



PEOPLE'S NEWS

News Digest of the People's Movement

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The Government will oppose Mercosur



The Government will oppose the new Mercosur trade deal between the EU and South American countries because of the threat to Irish farming interests.

Officials will examine the [details of the agreement](#) von der Leyen signed in Montevideo, Uruguay, with the leaders of Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay. The contentious deal was under discussion for 25 years. The Lisbon Treaty gave the EU sole rights to negotiate trade deals on behalf of member states.

“Irish farmers will be calling in the promissory notes,” according to the Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association (ICMSA). The Irish Farmers’ Association (IFA) dismissed the Mercosur pact as a “sell-out deal”. Sinn Féin called on the Government to block the “rotten deal”, with MEP Kathleen Funchion saying farmers and environmentalists were “united in their opposition”. The Labour Party said it was “a disaster for Irish farmers and our planet”. But, Ireland does not have a veto and cannot block the deal on its own. Only a blocking minority can do so.

But even if the current opponents (France, Poland, Austria and Ireland) don’t technically have enough power to block the trade pact in Brussels yet, it’s considered a no-no to do deals against the wishes of powerful countries like France and Poland. That means that the deal may not pass - at least in its current form, especially as Italy is sitting on the fence and has indicated the possibility of opposing the deal.

Sarkozy banged up – sort of!



France’s Supreme Court found Nicolas Sarkozy guilty of corruption, with the former president set to serve a one-year prison sentence under house arrest. Following our rejection of the Lisbon Treaty, [Sarkozy said](#) that Ireland would have to hold a second referendum. “The Irish will have to vote again,” he told members of his party. An official in Paris confirmed Mr Sarkozy made the comment.



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MILEX24 - showing off the EU's military capacity

“During the Distinguished Visitors Day, the EU showed its capacity to project force in a rapid, robust and capable way.”



The MILEX24 exercise simulated a crisis scenario in the fictional country of Seglia. The EU needed to respond fast and decided to deploy the Rapid Deployment Capacity (RDC) under the lead of the Military Planning and Conduct Capability. This exercise is an important step towards having the RDC ready for a real deployment in 2025. This was a live-fire exercise.

The exercise trained the EU Battlegroup Force Package 25, as the Rapid Response Force tailored to a Military Rapid Response Operation, for a predefined scenario; the fictional country of Seglia. From 1st January 2025, the EU'S highly mobile forces will be available for operations lasting from 30 to 120 days *in a radius of 6,000 km* from Brussels.

You can [read here](#) about Ireland's involvement. [174 Defence Forces personnel](#) will form part of the German – led Battlegroup and [here is the Irish Time's take](#) – interestingly ending with the statement that “... the Constitution prevents the participation of Ireland in any EU common defence arrangement;” so we can expect a referendum soon??



So, Ireland is [involved militarily in a force for NATO](#). People will become aware when it's too late! The EUROCORPS [home page here](#) tells all.

Strengthening EU spooks



The EU should establish a common intelligence service to consolidate information from member states' intelligence agencies, according to a report on strengthening the EU's military preparedness. Prepared by former Finnish President Niinistö, the report suggests that the EU needs its own intelligence agency, akin to a community-wide CIA, to combat threats, saboteurs, and foreign agents while improving information sharing between capitals. Niinistö advocates for the further development of the Single Intelligence Analysis Capacity (SIAC), which integrates the EU Intelligence and Situation Center and the EU Military Staff's intelligence. This initiative aims to create a service capable of supporting EU activities and leadership, with incremental implementation expected.

[Read the report here](#)

Greenwashing, 'sustainable' weapons manufacturing



The new EU Commission has declared security and defense as its top priority. Following her election, the Commission's President, von der Leyen, announced her intention to usher in a “new era of European defense and security.” At least €500 billion in additional funding over a decade is required, she said.

To enable this increased investment, Brussels aims to classify military spending as sustainable, according to the EU's “[European Defence Industrial Strategy](#)” (EDIS) [published in March](#). This move would not only enhance the reputation of arms manufacturers but also allow producers of tanks, missiles, and even nuclear weapons to be included in “sustainable” investment portfolios and funds—potentially without investors realising it.

