



# PEOPLE'S NEWS

News Digest of the People's Movement

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## Seachtain na Gaeilge!



The EU Parliament voted on 12th March, in the middle of Seachtain na Gaeilge to extend a rule that leaves the door open to keep sidelining Irish from the institution's translation and interpretation services until the end of the next mandate in 2029.

The Parliament's internal rules state that documents must be translated into all 24 EU official languages, and all lawmakers have the right to speak in one of the official languages with support from interpreters to bring the EU institutions closer to citizens.

[Read more here](#)

## EU war games 2024



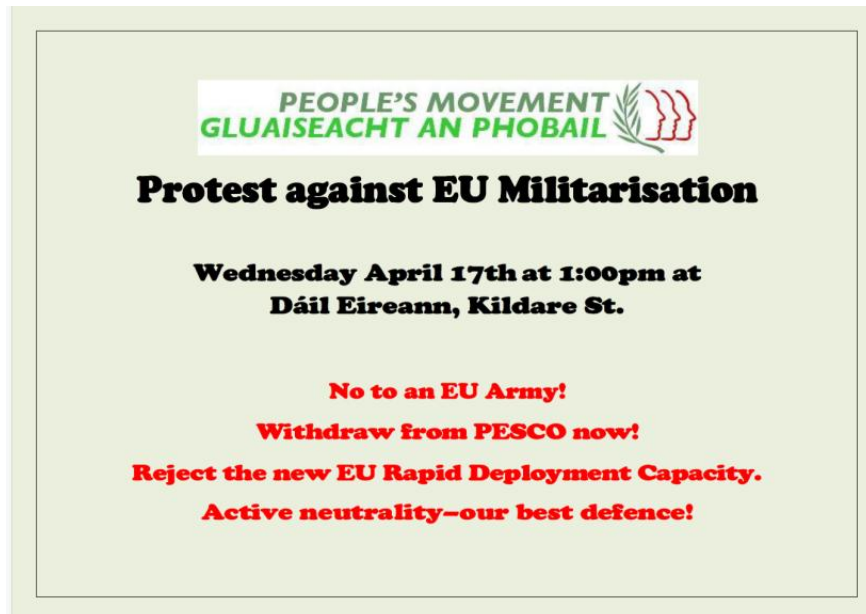
Since 2002, the European Union has been conducting crisis management military exercises to test the effectiveness of military command structures and procedures.

In line with the Strategic Compass, the EU is now conducting more regular exercises, including live ones. These live exercises involve using joint military forces and capabilities from EU member states including Ireland.

This year's EU Military Exercise is MILEX 24, a two-part exercise. The first part, a Command Post Exercise (CPX), is currently underway, running from 8 April - 3 May 2024. The second part, the Live Exercise (LIVEX), will take place later in Bergen, Germany, from 26 November - 10 December 2024. During the Command Post Exercise, the Military Planning and Conduct Capability will be augmented by key personnel from Member States.

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## Monthly protest against EU Militarisation



Mairead Farrell TD, Kathleen Funchion TD, Thomas Pringle TD and Catherine Connolly TD, Leas-Cathaoirleach of the Dáil at our March protest. Our April protest is on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

### Manna from heaven, with more to come!



The EU has allocated €130M to Boost Ammunition Production at the huge Rheinmetall Arms Manufacturer [according to a statement from the company's press service](#). The funds will facilitate the expansion of production for 155mm artillery ammunition.

The company has been steadily ramping up its production capabilities since 2022, with the goal of reaching an annual output of up to 1.1 million artillery shells by 2027. Additionally, Rheinmetall expressed keen interest in investing in at least four plants in Ukraine. In a related development, the Franco-German arms group KNDS, specializing in tank manufacturing, announced plans to produce military equipment and munitions in Ukraine.

