must exit the Energy Charter Treaty | Uplift](#)

Parliament's budget



MEPs have approved a €2.4 **billion** annual internal budget for the Parliament in 2024. In 2024, the budget will be 6 percent higher, as €9.5 million will be spent on a campaign to get voters to turn out in the EU election and there'll be salary rises for staff indexed to inflation. And, rental costs will mount up due to the Parliament's "Europa Experience." Its plan to build permanent exhibitions about the EU in prime locations in every member country capital city is behind-schedule. There are nineteen to go.

The Swiss stick to their guns!



The German Chancellor has criticised the Swiss government over their neutrality. Because of their long-standing policy, the Swiss are blocking German delivery of Swiss manufactured ammunition for the Gepard anti-aircraft tank, to Ukraine. "It is clear that neutrality is always an issue in Switzerland," Swiss President Berset said, in response.

"Neutrality means that Switzerland does not support either side militarily, Berset said. Given that Switzerland is also the place where the Geneva Convention was struck and where UN bodies and the international Red Cross were located, "this is also a question of credibility", he added. Switzerland continues to stand fast on neutrality.

Is Mercosur on shaky ground?



There was delight in Brussels when Lula replaced Bolsonaro as Brazilian president earlier this year, as it was considered an opportunity to wrap up the Mercosur trade deal. Lula had been an advocate of the deal but now, the EU is “concerned about Brazil’s position on Russia’s war on Ukraine and Brazil’s lack of delivery on climate and environment,” according to a briefing to EU foreign affairs ministers.

The document states that in “our engagement with third countries, we find ourselves in a competitive geopolitical environment: not only a battle of narratives but also a battle of offers. Moving ahead on the EU-Mercosur agreement will be of key importance,” the document reads. “But the EU will also need to increase investments in energy, digital and sustainable value chains.”

China is already by far Brazil’s biggest trading partner, and has invested billions in the country’s energy grid and agri-food industry. Lula’s recent remarks when he said that he would drop the dollar to trade in Yuan with China - reflected China’s dominance. The EU chief trade negotiator Rupert Schlegelmilch is currently on a trip to Argentina to try to advance talks on Mercosur. It’s a sign that the EU, after 20 years of negotiations has concluded that it may be the last chance to wrap up this deal with the emerging economic powers in South America and the possibility suddenly seems elusive.

The Commission in Court



Environmental groups have taken the EU Commission to court after it rejected their request to withdraw fossil gas from the EU’s sustainable finance taxonomy. Last year, the Commission gave gas power plants a ‘sustainable’ label under the EU’s green finance taxonomy, if they meet a strict CO2 emissions threshold.

That decision was challenged by four environmental groups who started legal action in September to stop the inclusion of fossil gas in the bloc’s sustainable finance rulebook, arguing that the legislation ignores the EU’s obligations under the Paris Agreement. However, in February the Commission rejected their request, and the NGOs are now challenging this decision by filing a case with the Court of Justice of the EU

A separate case at the EU Court of Justice against the inclusion of gas and nuclear in the taxonomy regulation has also been filed by Greenpeace. In September, Greenpeace organisations from eight countries asked the EU to review its decision, but their request was also rejected.

EU – NATO cooperation



[Here you can read](#) a transcript of a public hearing in the EU parliament on EU – NATO cooperation.

And, global expenditure on peacemaking....?



Total global military expenditure increased by 3.7 per cent in real terms in 2022, to reach a new high of \$2240 billion. Military expenditure in Europe saw its steepest year-on-year increase in at least 30 years. It soaring 13 percent last year to reach 345 billion dollars. That means the bloc is the world's second-largest arms purchaser, far ahead of China but spending less than half that of the US.

The three largest spenders in 2022—the United States, China and Russia—accounted for 56 per cent of the world total, according to new data on global military spending [published](#) by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

Could the EU be putting your medical records at risk?



use of health data

Last May, the EU Commission proposed the [European Health Data Space](#) (EHDS) in order to streamline the ways in which people's sensitive medical data is made available for various kinds of uses. Now, The Irish Council for Civil Liberties has [identified a number of problems](#) with the proposed secondary

use of health data

Your medical records include details of physical, mental and sexual health, drug and alcohol history, and any family and work-related problems that you thought you'd disclosed in confidence to your physician. But the EHDS does not foresee patients being asked for their permission and it does not include a right to object to this data sharing.

[Read more here](#)

Come fly with me



EU Council President Charles Michel was on the defensive following a [report](#) in *Le Monde* that he'd spent more than €400,000 on a single private jet flight to China. "By attacking me, you are attacking the institution and its 3,000 civil servants who work sincerely at the heart of the EU, with high standards in terms of governance," he said, arrogantly portraying himself as the institutions.

