



# People's News

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## **People's Movement participates in campaign for radical changes in EU fisheries policy.**

Following a conference in Dublin, fishing groups from England, France, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and the Republic of Ireland along with the People's Movement, have formed an alliance to campaign for radical changes in current European Union fishing policy.



That policy has failed to conserve fish stocks. It has caused untold hardship for fishermen and their local communities and industries. In fact, it cannot be reformed. The EU maritime nation states must regain control of their own waters rather than the competence for fisheries remaining with Brussels. That has not worked. It has been proved to be ineffective and inadequate in the conservation and management of fish resources. It has resulted in bankruptcies, the uprooting of individuals and families and the destruction of thriving communities with centuries-old cultural traditions and communal lives.

Aberdeen based Roddy McColl, the secretary of the Fishermen's Association Ltd warned that

'while the current EU review of the Common Fisheries Policy pays lip service to principles of "stakeholder involvement", "decentralisation" and involving fishermen directly in policy making so that decisions are made closer to the people they affect', the fine words are 'nothing more than a smokescreen for an ever developing European Union which wishes to control every aspect of fishing activity'.

'The reality is that the European Union's strategic aim is the creation of an EU fleet and the elimination of the fishing fleets of the member states.'

Caitlin Uí Aodha, the secretary of the Irish Fishermen's Organisation, reminded participants that just two years ago the EU Court of Auditors had characterised the EU fisheries sector as 'suffering from economic fragility resulting from over-investment, rapidly rising costs and a shrinking resource base reflected in poor profitability and steadily declining employment'. She said that what was being described was 'a social and economic crisis of gigantic proportions for coastal communities'. This had been deliberately brought about as part of the EU grand plan.

The CFP is equal access to the common resource not the management regime (the transitional derogation) introduced in 1983 under which the discriminatory principle of Relative Stability was introduced in the allocation of fish quotas to member states. There is only one way forward for the development and protection of fish fishermen and the people that depend on the sea. That's by getting control back to national governments.

Oliver Lepretre, President of the Picardie and Pas de Calais Fishermen's Organisation from the north of France said that there must be a united campaign to halt the economic and social decline suffered by fishing communities. Kevin McCorry, representing the People's Movement pointed out that 'As a general principle centralising more power in Brussels means less democracy and less say and control by the citizens of EU member states; thus a democratic and stable Europe demands the repatriation to the member states of powers already surrendered. This general principle has a clear relevance in relation to the future of the CFP. A rational model of European fisheries must restore genuine management and decision making powers to the member states. This is because fisheries measures are best developed by those most familiar with the fisheries; the stock distribution, the fleets and gears, the marine habitats and climatic conditions. Thus measures need to be developed for individual fisheries.'

He concluded: 'A rational policy that should deliver sustainable fisheries management and an end to discards; real partnership between government and the fishing industry; fisheries management arrangements which are aligned with national and international marine environmental and marine planning objectives and fisheries policies which recognise and which are sensitive to the needs of fisheries-dependent communities.'



The groups agreed that the three priority issues in the next few months would be:

1. To prepare a detailed set of policy proposals on the price and market structure of the industry;
2. To campaign against the introduction of 'internationally transferable quotas' as these would lead to excessive concentration of ownership with disastrous consequences for smaller scale fisheries and coastal communities; and
3. To advance the case for a rational and scientifically coherent balance between the objectives of sustainable economic, environmental and social priorities in fishing policy and management.

These issues will be addressed from the overarching perspective of the need:

1. To halt the centralising process that has characterised EU fisheries policy through the real CFP of equal access to the resource with exclusive competence for all marine resources being with 'Brussels', and
2. To initiate the process immediately of repatriating control of policy, management and stocks back to individual EU maritime member states.

The conference concluded by stating that dealing with the symptoms alone has no value whatsoever but that the real origins of this terrible disaster which has befallen our fishermen, our fishing grounds, our fishing rights and our fish stocks must be eradicated.

### **Decision by MEPs to increase their allowance by €1,500 a month**

This week's decision by MEPs to increase their assistants/support allowance by over 8.5% has been strongly criticized by the Ireland's EU monitoring group the Peoples Movement. Chairperson Patricia McKenna said the decision by MEPs to increase their already generous allowance is a scandal. McKenna, a former MEP

said: ‘MEPs already receive more than €17,000 per month for assistants and now they want to increase it by a whopping €1,500 a month under the guise of extra work load. I cannot believe that MEPs have the audacity to argue that this increase is to compensate for the extra work of the Lisbon Treaty considering that they argued the Lisbon Treaty would make the EU more efficient not more expensive.’