## The EU is marching towards a EU Army



At the European Defense Agency's (EDA) annual conference in November 2023, Ursula von der Leyen called for a European Defense Union. While the defense union is yet to materialise, the first-ever European Defense Industrial Strategy signed in March 2024 marked another significant step toward an EU Army by focusing on ramping up EU weapons manufacturing and creating an EU military – industrial complex, much to the advantage and cheered on by the EU armaments industries.

The EU's collective military spending reached almost \$300 billion in 2023, more than China's official defense but the latest Irish Times poll showed that voters, when asked whether they supported the State's current model of military neutrality or if they would like to see it change, 61 per cent said that they favoured the current model, while just more than a quarter (26 per cent) said they would like to see it change. But the road to an EU Army has been a long and incremental one with its set-backs along the way.

[Read more here](#)

## Pfizer hasn't gone away you know!



The European Public Prosecutor's Office is now investigating allegations of criminal wrongdoing in connection with vaccine negotiations between European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and the CEO of Pfizer though no one has yet been charged in connection with the case.

The probe was originally opened by Belgian judicial authorities in early 2023 following a criminal complaint lodged by local lobbyist. His complaint centered on an alleged exchange of text messages between von der Leyen and Pfizer boss Albert Bourla in the run-up to the EU's mega vaccine deal, which had an estimated value of over €20 billion, at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic." *POLITICO* revealed last year that there were at least €4 billion worth of wasted doses.

The New York Times, which first revealed that the exchange has launched a parallel lawsuit against the Commission after it refused to disclose the content of the messages following an access request and the Commission has so far refused to reveal the content, or confirm their existence.

## Make what you like of it!



The Maltese are not averse to the EU creating its own army, a [MaltaToday](#) survey reveals. The survey shows that 42% of Maltese voters favour the creation of an EU army set up to defend member states from possible attack by outsiders, while 36% are opposed. But only 38% would like neutral Malta to participate in such a military structure and 55% also oppose Malta joining other member states in providing military assistance to an EU country attacked by an outside power.

## Irish militarisation group won't reveal its membership



A pro-militarisation group lobbying government to allow Irish companies greater access to the international arms market has declined to publicly disclose its members. The Irish Defence and Security Association (IDSA) lobbied the government nine times since it was founded in September 2021, according to its latest lobbying return.

*The Ditch* has repeatedly asked IDSA to disclose who its members are – but the organisation has declined each time. The Irish Defence and Security Association was established in September 2021 by former Irish soldier Pat O'Connor, UCD professor Ben Tonra and executive director at the Azure Forum for Contemporary Security Strategy Caitríona Heintz. It's met with senior officials from the Department of Defence, independent TD, former soldier Cathal Berry and then minister for defence Coveney.

[Read more here](#)

### Nie!



Nearly 70% of Poles do not want their country to join the eurozone. The poll conducted for *Wirtualna Polska* shows that 66.8% of Poles would prefer to keep the 500 year old zloty rather than adopt the euro, and almost half are “definitely against” joining the eurozone. Only 27.3% support the introduction of the European currency.

### CETA blues!



The ratification of CETA, the trade agreement between the EU and Canada, rejected recently by the French Senate, will not be submitted to the National Assembly before the European Elections, the French government confirmed, to avoid “instrumentalisation of the debate!!” The French Foreign Trade Minister said in an interview with *Le Figaro* “We do not wish, as we saw in the Senate, for certain opposition groups to exploit this legitimate debate for electoral purposes.”

To be fully operational, CETA requires ratification of all 27 member states. At the EU level, only Cyprus has voted against it but has not notified the decision to the EU Commission, so allowing the treaty to still apply. The government's efforts to ratify CETA are unconstitutional by [the Supreme Court ruled](#) in the first such legal rejection by an EU member state. However, the deal has been provisionally applied. Ten states – including France and Ireland – have yet to make their final decision, and 17 have already given their approval.

It is now up to the National Assembly to have the final say at a second reading. Following the rejection, fellow representatives from the same parties announced they would do the same in the National Assembly on 30 May when CETA was expected to come up for votes, just 9 days before the European Elections.