[Read more here](#)

Slippery slope



The Swiss Federal Council has rejected the “Safeguarding Swiss Neutrality” (neutrality initiative submitted with almost [133,000 signatures](#)), which calls for perpetual and armed neutrality to be enshrined in the country's constitution. It also demands that Switzerland should not join any military or defence alliance. Cooperation with such organisations should be limited to cases where Switzerland is attacked.

[In a historic first](#), the Swiss defence minister joined a meeting of NATO's North Atlantic Council in March 2023, while in August 2024 a [working paper](#) commissioned by the Swiss Defense Ministry encourages the Swiss Confederation to collaborate more actively with NATO's security framework. In particular, it advocates the participation of Swiss soldiers in joint Alliance manoeuvres. Switzerland also [recently approved](#) two PESCO projects.

[Read more here](#)

Priorities



In her political guidelines presented on 18th July, Ursula von der Leyen emphasised the importance of defence in completing the EU's single market, with a focus on creating a "European Defence Union." She committed the new Commission to deliver a white paper on European defence within its first 100 days. Commissioners Kaja Kallas (High Representative/Vice President) and Andrius Kubilius (Defence and Space) were assigned the task of preparing this paper, which will primarily address military capabilities, industrial competitiveness, and investment needs.

The white paper will outline key initiatives, including enhanced EU-NATO cooperation, more efficient military spending by Member States, and increased intra-EU collaboration in areas like innovation, procurement, and production. This effort follows the EU Parliament's 2016 call for a white paper on security and defence, marking an important step towards deeper EU military integration.

[The Briefing document is here](#)

Von der Leyen is in total control



The EU Parliament has voted for von der Leyen's second Commission, which started its work on 1 December. The new Commission was approved with the smallest margin since 1993. Furthermore, no country's nominee was rejected, a first since 1999.

Von der Leyen's Commission features unconventional and overlapping portfolio combinations, sparking concerns over inefficiency and power concentration. Furthermore, it appears that she aims to have more personal control over specific policies. To ensure policies follow her agenda, vice presidents are partnered with EPP – her party - observers, while major portfolios like trade, the budget, and fiscal policy remain directly under her control. For the next mandate, it looks like [all roads lead to von der Leyen herself](#) and that she is in total control following this power grab.

More weapons for war as EU military – industrial complex grows



As [arms spending across Europe](#) accelerates, the EU's military industrial - complex grew by 16.9 percent last year, reaching revenue of nearly €160 billion. The sector also saw employment swell by 8.9 percent to reach a head count of 581,000, the Aerospace, Security and Defence Industries Association of Europe (ASD) said. The ASD, [which compiles data](#) from its 3,000 member firms in 17 countries, said that exports outside the bloc also rose in 2023 by 12.6 percent to reach €57.4bn.

“These exports play a vital role in sustaining the competitive economic performance of the EU defense industry,” the association said in a statement.

Breaking down the numbers, the ASD said the military aerospace sector grew by 15.8 percent to reach €64.8bn in revenue in 2023, the naval sector grew by 17.7 percent to €37.9bn and the land sector also grew by 17.7 percent to €56.2bn. The three sectors combined for revenue of €158.8bn. Of the total number of 581,000 employed in military industries, 217,000 work in aeronautics - including 17,700 new jobs added in 2023, while the remaining 364,000 jobs are in the land and naval sectors.

Turning to the combined aerospace, space and defense sectors in Europe, the ASD said total revenue grew by 10.1 percent in 2023 to reach €290.4bn, with firms adding 76,000 new jobs to reach total head count of 1,027,000 last year. But, not a word about the profits generated by manufacturing and exporting these weapons.

Somebody has noticed

Newsweek

World | NATO | Russia | World War III | Baltics | Poland | Lithuania | Estonia | Latvia

Europe Quietly Prepares for World War III

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A thought for the season that's in it!



During a recent meeting in Warsaw in November, the foreign ministers of France, Germany, Italy, Poland, and Spain made a joint declaration stating: “we are determined to stand united with our European and transatlantic partners to think and act big on European security.” The ministers emphasised the need to “to strengthen Europe’s security and defence, using all levers available to us, *including the economic and financing power of the European Union* ... To this aim, we will ... discuss innovative financing ... invest in our critical military capabilities, including air defence, deep precision strikes, drones and integrated logistics, as well in critical infrastructure and cyber defence, while investing in research and development, and using new technologies.”