‘This decision would indicate that the Lisbon Treaty was not in fact about making the EU more efficient but instead more expensive to the taxpayers. It is absolutely scandalous that, at a time when workers are being told to tighten their belts and accept cutbacks and increased levies, MEPs can vote to increase their own budget at taxpayer’s expense’ she said.



McKenna said: ‘There is no justification, especially in the current economic climate, for this increase as MEPs already receive a very generous assistance allowance. Using the Lisbon Treaty as an excuse is farcical. Not one single MEP supporting the Lisbon Treaty in last year’s referendum warned that the treaty would result in a further burden on the already hard-stretched taxpayer. Instead they claimed that Lisbon was all about making the EU more “efficient” not more expensive.’

She said: ‘The EU institutions are totally out of touch with ordinary people and have no regard for how taxpayers’ money is spent. If further evidence of this is needed then look at the European Commission’s decision to take EU

member states to court over their refusal to back a pay rise for EU civil servants.

This court case, backed by all 27 Commissioners, is ludicrous – particularly at a time when member states have been applying pay freezes to their national civil servants. EU civil servants already enjoy massive salaries, for instance a senior director general can receive over €17,000 per month, plus all benefits such as family allowances, expatriation allowance, installation allowance, travel expenses, removal expenses, daily subsistence allowance as well as very low taxes. Many people in Ireland have to live for a year on what they get in one month.’

The move will cost European taxpayers an additional €13.3 million, and increase the Parliament’s budget to €1.6 billion this year.

### Lest we forget



Meanwhile, outgoing Irish EU Commissioner Charlie McCreevy will get a €378,288 golden handshake in transition payments and can expect a pension of €51,068 per year for just four years’ service. A spokesman for the Commission has confirmed the generous payout. Parliament’s pension fund recorded a staggering €121 million deficit at the end of 2008, with a further €277 million still to be paid to members.

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## EU Court ruling means bin charges will rise

Dublin City Council has warned householders that, because of an EU Court ruling, they face a big hike in charges for services provided by local authorities.

A 2009 ruling by the European Court of Justice means that councils will have to charge VAT on bin collections, car parking, swimming pools, the hiring of sports facilities and commercial water provision – causing a rise of up to 21% in charges passed onto consumers. Other councils are likely to also pass on the charges.



As a response to a European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruling against Ireland of 16 July 2009, the VAT regime will be extended to cover public bodies, including local authorities, engaging in activities that lead to a distortion of competition with private operators (e.g. services such as waste collection, landfill, and recycling services; off-street parking; toll roads; the operation of leisure facilities). The Department of Finance said the impact on people who availed of local authority services would 'depend on whether the VAT is passed on by the public bodies'.

VAT (either standard or reduced) rates will apply as appropriate, though it still has to be worked out which services would be charged at 13.5% and which ones would have 21% imposed on them.. The changes will apply from 1 July 2010. Education, health, water and passenger transport services will not immediately become subject to VAT arising from the judgment.



But under the judgement, commercial water charges would also eventually be considered for VAT, even though the council is the only

supplier of water services to businesses in the city. This is because the EU Court held that, in theory, there could be private companies competing with a council to provide water to consumers. Undoubtedly there will be soon – now that there's money in water!

## Forget about Lisbon – the government does not back EU plan for economic co-ordination!

The government has asserted domestic primacy over economic policy in the face of repeated calls for deeper co-ordination from top officials in Brussels, among them European Council president Herman Van Rompuy.

After calls from the incoming commission for an injection of 'spine and rigour' into the monitoring of policy, the government has declared in a submission on the plan to the EU executive that it wants to avoid an 'overly-burdensome' approach.

'Within an overall EU2020 strategy framework, individual member states should select their own mix of domestic policies best suited to their circumstances and reflective of engagement with national stakeholders', a paper of 'initial observations' from Dublin states. 'Ireland is of the view that the focus for the EU2020 strategy should primarily be on overall outcomes rather than strict adherence to meeting specific targets in each sectoral area.'

The government's position was revealed as European Commission president José Manuel Barroso seeks support for measures that would empower his executive to issue public warnings and policy recommendations to countries that fall short of targets set out in the plan. Mr Van Rompuy also favours stronger co-ordination. In his first major speech since taking office, Mr Van Rompuy that ways must be found to enhance 'shared commitment', particularly in the euro zone.