## A betrayal of trust



The Cabinet has decided to reverse the declaration on the Triple Lock first given by Ireland at the Seville European Council meeting in 2002 in an attempt to encourage voters concerned about neutrality to vote for Nice 2, the Nice Treaty then being accepted by the electorate on the second occasion.

At the Seville European Council in 2002 Ireland made the following “National Declaration” setting out the Triple Lock as follows: *“Ireland reiterates that the participation of contingents of the Irish Defence Forces in overseas operations, including those carried out under the European Security and Defence Policy, requires (a) the authorisation of the operation by the Security Council or the General Assembly of the United Nations, (b) the agreement of the Irish Government, and (c) the approval of Dáil Eireann and in accordance with Irish law.”*

In response to this the European Council of EU Member State Governments made the following Declaration: *“The European Council takes cognizance of the National Declaration of Ireland presented at its meeting in Seville on 21-22 June 2002. It notes that Ireland intends to associate its National Declaration with its act of ratification of the Treaty of Nice, should the people of Ireland in a referendum decide to accept the Treaty of Nice.”*

The Government used the same cynical sleight of hand to secure passage of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009. Repudiation by the Government of Ireland’s “National Declaration” on the Triple Lock, as the Coalition Government now proposes, would be an insult to the Irish people who voted in the 2002 and 2009 referendums. It would show that the people who voted then had been deceived. It would deepen public cynicism about politicians’ promises and lower further the standard of Irish public life. It would be a betrayal of the solemn official commitments of previous Irish Governments with regard to Nice and Lisbon.

## The arms trade grows in leaps and bounds



States in Europe almost doubled their imports of major arms (+94 per cent) between 2014–18 and 2019–23. Far larger volumes of arms flowed to Asia and Oceania and the Middle East in 2019–23, where nine of the 10 largest arms importers are. The United States increased its arms exports by 17 per cent between 2014–18 and 2019–23, while Russia’s arms exports halved. Russia as for the first time the third largest arms exporter, falling just behind France. The global volume of international arms transfers fell slightly by 3.3 per cent between 2014–18 and 2019–23, according to new data on international arms transfers published by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), available at [www.sipri.org](http://www.sipri.org).

## Billions for peace?



On March 18, the EU Foreign Affairs Council agreed to provide an additional €5 billion in military assistance to Ukraine. This amount is set aside for Ukraine's defense needs in the form of a Special Assistance Fund for Ukraine under the Orwellian [European Peace Facility](#) (EPF). The EPF is a fund currently worth over €17 billion financed outside

the EU budget for a period of seven years (2021-2027).

It is disturbing that this considerable sum is being used mainly to effectively pursue a proxy EU war against Russia, now that the US is currently withholding support. There's not a mention of this dangerous development in the media.

Perhaps, more importantly, there's the question of a neutral country being involved directly in funding one side in a conflict. Add to this, the Irish equipment currently deployed on the front line and it's hardly surprising that the media is silent. Despite the Irish public's obvious sympathy for Ukrainians, they also value our neutrality – and there's an election in the offing!

[Read more here](#)

## It's time to scrap the EU-Israel association agreement



The EU should suspend its trade and institutional ties with Israel to deter war crimes that amount to genocide in the Gaza Strip, the UN's special rapporteur on Palestine has said. Francesca Albanese - who recently concluded that the threshold of the crime of genocide has been met in Gaza - told *Euronews* that the EU has "an obligation" to suspend its Association Agreement with Israel given that its offensive

violates that agreement's provisions on human rights.

"Europe is the main trading partner - which accounts for 30% of Israel's trade - so it has a huge power and it should use that power. In the end, this is not an option, it's an obligation because Article 2 of that association agreement foresees the suspension in case of violations of human rights," she added. A recent **initiative by the leaders of Ireland and Spain** calling on the EU Commission to suspend the EU-Israel agreement has been met with resistance by other member states eager to uphold the bloc's stance of solidarity with Israel. A decision to halt the agreement would require the unanimous backing of all member states.

