



PEOPLE'S NEWS

News Digest of the People's Movement

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

No.266

August 2024.

Articles may be used or adapted in whole or in part including changing titles if desired, and circulated without any need of reference to or acknowledgement of the source.

In case you missed it

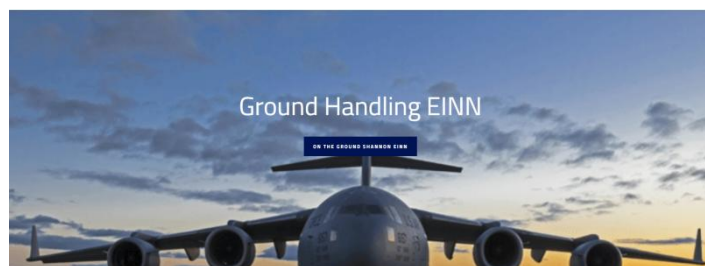


Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs Micheál Martin has refused to publish a letter sent to NATO by Ireland and three other neutral countries, in which they sought closer cooperation with the alliance, including participation in military manoeuvres. The letter was accompanied by a discussion paper that proposed increased intelligence-sharing, involvement in crisis-response exercises, and "privileged access to NATO documents and information."

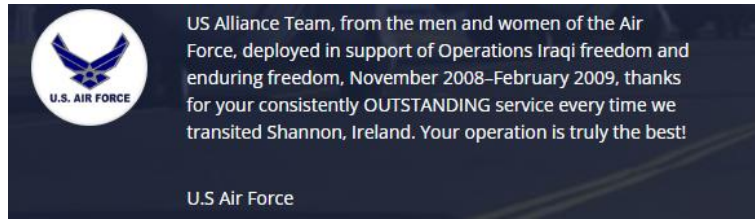
It was signed by representatives from Ireland, Austria, Malta, and Switzerland, who described themselves in the correspondence as "the bloc's closest partners in pursuit of common values". The four neutral nations reportedly intend to position themselves as "WEP4" (four Western European Partners). Martin was asked by Catherine Connolly TD to publish its contents. Martin refused: "There are no plans to publish these documents at this time," he told Ms Connolly in his reply to a parliamentary question. As usual, he also insisted that the move was "fully consistent" with the country's policy of military neutrality.

The letter had referred to the "growing importance" of the countries' partnership with NATO in the current period. The signatories expressed an interest in participating in NATO military manoeuvres, including crisis response exercises. They also proposed increasing intelligence-sharing. Neutrality Irish –style!

More Neutrality - Irish style



EINN is an international call sign for Shannon Airport – you can read about the activities of Ground Handling EINN [here](#) and [here](#) you can read how founder Declan Cregan supports and serves the US troops on the ground in Shannon and “plans to do so for years to come.” Among the testimonials is the following:



The EU supports genocide in Gaza

The deaths of humanitarian workers is increasing dramatically, due overwhelmingly to those killed in Gaza since October 2023, [a total of at least 274 humanitarians](#) in the last 10 months. Indeed, the number of humanitarians who have lost their lives in the last 10 months in Gaza alone is higher than the total deaths of humanitarian workers around the world in the two years between 2021 and 2022.



Israeli forces have [reportedly carried out](#) at least eight strikes on humanitarian workers' convoys and premises in Gaza since October 2023. These attacks occurred in spite of the fact that humanitarian agencies had provided their coordinates to the Israeli authorities to ensure their protection. In Ireland and Spain are seeking an "urgent review" of whether **Israel** is complying with human rights obligations under its trade agreement It's time the EU hit Israel in the piggy bank!

[Read more here](#)

EU Funding spurs 'desert dumping'



Authorities in Tunisia are [rounding up migrants](#) and dumping them in the desert, following an EU cash-for-migrant deal with Tunisia. In July last year, von der Leyen offered a [partnership package](#) to Tunisia worth more than €1 billion consisting of €900 million plus €150 million in immediate budget assistance, and a further €105 million for border management and anti-smuggling activities.

Human rights observers say the Tunisian authorities are conducting illegal "[collective expulsions](#)" of migrants, with funds from the EU. They say that [the practice is becoming increasingly common](#).

[Read more here](#)



How's Phil Hogan doing?



Here's a look at his company: [Triton Advisory](#) has one [lobbyist employed](#) 25% of the time. The EU [Transparency Register](#) entry suggests that it's the bould Phil himself. Income for that year was >= €1,000,000 from an impressive list of clients including Visa, Vodaphone and JP Morgan.