So, just to remind those fervent advocates of the Lisbon Treaty of a few of the relevant provisions in the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU) – the second part of the Lisbon Treaty:

**Title 1. Article 2 A.3.** *The Member States shall coordinate their economic and employment policies within arrangements as determined by this Treaty, which the Union shall have competence to provide.*

**Title 1. Article 2 D.3.** *The Member States shall coordinate their economic and employment policies within arrangements as determined by this Treaty, which the Union shall have competence to provide.*

**Article 99** *Where it is established, under the procedure referred to in paragraph 3, that the economic policies of a Member State are not consistent with the broad guidelines referred to in paragraph 2 or that they risk jeopardising the proper functioning of economic and monetary union, the Commission may address a warning to the Member State concerned. The Council, on a recommendation from the Commission, may address the necessary recommendations to the Member State concerned.*

So who do they think they're kidding – the Irish electorate?

**'So how did that one pass us by?' asked Patrick Smyth in the Irish Times on Saturday, February 6, 2010**

*Well, it would appear that they didn't read the People's Movement commentary on the Treaty! An edited version of his article follows.*

'In all the column inches devoted in Lisbon debates, the new voting rules on commission economic assessments of member states seem not to have registered on our political Richter scale. Now it's all they are talking about in Brussels. Incoming commissioner for monetary affairs Olli Rehn says we should "benefit from

the opportunity the Lisbon Treaty opens as regards reinforced economic co-ordination".



Olli Rehn

With Greece being prescribed tough medicine by Brussels – he conveniently doesn't mention Ireland – and next week's special summit set to debate and adopt the commission's EU2020 report on enhancing competitiveness, "enhanced economic co-ordination" – "enforced" might be a better word – is firmly back on the agenda.

There have always been supporters of a more robust approach, like the French and Spanish, but others, not least the Germans, fearful of eroding the ECB's anti-inflation mandate or national sovereignty on fiscal matters, have always resisted. Ireland has traditionally been among the latter. But Lisbon, by allowing states to vote by majority to sanction countries that misbehave economically, has re-opened the opportunity to get collective economic governance into the air.



Herman Van Rompuy

In recent weeks, they have all been at it. The new president of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy said three weeks ago that ways must be found to enhance "shared

commitment”, particularly in the euro zone. Luxembourg’s prime-minister Jean-Claude Juncker, re-appointed president of the Eurogroup, sent a work programme to ministers which prioritises the issue: economic supervision is expected to go beyond budgetary considerations. In his letter, he points out that the Lisbon Treaty explicitly includes the elaboration of economic policy orientations for the euro zone, as well as supervision of their application.

The commission has indicated it intends to develop a supervisory guideline mechanism that goes beyond country-by-country recommendations. “In the past, some national politicians have resisted stronger mechanisms of governance,” president José Manuel Barroso said last month. “I hope that ... all EU governments will now recognise the need for full ownership of EU2020 and for a truly coordinated and coherent action in economic policy.”

Announcing his plans for the Spanish presidency, Spanish prime minister José Luis Zapatero called for a “qualitative leap” in the economic governance of the EU, including “binding” targets and penalties for laggards, and new economic policing powers for the commission.’

### **Clinton calls for deeper ties between EU and Nato**



US secretary of state Hillary Clinton has called for closer co-operation between the EU and

Nato, arguing that the Lisbon Treaty provides a platform for deeper ties with the military alliance.

Citing moves to reform Nato, Mrs Clinton said reforms at EU level would make co-operation with the military alliance easier. ‘Under the Lisbon Treaty, with more focus and specific leadership attached to foreign policy and development assistance, there will be a way to better co-ordinate’, she said.

Although ‘some questions’ had been raised in recent months about the depth of Washington’s commitment to Europe, she said European security was ‘an anchor’ of US foreign policy.



### **Israel should be EU member – Berlusconi**



Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi has said that Israel should be a member of the EU. Speaking at Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s office at the start of a three-day trip, Berlusconi said: ‘My greatest desire, as long as I am a protagonist in politics, is to bring Israel into membership of the European Union.’

EU ministers in 2008 agreed that the two sides should have a special relationship with regular summits and foreign ministers’ meetings. But the diplomatic upgrade was frozen following Israel’s assault on Gaza in early 2009 and a bloc of EU states remains opposed to reviving the plan.

But a poll by the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung in April last year said 75 percent of Israeli Jews

and 40 percent of Israeli Arabs would like to become part of the union. The European Commission has said that any 'European state' can join the EU in line with Article 49 of the EU treaty. 'The term "European" combines geographical, historical and cultural elements which all contribute to European identity ... [which] is subject to review by each succeeding generation', it explained in a statement.