[Read more here](#)

EU Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly bows out



And on the way, she described the approach to transparency by the Commission under von der Leyen as “quite controlling, and to be honest, wrong.”

The European Ombudsman post recommendations are non-binding but O'Reilly brought crusading instincts to the post, basically looking at whether the institutions are following their own rules. Her strategic choices to seize on hot issues — Martin Selmayr's promotion, [von der Leyen's texts](#), the deaths of [600 migrants off the coast of Greece](#) made O'Reilly a lightning rod and somewhat unpopular with the commission.

O'Reilly said Parliamentarians were constantly asked her advice on how to get the Commission to be more accountable. “That is concerning,” she said — because that's the MEPs' job. Emily got a big send – off as the Ombudsman's office hosted a €35,000 farewell party in September. The event took place at the prestigious Concert Noble in Brussels. Portugal's Teresa Anjinho, a former politician and current adviser to the EU's anti-fraud office, OLAF was elected as her successor.

Mozambique – millions for oppression given in our name



To protect its oil multinationals, the EU has no qualms about funding the armies of African dictatorships. Cabo Delgado, in northern Mozambique, is home to a jihadist guerrilla group that began in 2017 with an attack on police stations in the town of Mocímboa da Praia. This militia, known as Ash-Shabab, meaning ‘the youth’, has pledged its allegiance to Islamic State.

This situation is the main obstacle to exploiting one of the largest gas deposits. Companies from the United States (Exxon Mobil), Italy (Eni) and France (TotalEnergies) have positioned themselves in the region. The latter has invested more than \$20bn in infrastructure that has led to the expulsion of local people from their land.

[Read more here](#)

DCU, Israel and EU-GLOCTER



Since January, Israel's International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) and its home institution, Reichman University, have participated in the EU-GLOCTER project to promote "scientific excellence and technological innovation in counter-terrorism". The project's description offers few details, but its website features an image of soldiers in camouflage raiding a wrecked house.

Dublin City University, which coordinates the project, said the funds initially allocated to the Israeli partners were suspended earlier this year. It did not elaborate on the reasons behind the decision, but the move followed a student-led campaign in Ireland against Israel's involvement in the project. Dáire Keogh, president of DCU, has called for an immediate ceasefire and said that the conflict in Gaza has seen "unimaginable violence, cruelty, and loss of innocent civilian lives. DCU has no university to university partnerships with any Israeli institution. The University also has no investments in Israel." Let's hope so!

Have you heard of the "Europa Experience?"



A review has been ordered of plans to build EU exhibitions known as the "Europa Experience" in all 27 member states, which has cost millions so far and is way behind schedule. The "Experience" in Chatham St in Dublin cost €42m. This was after an "initial investment" of €13.4 million on the existing property; the priciest set-up cost. It opened in October.

With only 15 Europa Experiences finished, the Parliament is getting cold feet, especially as the annual running costs for each one can go as high as €3 million. That's besides the total initial investment, which so far amounts to €110 million. In Copenhagen in 2023, fewer than 9,000 people visited, at a cost to the taxpayer of €46 per person. In Paris, just over 32,000 people visited, costing the taxpayer €92 a head as entry is free. For a project that aims to show how indispensable the EU is to people's lives, it would seem that though the people are less than enthusiastic, it is costing them a packet.

The 'big bang' - €700bn!



Andrius Kubilius, the new EU Commissioner for Defence, is to produce a White Paper within his initial three months in office. It will outline strategies for financing a significant increase in military spending, which he has described as a "big bang" in investment. Kubilius has expressed support for the issuance of common bonds to fund the EU's military needs, suggesting that pooling national military budgets would make debt repayment more manageable for member states.

Kubilius emphasised that the EU currently lacks financing mechanisms for its military spending. He highlighted that building a common air defence shield alone would require an estimated €500 billion. Additionally, upgrading infrastructure to facilitate rapid deployment of military resources across the EU is projected to cost around €200 billion over the next decade. In comparison, the 2021-2027 EU budget has allocated about €10 billion for these purposes. Neutral member states, such as Ireland, Austria, Cyprus, and Malta, could opt out without vetoing the plan.