Michel routinely uses private jets, which are up to **14 times more polluting for each passenger than commercial flights**, for his trips to the European parliament's second seat in Strasbourg, with costs ranging from €1,283 to €9,049 for his return-trip ticket.

But those officials also seem to have the travel bug! It transpires that officials from the EU Commission's competition department had their travel costs paid for by others for 150 missions last year. The risk that staff took paid-for trips from firms that may be working for companies the Commission is investigating, must cast doubt on the impartiality of the Commission's antitrust unit, DG Competition.

The EU arrives in Niger



The German government has paved the way for German troops' participation in an EU military mission in Niger. Germany intends to deploy up to 60 soldiers to Niger, one of the poorest countries in Africa, as part of an EU operation designed to support the government in Niamey in the build-up of its forces. Could this be the first location for deployment of Irish troops if the triple lock is abolished?

The EU decided in December to set up a three-year military mission to Niger. Some 50-100 European troops at first, and up to 300 at a later stage, are to help the country (government) improve its logistics and infrastructure. Last November, Berlin decided to pull out its troops from the UN mission in Mali by May 2024, following France and other European nations such as Britain. However, Irish troops remain.

With friends like these, who needs enemies?



A recent EU/Norway fishing deal, agreed ironically on St Patrick's Day, allows Norway to catch 4.5 times the Irish blue whiting quota in Ireland's Exclusive Economic Zone. Norway has been allocated an extra 36,000 Metric Tonnes (MT) of blue whiting in the Irish EEZ, compared to just 4,800MT extra blue whiting for Ireland.

After Brexit; Norway was excluded from UK waters. That brought them into Irish waters to fish their blue whiting quota. The Trade and Co-operation Agreement between the UK and EU arising from Brexit had led to the transfer of quota to the UK; 40% of this came from Ireland, far more than was taken by any other EU Member. Norway's increased fishing off our coast thus exacerbated an already grave situation.

[Read more here](#)

Von der Leyen in the spotlight again



A Belgian lobbyist has filed a complaint directly against EU Commission President von der Leyen before a Belgian court in a case that could have her immunity lifted and text messages exchanged with Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla examined. Von der Leyen and Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla came under suspicion of having directly negotiated a €1.8 billion contract extension for additional doses to EU countries via text messages.

The judge must investigate and cannot say that the complaint is inadmissible, meaning the judge may have to ask for the waiver of von der Leyen's immunity in order to carry out the investigation. Von der Leyen "is accused of 'usurpation of functions and title', 'destruction of public documents' and 'illegal taking of interests and corruption'. There is also an ongoing investigation by the EU Public Prosecutor's Office."

O'Reilly doesn't rest



The EU Ombudsman has called on the Commission to offer more transparency on the role of external experts who approve projects under the €8 billion European Defence Fund. It has yet to respond to [a letter from O'Reilly](#), asking how the Commission can respect the EU's code of conduct and safeguard against conflicts of interest that may arise from such experts. The ombudsman pointed out that these experts' names are nowhere to be found — which undermines public scrutiny and prevents conflicts of interests being identified. [The ombudsman's annual report](#) has also been published.

O'Reilly has also highlighted the declining interest of journalists in von der Leyen's mysterious text messages on vaccine purchases with Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla. "VDL is out there, she's a public figure [...] but there has never been an opportunity to ask her directly: 'what about the text messages? I noticed that there was an interview with her in the Financial Times, where the text messages weren't even mentioned.'"

The US and EU sign new military co-operation agreement



The US Department of Defense (DoD) and the EU Defence Agency (EDA) have formalised a framework for military co-operation through the signing of an [administrative agreement \(AA\)](#) on 26 April last. The AA follows the statement by Borrell, the EDA chief, in which he [called for a greater European naval presence in the Taiwan strait](#), in order for the EU to contribute deterrence efforts against China.

The EDA-DoD AA provides for stronger transatlantic cooperation in defense in specific areas, including in the exchange of information. The two parties agreed to a framework of greater institutional integration. There will be invitations for the DoD to attend relevant meetings of EDA's steering board, and for the EDA to attend meetings convened by the DoD as appropriate.

Activities of co-operation include consultations on the impact of EU registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals (REACH) regulation; military mobility; supply chain issues; and the impact of climate change on defence. It also allows for DoD participation in the open session of European defence standardisation committee.

Yerra, we don't want to be neutral; Green Party TD.



Brian Leddin Green Party TD, speaking in the Dáil supporting an end to neutrality; "The Irish people don't want to be neutral. And we are not neutral, just as we are not militarily aligned. We're Celts." Yerra, that's the Greens in government for you!

You can watch him here: <https://t.co/YrQH47mRIX>"

And yes, it's the same Leddin who recently made inappropriate [sexist comments in a WhatsApp group](#).

