



PEOPLE'S NEWS

News Digest of the People's Movement

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Keep the Triple Lock



Irish soldiers could be deployed on peacekeeping missions to the Balkan region or even to Ukraine should a peace deal with Russia emerge.

Two hundred and one troops of the Irish Defence Forces began their two year stint in the German-led EU Battlegroup on January 1st. They will join other EU/NATO militaries

from Hungary, Lithuania, Croatia, Sweden and Belgium as a quick reaction force.


“Deployments will be as a peacekeeping force, and that comes out of the EU security and defense policy, which has shaped the model for the Battlegroup,” according to Comdt. Liam McDonnell, who is tasked with leading troops in operations said. The Irish detachment for the EU Battlegroup is shown above. *(EuroCorps)*

“There are two regions of operations that we will probably be deployed in and those are the Middle East and either the Balkans or recently now you could be looking at a deployment to Ukraine.” Any peace deal in Ukraine may need a force to act as peacekeepers and take up positions along the frontlines in the east of the country. It is unlikely to be a NATO force to achieve that due to tensions between Russia and the alliance but those sources believe that an EU force may be acceptable to both sides though Sergi Lavrov, the Russian Foreign Minister has expressed opposition to an EU force.

With increasing consideration being given to the deployment of EU military on a large scale, appointment of a “Defence Commissioner” and the new Commission being even more belligerent than the previous one, it is increasingly likely that a Battlegroup will be deployed during this term. This would be the first time that such a deployment has taken place and does not necessarily require UN approval.

To facilitate Irish involvement, the Triple Lock, requiring a UN mandate for the deployment of Irish troops would have to be abolished, and Taoiseach Micheál Martin has already stated his intention to do so though the FF election manifesto only referred to making a “sensible” change – now ‘reform’ in the Programme for Government. Of course, if the requirement for a UN mandate in order to deploy Irish troops to combat zones is removed, it is only a short step to a government decision to join NATO. At a minimum, it would allow Battlegroup deployment in the EU Army, underlining the importance of campaigning to keep the Triple Lock. If it is removed, it will be the final nail in the coffin of Irish neutrality.

Protests continue

PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT
GLUISEACHT AN PHOBAIL 

The next monthly protest against EU Militarisation
will be held on Wednesday February 19th
at Dáil Eireann, Kildare St. commencing at 1:00pm.

No to an EU army!
Withdraw from PESCO now!
No to EU Battlegroups!
Keep the Triple Lock

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

Our next protest calling for retention of the Triple Lock in its preset format and against EU militarisation will be held on Wednesday February 19th. It is important at the present juncture as the coalition of FF/FG and its 'Independent' supporters have agreed in the Programme for government to "reform" the Lock, no doubt hollowing it out just like they have done with neutrality, while referring to it as still being policy. Our protests will soon enter their eight year – please try to join us

The EU'S complicity in genocide



An evolving body of law has stripping back the immunity of heads of state for gross human rights abuses, and the potential complicity of third parties and powers in aiding such heads of states and their armies. A further obligation is the prevention and punishment of genocide, as outlined by the UN Genocide Convention. While claims that it is taking place against the Palestinians as a feature of Israeli policy have been dismissed by a core group of ministers in the EU, the human rights fraternity are increasingly convinced that genocide is taking place in Gaza.

This makes the continued arms sales to Israel not only problematic, but potentially criminal. The EU adopts a notably preferential approach to Israel when it comes to the imposition of arms embargoes, leaving the matter to individual member states. We can surmise that is this due to the EU being Israel's second largest arms supplier after the US. The European External Action Service's COARM database reveals that between 2018 and 2022, EU member states sold arms to Israel worth €1.75 billion.

[Read more here](#)

We knew it would come to this



Faced with Trump's demand of 5 percent military spending from his EU NATO allies, NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte didn't go quite that far in his first meeting with MEPs. "I don't want to commit to a number," he said, but "it will be north of 3 percent.

Rutte had a suggestion for member states struggling to hit their targets: look to your social systems, which take up a quarter of many national budgets, repeating an earlier statement that governments should reallocate money from welfare to the military. The burden falls on the ordinary citizen again and our government wants to drag us into this situation by stealth

Irish Chief of Staff attends NATO jamboree



The Chief of Staff of Óglaigh na hÉireann, Lieutenant General Seán Clancy, is also Chair of the EU Military Committee and is pictured above attending a two-day NATO meeting in Brussels on 16th and 17th of January.

Partners, including Ireland, discussed NATO's vigilance & deterrence, strengthening military partnerships, and continued support to Ukraine. The two-day session was finalised by the NATO-Ukraine Council with the Ukrainian Chief of Defence. Is this what the programme for Government means by "a policy of active military neutrality?" You can see the programme and the final press conference [here](#)

We should be very concerned



In a matter of days, governments across the EU will have the power to deploy AI-powered technologies that track citizens in public spaces, conduct real-time surveillance of refugees in border zones and use facial recognition tools against people based on their suspected political affiliations.