## EU Austerity 2.0



In late February, the EU Commission published the [mid-point evaluation of its Recovery and Resilience Facility](#) (RRF) but within hours the EU had voted to severely cut it. The evaluation had set out how the €225bn investment made so far has led to stronger economic growth, record low unemployment and been a “considerable boost” to the green transition.

The rules, which were proposed by the Commission and made even more severe by the Council, would require member states to reduce their deficits to 1.5 percent of GDP. That would force member states to collectively [cut their collective budgets by more than €100bn](#) in the first year of their implementation alone. The cuts can be spread seven years but there are conditionalities, such as anti-worker reforms – ‘surprised?’

[Read more here](#)

## The EU funds Israel’s military



The declared aim of the research policy of the EU is to create “a European research area” and to encourage the relevant industry “to become more competitive.” This is currently carried out through the Horizon Europe programme, which has a total budget of €95.5 billion between 2021 and 2027. In addition to organisations and companies from the member states, Turkey and Israel have been granted privileged access to the associated

funds the latter [in the area of drone technology](#).

The EU's support for the Israeli arms industry is undoubtedly questionable from a moral and legal point of view - especially in light of the current indictment for alleged genocide in Gaza. This is justified, amongst other things, by genocidal statements made by high-ranking Israeli officials and politicians, including the Israeli Minister of Defence, whose ministry is being funded to participate in EU research projects. It's beyond time to withdraw Israel's access to Horizon funds.

[Read more here](#)

## Piepergate: VDL propels anti-regulation zealot into Commission job



A controversial new appointment by President von der Leyen has raised questions about the flawed and politically convenient recruitment process, and concerns over the Commission's 'competiveness' focused agenda. Part of von der Leyen's bid for a second term, this appointment puts Markus Pieper, with a history of deregulatory zeal, fossil-friendly politics, attacking NGOs, and boosting corporate lobbying influence, into a powerful new role where he could do real damage to social and environmental policy proposals. It also smacks of cronyism.

[Read more here](#)

## Ireland's exports of restricted 'dual-use' goods to Israel soar



Ireland's exports to Israel of restricted "dual-use" goods that have potential military purposes grew nearly sevenfold last year from €11m to more than €70m, even as the Government raises the prospect at EU level of trade sanctions over the escalating death toll in Gaza.

At the same time, trade in ordinary goods and services between Ireland and Israel has also grown hugely over the last few years. Ireland is now Israel's fourth-biggest market for all types of goods, with sales mostly of computer circuits growing to €4.8bn

## A battlefield between EU institutions



Earlier this week, Josep Borrell, the senior EU diplomat who is also in charge of security policy said that: "When I started my mandate, I said that the EU needs to learn to speak the language of power. When we look at the institutional architecture of the European Union, foreign policy and defence remain a national competence. It will be a battlefield between institutions during the next legislature. But today, foreign affairs and defence are in the hands of the Member States."

"I am sure that the institutional setting of the defence and security in Europe will be one of the most important political debates among the Member States and with the European Parliament, in order to decide who does what. And I think that everybody has to do a lot. Member States, each one of them, at home: cooperating among themselves and at intergovernmental level."

[Read the speech here](#)

## Immigration and asylum pact agreed



MEPs have given their final approval on to the EU's long-delayed [immigration and asylum pact](#). The package of 10 regulations and directives, which will come into effect in 2026, amounted to the [biggest overhaul of the immigration and asylum rules](#) in over a decade. It includes provisions to allow asylum seekers to be sent to 'safe' third countries for their claims to be processed, which critics say could allow the EU to replicate the UK's agreement [to send asylum seekers to Rwanda](#) while their claims were handled.

From the onset of the debate, the New Pact has been [the target of criticism](#) by NGOs, human rights advocates and legal experts, who warn the strong push to have common, predictable rules could come at the expense of fundamental rights.

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