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### **Galway Advertiser takes note!**

*The article below by their correspondent 'Outsider' appeared in last week's edition.*

'The dogs in the street know there is no love lost between Minister Ó Cuív and Frank Fahey TD. But at a meeting last year in Ros a' Mhíl even the fish in the sea got wind of the animosity when local FFers feared blows might be exchanged between the two heavy hitters. And it apparently had to do with the much-needed deep seaport on the west coast.

A deep seaport at Ros a' Mhíl has been a local demand for years as larger Irish boats cannot enter the harbour. The problem has been compounded by Irish governments allocating most of our EU fish quotas to the much larger vessels. As a consequence the local fish processing plant is struggling to survive.

Indeed, the lack of the deep seaport has resulted in the bizarre situation where large Irish boats land their mackerel catches not in Ireland but in Norway, which isn't in the EU.

As Minister for the Marine, Frank Fahey had proposed a deep seaport for Ros a' Mhíl. Ó Cuív vehemently disagrees. He thinks there should be two: one in the city to cater for the much awaited cruise liners and another in Ros a' Mhíl.

At a time when the government is only dishing out dosh to bankers and developers it seems an absurd demand. Besides Ros a' Mhíl could cater for both fishing and liners. It is a more natural port and would be a much cheaper project based on land costs alone. And if the tourists ever do arrive, they can see the Conamara landscape and then the city.



*Cllr Seosamh Ó Cuaig*

Strangely, Ó Cuív has already spent €45 million on a new harbour in Kilronan, Inis Mór that won't add one extra sprat to our fishing industry or indeed one extra visitor to the island. Half of that sum would go a long way to building the port at Ros a' Mhíl. So what's up with Ó Cuív? When posed this question on Raidió na Gaeltachta the veteran broadcaster and socialist councillor Seosamh Ó Cuaig responded: "You would need to have a Senior Counsel and a theologian beside you to interpret the minister's utterances. He's an expert at mental reservation."



*Cllr Catherine Connolly*

Even more perverse, this squabbling continues as Brussels issued a Green Paper on the 'reform' of the EU's Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). Although it is the CFP that has destroyed our fishing industry there is complete silence from Messrs Ó Cuív & Fahey and ALL of the

political parties. Only one Irish political organisation has submitted proposals to reform the CFP and that is the People's Movement ([www.people.ie](http://www.people.ie)), which has two Galway patrons, Cllr Catherine Connolly (pictured) and Cllr Seosamh Ó Cuaig.

Let Trevor Sargent of the Greens – speaking in the Dail before his party sold out – remind us what the CFP actually means in financial terms: “The reality is that fish worth €2,500 million are taken from Irish waters by EU boats every year. Ireland’s share is only €127 million. Ireland has 16% of EU waters and only 4% of the EU quota. In effect, this country is giving €2,400 million in what could be called structural aid to our EU partners every year.”

The People's Movement's paper shows there was no fisheries policy in the Treaty of Rome, the foundation stone of the EEC. It only became urgent when Ireland, Denmark, Britain and Norway – with the richest best conserved fishing grounds in Europe – began entry negotiations. In 1971, the Six founding EEC countries rushed through fishery regulations giving all members “equal access”. Fish was to be a “common resource” – the only one! The FF Government realised the dreadful consequences for our fishing industry and deliberately misled the people.

The CFP has also been a disaster for fish conservation: 88% of EU fishing stocks have been fished beyond their Maximum Sustainable Yield. Norway did not join the EEC and today continues to boast a very healthy fishing stock. The over-centralised CFP has proved a failure.

One example is the issue of “discards”. Brussels doles out quotas for the catching of specific species of fish. Any fisherman knows that a net has not been invented that can catch only one species of fish. In order to avoid heavy penalties fishermen must discard the fish they do not have a quota for. These fish are dead

when discarded – resulting in 600,000 tons of fish being lost through discards each year.

What needs to be discarded is the CFP and our rights to this natural resource repatriated. This would be a boost for conservation and to our economy. The scrapping of the CFP could prove beneficial for developing countries too. Under the CFP the EU forces deals with developing countries allowing European monster factory ships to empty their seas of fish. Today's Somali pirate is yesterday's Somali fisherman.

In private and in the right company Ó Cuiv will expound about the iniquities of the CFP. It's about time he brought these views into the public domain and to the Cabinet table.'

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