The main EU legislative proposals or policies targeted are in financial, banking, sustainability and telecommunications areas, as well as energy security, health and proposals linked to the "general sustainability" agenda. So, he's doing very well and has plenty of time for golf!

The Brits are back?



Labour's proposed [foreign policy and security pact](#) with the EU sounds "quite promising", the head of the European parliament's foreign affairs committee has said, adding that the British government should use the next weeks and months to come up with proposals that are "as concrete as possible" – indeed!

The Labour Party's "progressive realism" diplomatic philosophy, to some extent, at present, continues the core ideas of the Conservative government, emphasising the Britain's role in military cooperation with its allies while showing a more open and proactive attitude toward British - EU relations.

[Read more here](#)

Hungary suffers the ire of Fine Gael



Fine Gael MEPS have signed a letter to EU leaders seeking to block representatives from Hungary from being able to vote in Europe's institutions.

[The letter, seen by The Journal](#), has been sent to EU Council president Charles Michel, Ursula von der Leyen and EU Parliament president Roberta Metsola. It is understood that the letter has been signed by Fine Gael MEPs Seán Kelly, Regina Doherty, Maria Walsh and Nina Carberry. The letter is being spearheaded by the European People's Party (EPP), of which Fine Gael is a member.

[Read more here](#)



Moving towards a Defense Union - the recommendations of the "Charlemagne" group.

Euractive has had sight of the latest report from the influential Charlemagne 'think tank usually distributed to important EU functionaries and politicians.' You won't find this report anywhere, but the Euractive synopsis is [here](#)

The legal basis for EU militarisation



EU militarisation has progressed in leaps and bounds in terms of operations and cooperation on armaments and in this context, it should be remembered that the EU does have a collective defence article ([Article 42-7 TEU](#)) inherited from the collective defence clause in the Brussels Treaty.

This article is a reminder of NATO's pre-eminence, and has been used once, for the benefit of France after the attacks in 2015, just as Article 5 of the Washington Treaty was used once, for the benefit of the United States after the attacks in 2001. Article 42-7 did not give rise to any robust, formalised intervention by the Union alongside France in Mali or against Daesh, but it should be noted that this article has been preferred to the solidarity clause in the event of a terrorist attack or natural disaster (Article 222 TFEU) and that several Member States have wanted to step up their commitment alongside French (and allied) troops in operations against Islamic movements.

The collective European defence clause has even been supplemented, in the Treaty of Aachen (2019), by a bilateral Franco-German defence clause, which is supposed to coordinate with the EU and NATO clauses.

And finally, The European Union Treaty expressly provides for the possibility of moving to a common defense policy. A provision provided for in Article 24 of the EU Treaty and in Article 2 of the Treaty but with our Brig. Gen Clancy – pictured above left - in charge we can be assured that the ongoing process is in safe hands.

Imperialism 21st Century - style



The EU's hunger for minerals for its electric cars and microchips is sparking accusations that it is inflaming [conflict in eastern Congo](#), one of the world's worst humanitarian crises that has killed 6 million people over recent decades.

The outrage was provoked by [a strategic minerals deal](#) that the EU Commission struck with Rwanda, which borders the Democratic Republic of the Congo. For the EU — caught in a race with China for the resource riches of Central Africa — the agreement is an opportunity to gain access to the ingredients it needs for its “green and clean energy objectives.”

The EU's critics hit back that the pact will create a smokescreen to smuggle “blood minerals” out of eastern Congo — not least because Rwanda is accused of playing a decisive role in the war on the other side of the border with its support for an insurgent rebel group called M23.

It is just the old imperialism under a new guise. There is nothing in the deal of benefit to ordinary Rwandans and whatever is advanced by way of incentives will be siphoned off by a corrupt government. But perhaps more importantly, where is the EU's much vaunted concern for human rights? We should all be concerned about that!

The EU's designs to accelerate militarisation – the link was missing in the last issue



The EU is gearing up to boost military spending across the continent amid a perceived threat from Russia and fears of a wavering U.S. commitment, creating avenues for funding military projects through EU-level institutions. The collection of incremental moves aimed at steering the Brussels bureaucracy towards military outcomes flies in the face of the EU's founding myth as a peace project and overturns the primacy of member states in military matters, primarily in the interests of the bloc's arms manufacturers – no matter how it's dressed up!

[Read more here](#)

No transparency here!

