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Serious moves towards qualified majority voting in the Common Foreign and Security Policy and a federal EU!



On November 22nd the EU Parliament [adopted a report](#) that seeks to amend the treaties of the EU, abolishing member states' veto rights, and giving more power to EU institutions. The resolution was accepted by 291 votes, with 274 MEPs voting against it, and 44 abstaining. It also calls on the EU Council to call a Convention – a decision taken by simple majority

- for the revision of the Treaties, in December 2023.

One of the most serious aspects for Ireland of possible treaty change is the introduction of qualified majority voting in the Common Foreign and Security Policy where we currently possess a veto. However, treaty change would most likely require a referendum here, though the government [may initially attempt to avoid it](#). Nonetheless, if it's left to Micheál Martin, [we'll forge ahead](#).

The prospect of a federal EU state where we would have minimal influence on decision – making on vitally important issues, especially in the context of the rapid militarisation of the EU, should be of serious concern to us all and must be firmly opposed by our government and failing the latter, by the electorate.

[Read more here.](#)

Conflicts of interest and EU arms spending



The EU Ombudsman, Emily O'Reilly, [has opened an inquiry](#) into how the European Commission ensures external experts who help it evaluate EU Defence Fund (EDF) project proposals do not have conflicts of interest. The Commission is not required to make public the names of the experts it consults for EDF-backed projects so we can bet that the armaments industry figures large!

The inquiry follows previous correspondence with the Commission on this matter, which indicated that it largely relies on experts' self-declarations. The Commission should reply by 31 January 2024. Expect the usual obfuscation.

Through the evaluation of research and development projects for defence technology and equipment, independent experts help the Commission decide which projects should receive financial backing from the EDF. The EDF has a budget of around EUR8 billion for the period 2021 to 2027 so there's plenty to play for.

EU Council conclusions

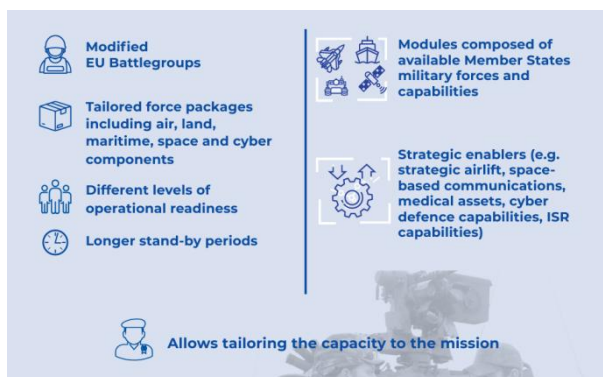


“Recalling the [Granada Declaration](#), building on the [Strategic Compass for Security and Defence](#), we will strengthen our defence readiness and invest in capabilities by developing our technological and industrial base. We will also focus on military mobility ... the European Council underlines that enlargement is a geo-strategic investment.”

In parallel, the Union needs to lay the necessary internal groundwork *and reforms*, [[Qualified Majority Voting](#)] setting the Union’s long-term ambitions and the ways to achieve them, and addressing key questions related to its priorities and policies as well *as its capacity to act*. This will make the EU stronger and will enhance European sovereignty. [While simultaneously, further diluting the sovereignty of member states].

“... the European Council underlines the importance of strengthening European security and defence to deliver an ambitious geopolitical Union. The Union needs to take more responsibility for its own security and defence, pursue a strategic course of action and increase its capacity to act autonomously.

“In view of the next Annual Progress Report of the Strategic Compass and in line with the commitments undertaken by the participating Member States in the framework of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), calls for work to be intensified to increase the defence readiness, resilience and security of the Union, including through defence investment, military mobility, regular live exercises”



“...and reinforcing the collaborative development of the capabilities necessary to conduct the full range of missions and operations, in particular through the implementation of the [EU Rapid Deployment Capacity](#).” (Graphic on left)

A stronger and a more capable European Union in the field of security and defence will contribute positively to global and transatlantic security and is

complementary to NATO, which remains the foundation of collective defence for its members

You can read the full conclusions [here](#)

Europe must learn to speak the language of power. Over the next decade, we will make a quantum leap to become a more assertive and decisive security provider, better prepared to tackle present and future threats and challenges.”

(JOSEP BORRELL High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/ Vice-President of the EU Commission)

And in case you missed it in the Irish Times - Ireland joined Belgium, Spain and Malta in issuing a joint call urging the EU to demand a ceasefire in Gaza:

<https://www.irishtimes.com/world/europe/2023/12/16/eu-leaders-fail-to-change-stance-on-gaza/>

Controversial chemical Glyphosate approved for another decade in EU



France has been compensating farmers with Parkinson's for the last three years following numerous scientific studies linking the disease to the use of the pesticide glyphosate.