A 'moral dilemma' for some



As the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and former defence minister Gallant for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity, the EU and some member states now face a critical dilemma: balancing their stated commitment to international law with their longstanding political and economic ties to Israel. The then EU's top diplomat Josep Borrell said the ICC decision to issue arrest warrants is binding on all member states.

The EU, Ireland, Belgium and the Netherlands said they would honour the arrest warrants. Italy said they have no choice but to comply even if they disagree. France's foreign ministry said it was looking into the legal implications. Germany is still "examining" the ruling but is expected to oppose it.

[Read more here](#)

EU research funds flow to Israel despite outrage over Gaza



On October 7, as Israel began its latest war on Gaza following Hamas's incursion into southern Israel, the European Union's position was immediately clear. "Israel has a right to defend itself – today and in the days to come," von der Leyen posted on X, alongside an image of herself with Israel's flag. "The European Union stands with Israel."

Israel has since been placed on [trial for genocide](#) at the International Court of Justice at The Hague and its leaders have been indicted by the International Criminal Court. Yet [the EU continues to partner with Israeli institutions](#) under its "Horizon" scheme, a programme that funds research and innovation. [Data collected by the EU Commission](#) shows that since October 7, the EU has awarded Israeli institutions more than 238 million euros including 640,000 euros to Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI), a top aerospace and aviation manufacturer supplying the Israeli army.

[Read more here](#)

The EU military - industrial complex is doing very well - profits soar



In the first nine months of this year, France's Thales [reported](#) sales were up by 6.2 percent at €14 billion compared to the same period last year, largely driven by defense and security. Over the same period, Sweden's Saab [saw its orders](#) jump by 71 percent to €6.9 billion.

Germany's Rheinmetall "significantly increased its sales and operating result" in the second quarter of the year. "We continue to see increasing demand as European nations need to replenish their defense stocks, which will require long-term efforts," [said](#) CEO Johansson. It "significantly increased its sales and operating result" in the second quarter of the year, and [predicted](#) record sales of €10 billion and an operating profit margin of 14 percent to 15 percent for the full year.

Italy's Leonardo noted double digit growth in the first half of this year, its orders were up 18.8 percent at €10.3 billion and its net result was €555 million, a 166.8 percent increase on the same period in 2023. Their CEO said : "We are in the presence of a special window of opportunity as the defense industry is now part of global security."

And the trend shows no sign of stopping. The world's top 15 defense contractors are forecasting a cash flow of \$52 billion in 2026, almost double the figure for 2021, according to an analysis by the Financial Times. And, the weapons trade booming worldwide. [The SIPRI Annual report is here](#)



**PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT
GLUISEACHT AN PHOBAIL**

The next monthly protest against EU Militarisation

Wednesday January 15th

Dáil Eireann, Kildare St., commencing at 1:00pm.

No to an EU army!
Withdraw from PESCO now!
No to EU Battlegroups!

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

And finally for 2024

A letter from Edward Horgan carried in a number of newspapers:

Christmas should be a time for peace and celebration in the Holy Land and in the Middle East, for Christians, Jews, and Muslims, and for all those who believe in humanitarian principles and the proper rule of international laws. This 2024 Christmas holiday season sees large areas of Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria in ruins with hundreds of thousands dead and injured. War crimes amounting to genocide have been committed with impunity by Israel, supported by the US and its allies.

International laws have been and are still being grossly violated. Large areas of the state of Syria are now occupied by Turkey, United States, Israel, and various rebel groups, including Kurdish forces and by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) who are being described as liberators despite their previous close associations with al Qaeda and ISIS terrorists. Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Yemen, and their peoples have also been devastated by wars waged for resources, in breach of the UN charter. US-dominated Nato, that now includes 24 of the European Union's 27 member states, should have been disbanded at the end of the Cold War, but is now arguably being misused as the equivalent of a global criminal gang enforcer.



All these wars are causing colossal damage to our global environment and increasing the risk of nuclear war. International peace and global justice were never more important, but sadly never more threatened than they are at Christmas 2024.