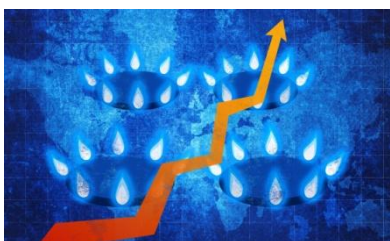


The EU Commission has not sent any documents in response to a public access request regarding Ursula von der Leyen's holiday as a guest of the Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis at his house in Crete last summer.

Politico reports that EU Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly requested public access to all documents related to the holiday, following a complaint by former MEP Sophie in't Veld, who accused von der Leyen of breaching the EU's treaties — allegations the EU executive rubbished. The Commission denied a request from the MEP for documents about the trip, saying it didn't hold any information in the scope of her request. In't Veld argued it was implausible the Commission would hold no documentation relating to the visit by its president to the prime minister of a member country.

In a letter sent to von der Leyen available to read here, O'Reilly said her preliminary view was that the visit must have generated a paper trail and asked the Commission to widen its search. She asked for an explanation if this still turned up nothing.

It wasn't gas at all!



EU auditors have concluded in a recent report that neither the EU's overall response to the 2022 gas crisis nor did its joint purchasing push delivered clear benefits.

2022 saw a six-fold increase in gas prices, and EU countries rushed to subsidise bills. With prices stabilised, the European Court of Auditors found that the EU's contribution cannot be readily identified and that the cross-country solidarity rules need work. The report argues that while the EU managed to provide enough natural gas, it failed on two fronts: affordability was not a priority, and the Commission failed to plan long-term. "The Commission knew already in 2014 that a cut-off of Russian gas would have a huge impact on prices, but never modelled its effects on consumers or industry."

[Read more here](#)

Irish neutrality in action!



Thirty vehicles belonging to the Irish Defence Forces are now being used on the frontlines of the Ukrainian conflict. The vehicles included heavy lift trucks, known as drop trucks, ambulances and Ford Rangers – a style of utility vehicle similar to SUVs. It is not the only aid Ireland has provided – it has included demining vehicles, medical training and more dynamic tactical training for infantry troops.

Sources have said that this training programme had Irish troops teaching war fighting to non-commissioned Ukrainian officers who then returned to their frontline units to coach their own troops in battle techniques and skills taught by the Irish. It is modelled on a 35-day course developed by the British which is a streamlined version of the normal military training.

Sources have said that the Irish had offered to train troops in marksmanship and sniping skills but this was blocked by the Irish Government. Speculation is now rife across the EU military sector that Ireland may adopt a more involved role in training and supply as the war rumbles on. Wouldn't it be so much better if we were calling for a negotiated solution and a ceasefire? Too many on both sides have died and been maimed.

Horsing about with transparency



Ursula von der Leyen has met multiple times with the European Horse Network, even though the equine industry lobby did not have an active entry in the Transparency Register. Von der Leyen did not disclose the meetings, either in her list of contacts with lobbyists or on her public agenda. The Commission says that the interactions fell under the category of “inter-institutional communication” because the meetings with EHN were held in conjunction with [the MEP Horse Group](#).

Von der Leyen was under no obligation to disclose the discussions because they “cannot be considered to be lobby ‘meetings.’” Lobby meetings, it claimed, are a “bilateral encounter ... to discuss an issue related to policymaking and implementation” in the EU.

But the EHN explicitly described discussing the bloc’s animal welfare legislation with von der Leyen. The Commission’s reply creates serious uncertainty about what the Commission president discloses, suggesting that neither the public calendar nor the lobby register “can be trusted as an accurate reflection” of lobbying interactions. This totally undermines the credibility of the Commission’s transparency system.

Speaking out the side of his mouth



The triple-lock is a three-stage process for authorising the deployment of Irish troops on peacekeeping missions abroad, requiring the approval of the Government, the Dáil, and the UN Security Council. Speaking recently in the Dáil, Micheál Martin said: “What we would propose into the future is that in the amendment to the triple lock,” he said, adding: “...I would have to reassert the point that there is no connection between the triple lock and our military neutrality.” However, this is starkly at odds with what the Fianna Fáil leader said on the matter in 2013.

Speaking in the Dáil while in opposition in December 18th 2013, [Martin slammed](#) the then-Fine Gael Defence Minister for trying to “water down” the triple lock. “Earlier this year, the Minister for Defence signalled that he would try to water down Ireland’s commitment to the triple lock, which is at the core of our neutrality,” he said at the time.