The EU Commission, last month, approved the use of [the controversial chemical](#) across the EU [for another decade](#) after member states failed to reach an agreement. [The move was supported by Ireland.](#)

France does not yet want to ban the pesticide but is convinced that there is a link between Parkinson's disease and the chemical. So, farmers in France who can prove they are suffering from Parkinson's disease are entitled to compensation from the government. It's unlikely that farmers here will benefit from a similar scheme as the major farming organisations supported continued use of the chemical. Lobby group [Parkinson's Ireland called for a ban.](#)

News of recent EU military developments from the [European Network against Arms Trade](#)



The European Network Against Arms Trade (ENAAT) is an informal network of European peace groups working together in research, advocacy and campaigning. Here is [their recent](#)

[bulletin](#) which gives an overview of recent developments in EU militarisation.

Military assistance to Ukraine



[The EU has agreed](#) to more than quadruple its spending on training Ukrainian soldiers, investing close to an extra 200 million euros from the off – budget European Peace Facility. It has so far trained 34,000 Ukrainian personnel, with Irish participation. That makes the EU the biggest provider of training for Ukraine's military. The EU says that together with member states it has delivered some 27 billion euros in military support to Ukraine since the beginning of the conflict.

Trouble on the way: Lisbon 3?



By a slim majority, the EU Parliament approved its [proposal for EU treaty reform](#) on 22 November, triggering the formal request to the heads of state to vote on whether to open the EU reform convention. The last time EU institutions reformed the treaties was in 2009, which resulted in the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty. Lisbon changed many aspects of the functioning of the EU, for instance, putting more policy areas under the qualified majority voting in the Council of the EU and creating the figure of the high representative for foreign policy of the Union.

[Read more here](#)

Are we surprised?

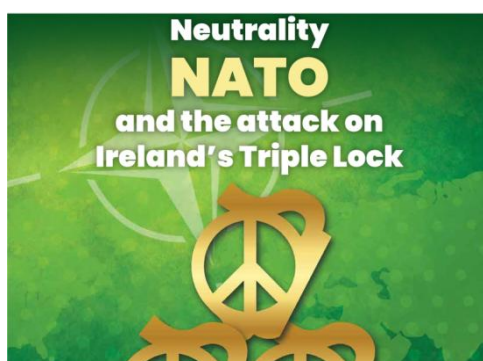
[Military spending](#) could be granted special status in the EU fiscal rules under the new [economic governance review](#) (EGR) in a bid to encourage member state investment in this area, according to a draft compromise seen by Euractiv.



The draft paper suggests that member states that increase defence spending should be handled with more leniency if they exceed the EU's deficit rule that limits member state budget deficits to a maximum of 3% of GDP. Breaking this rule typically triggers the so-called [Excessive Deficit Procedure](#) (EDP), which requires the concerned member state to take corrective action within a certain deadline.

The paper states an “increase of government investment in defence compared to the average over the four years before the plan, where applicable, to be explicitly recognised as a specific relevant factor when triggering an Excessive Deficit Procedure (EDP), alongside other relevant factors”. When the European Commission tabled its legislative proposal to reform the [Stability Pact](#) in the spring, such a rule was not on the table. Here is van der Leyen's latest statement on the issue.

New pamphlet on the Triple Lock



You can read PANA's document [here](#) or by clicking the image above.

Amid rising climate concerns, why is the EU putting an oil man in charge?



At a time when the EU claims to be taking unprecedented action to tackle the climate crisis, Ursula Von Der Leyen nominated ex-Shell employee and well-known corporate player Wopke Hoekstra as climate commissioner. He also acts as Executive Vice-President of the European Commission for the European Green Deal. As usual, the EU sides with the big corporations.

You can read the Corporate Europe Observatory report [here](#)

Errata! Readers will have noticed – and probably were amused - that in our last issue, we stated that Irish troops bound for the EU military exercise in Cadiz travelled on the MV Matthew. The sentence should have read: 'fresh from their exploits aboard the MV Matthew!'

Protest against EU Militarisation



Our next protest will be at Dáil Eireann on **Wednesday January 17th** (third Wednesday of the month) at 1:00pm

Big pharma continues to dominate EU health policy



One of the EU Parliament's tasks is budgetary control: ensuring taxpayers' money is spent in a proper way. But when it comes to the tens of billions of euros the EU spends on purchasing vaccines from powerful pharmaceutical companies like Pfizer, it seems to have adopted a different and secretive role.

Earlier this year, a special [COVI-committee](#) set up to examine the EU's response to the pandemic and identifying lessons to be drawn to be better prepared for future health crises. However, the committee published its report, subsequently endorsed by the EU Parliament without full access to the information it requested. COVI's work could have provided a chance to re-balance power between Big Pharma interests and public interests. But in the aftermath of the pandemic, it seems the EU is happy to cede control of public health policy to corporate entities like Pfizer.