“He presented the idea that it was contradictory and that we were giving unsavoury countries a veto over our actions. This argument has been behind the efforts of a wing of Fine Gael to erode neutrality over the years.” Martin went on to say that he “completely rejected” this notion and that the triple lock policy should “reflect the will of the people”, and not the “preferences” of the ruling political party.

Make the EU Great Again – with NATO



[The European Investment Fund](#) (EIF), a subsidiary of the European Investment Bank (EIB), is to cooperate with the [NATO Innovation Fund](#) (NIF) as part of the EIB's recent action plan for security and defence. The two institutions have signed a cooperation agreement (MoU), with a view to facilitating access to finance for EU companies, particularly in the deep tech sector, reports B2pro

“More concretely, the two organisations will exchange knowledge on the investment criteria with the aim to increase funding for small and medium companies (SMEs) and mid-caps” Yet this already does not seem enough, as the EU leaders, after “welcomed the [Security and Defence Action Plan](#) adopted by the EU’s European Investment Bank Group and calling for its swift implementation (...) calls on the European Investment Bank to assess and further adapt, as appropriate, its policy for lending to the defence industry, while safeguarding its financing capacity” in their Council Conclusions.

‘Defence’ is the 2nd priority of the Hungarian presidency. The detailed programme on ‘defence’ from the recent ‘Foreign affairs Council’ is about “continuing implementation of the Strategic Compass” from “setting up the [EU Rapid Deployment Capacity](#) (EU RDC) and the relevant command and control systems” to “strengthening of the [European Defence Technological and Industrial Base](#)”, which includes a “reflection on the future of the European Defence Fund (EDF)” and paying “attention to (...) the expansion of financing options and production capacities, better security of supply, as well as the swift commercialisation of research, development and innovation results”. And of course “advancing the legislative tasks related to the [European Defence Industry Programme](#) (EDIP).” Another priority will be to organise the next [European Political Community](#) (EPC) summit “as an important forum for political dialogue and exchange of views on the European security architecture.”

Another step



The European Central Bank (ECB) has just published harmonised rules and arrangements for the mobilisation and management of collateral in Eurosystem credit operations marking a step towards further financial integration in the euro area and the capital markets union.

The new rules and arrangements can be found in the guideline on the management of collateral in Eurosystem credit operations (ECB/2024/22), which the ECB published today. A document containing further information for Eurosystem counterparties on the harmonised processes, procedures and arrangements involved in the mobilisation and management of collateral in Eurosystem credit operations is also available on the ECB's website.

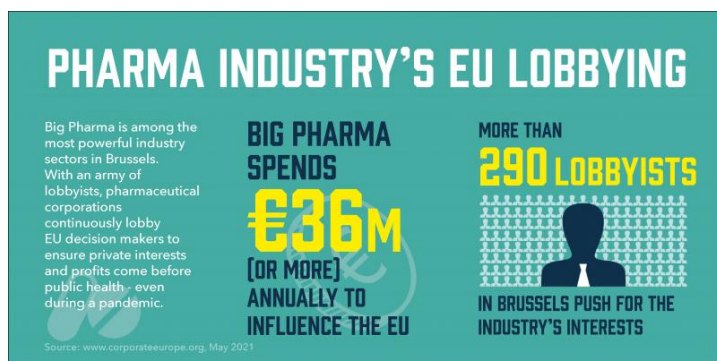
Big pharma stashing profits while patients struggle



This comprehensive [Investigate Europe report](#) looks, among other issues, at the situation in Ireland and the effects of exorbitant drug costs on Irish patients.

"Corporate tax avoidance is not victimless, fewer taxes mean less investment in healthcare in Ireland and also negative impacts for countries in the Global South," says Aileen Elliott of Oxfam Ireland. "Nothing these companies are doing is illegal. They are taking advantage of corporate tax rules."

The rich get well and the poor get sicker.



Confidentiality agreements are allowing pharmaceutical companies to make billions from secretive deals on life-saving medicines, an investigation by Investigate Europe and its partners has found.

Governments across Europe are unaware of what their

counterparts in other countries have paid for a drug – meaning they might pay way over the odds for it or, in many cases, decide they can't afford it at all.

Research at Investigate Europe found evidence that in at least one category of very expensive and important medicines, stronger and richer countries get better deals compared to countries with smaller populations and weaker negotiating powers.