[Read more here](#)

Preparing for war?



Last month, 27 EU Ministers of Defence, including Ireland's, approved the 2023 EU Capability Development Priorities, the European Defence Agency reported.

The document serves as a baseline for EU-wide defence planning, and all EU defence-related initiatives. According to the statement, the priorities – developed with an equal focus on short, medium, and long-term planning – aim to address both current defence gaps and future challenges.

Elsewhere, Stéphane Séjourné, the leader Renew Europe group in the EU Parliament; Fianna Fáil is a member, has called for the next College of Commissioners to have a dedicated defense commissioner.

His call follows similar remarks by Dutch Defense Minister Kaja Ollongren [earlier this month](#). In September, a Parliament internal document [also pitched](#) a fully fledged defense committee in the next term.

[Read more here](#)

Micheál Martin and his government colleagues won't be fighting in the front line



Micheál Martin has decided to bring in legislation to abandon the Triple Lock. The Lock has ensured that members of the Defence Forces would not be sent to fight in EU or NATO – led military actions unless they had a UN mandate.

The removal of the UN element from the triple lock would represent a huge foreign policy shift, distancing Ireland from an international body that may be flawed but remains central to international peacekeeping. Arguably, the Irish Government would be undermining the UN at a critical time in its history.

But, more importantly, this step would be effectively a repudiation of the Seville Declaration which induced Irish voters to vote Yes to the ratification of the EU's Nice Treaty by referendum in 2002, having rejected that treaty by referendum the year before.

[Read more here](#)

The Abraham Accords and EU support for Israel



EU leaders have revived calls for a two-state solution in Palestine and Micheál Martin has chimed in. Yet at the same time, the EU is supporting Israel's regional strategy aiming to do the opposite: circumvent the Palestinian issue and avoid a territorial compromise.

The Commission has [approved an €18m](#) funding plan entitled "Regional EU-Israel cooperation in support of the [Abraham Accords](#), and fight against anti-Semitism and fostering Jewish life". The optics of a [nine-fold increase of annual funding](#) for Israel, expedited in the middle of its devastating military campaign in Gaza, stand out in contrast with the [attempted suspension, delaying and constraining of EU development aid for the Palestinians](#) under the same commissioner.

[Read more here](#)

It couldn't happen in Ireland – or could it??



Sweden and the United States have signed an agreement giving the US military access to seventeen Swedish bases – despite the fact that the country is still neutral. The military agreement will allow the US to conduct military exercises and refuel its military aircraft and ships in Sweden.

Under the deal, the US military will be permitted to store weapons and ammunition at various bases within Sweden but will have to inform the government in detail about what is being imported – which will not include nuclear weapons. For the agreement to come into force, the Swedish parliament must approve the bill, which will be submitted by the government with a three-fourths majority.

Buying Israel's weapons is a bigger EU priority than aiding Palestinians



Ursula von der Leyen is constantly [pointing](#) to the European Union's "humanitarian assistance" for Palestinians, while stressing her [full solidarity](#) for Israel.

Under her leadership, the EU [claims](#) to have quadrupled its humanitarian assistance for Gaza but Von der Leyen proved where the real priority lies when she [addressed](#) a recent conference on bolstering the weapons industry. The conference heard that EU military expenditure came to almost \$260 billion in 2022.

The [data](#) presented at the conference did not give a precise breakdown of what equipment had been bought. Yet it has been previously [reported](#) that Europe spent more than \$3.6 billion on arms manufactured by Israel last year.

[Read David Cronin's article here](#)

BusinessEurope: the death star of corporate lobbying



The association of European employers, BusinessEurope, of which IBEC is a member, is the most active and probably the most powerful lobby group in the EU institutions. Determined to see the EU adopt policies that defend profits over people and planet, they have won privileged access to decision-makers like no

other and even shape the direction of the EU as a whole. It is high time to roll back their power and privileged access. The Corporate Europe [report is here](#)

Playing with the big boys – and girl

The Director General of the EU Military Staff (EUMS), welcomed the Director General of NATO's International Military Staff (IMS), Lieutenant General Janusz Adamczak and his staff to the EUMS Headquarters for the EUMS/IMS Director Generals Conference, which took place on 01 December.

Lieutenant General Adamczak emphasised the importance of the meeting as "an essential activity, not only because it guides the cooperation between our two staffs, but more importantly, because it is a key part of the larger effort to increase the over-all level of NATO-EU cooperation in line with the political expectation, reflected in our higher political documents such as the [NATO Strategic Concept](#), the very similar [EU Strategic Compass](#) and, most recently, NATO's [Vilnius communiqué](#)".

In the photo on the next page, Brig. Gen Sean White (arrowed) who kept our side up with the boys and girl, while leading us into NATO in the long run!