These are just some of the loopholes and national security exemptions forced through in the [European Artificial Intelligence Act, the world's first set of laws targeting the sector](#). The legislation is designed to mitigate the myriad bias and privacy fears surrounding the use of AI technologies and algorithms, with the EU saying the law will create "an AI ecosystem that benefits everyone."

We should be concerned, because controversial parts of the regulation will take effect from 2nd February 2025 and EU regulations are binding on member states. Investigate Europe with a number of major newspapers has prepared a [detailed report here](#)

Double - jobbing

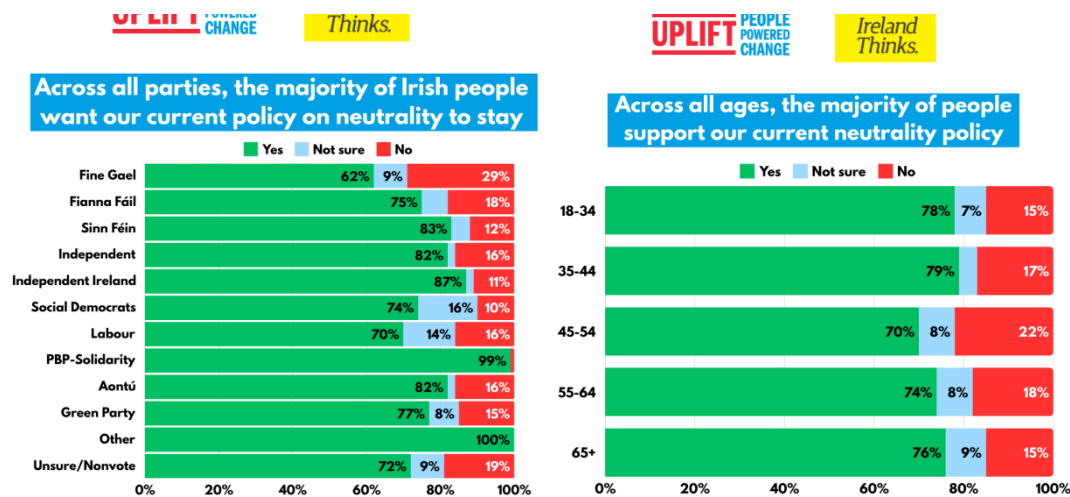
On top of their €125,000 annual salary, MEPs are not barred from making an extra buck on the side. Today Transparency International published [an analysis](#) of members' side jobs, showing that 30% of the hemicycle has declared an additional source of income. [Then there's](#) expenses: these for Irish MEPS from 2019. [Here](#), Matt Carthy, former MEP bares all and shows FG in bad light. It might be cynical to say: they're in it for the money?

Support for neutrality holds firm

The Triple Lock describes the three steps that Ireland must go through before more than twelve members of the Defence Forces are sent abroad on missions. The first is a Government sign-off, the second is Dáil approval, and the third is authorisation from the UN Security Council.

The FF/FG party leaders believe the mechanism hands the five permanent members of the UN Security Council a veto over how and where Ireland decides where to deploy troops. Those who want the mechanism maintained see Ireland moving closer to joining in the current “war frenzy” around the world and becoming involved in NATO/EU military ventures.

Just over 1,200 people were polled by the polling company Ireland Thinks, commissioned by Uplift. 75% said ‘yes’ to Ireland maintaining the current policy, 17% said ‘no’ and 7% were ‘not sure’. More people who identified as Fine Gael voters were among those who said ‘no’. They amounted to 29% of ‘no’ voters while 18% of Fianna Fáil voters said ‘no’.



And, in case you missed this from 2023.....



The Government has spent almost €1.2m on Ireland’s NATO liaison office in Brussels in the last three years to 2023, including more than €800,000 on refurbishments in 2020. In total, the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Defence have collectively spent €1,197,861 on Ireland’s office at the military alliance’s headquarters in Belgium over the three years to 2023.

The data, released via a parliamentary question, shows the remaining €383,206 was spent on rent and phone costs, which are payable directly to Nato. There were eight staff assigned to the office (2023). There were also two Irish officials, from the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Defence Forces, seconded to the NATO international staff.

Neutrality and the Programme for Government

Strong policy base:

The Government will preserve and protect Ireland's policy of active military neutrality. We also recognise that while we strongly value our military neutrality, we are not politically neutral. We will continue to engage with international partners and we will reform the Triple Lock legislation whilst also ensuring that amendments to the legislation are in keeping with our values and policy of active military neutrality.

- Prepare a revised National Security Strategy which reflects the changed geo-political landscape that Europe and Ireland confronts. This will ensure a whole of Government approach to defence and deterrence.

We will also continue to co-operate with international partners in pursuit of our security interests and in line with our values, focussing on:

- International security and peacekeeping
- Protection of critical undersea infrastructure
- More efficient procurement of military equipment
- Cyber security and countering hybrid threats
- Training, upskilling and knowledge sharing

"We will continue to engage with international partners (NATO/EU military) and we will reform the Triple Lock whilst ensuring that amendments to the legislation are in keeping with our values and policy of active military neutrality." It suggests that the Triple Lock will remain, just like neutrality – in name only. Reform must be resisted as it clears the way to active participation in NATO though not necessarily membership.

Unions call for suspension of EU – Israel Association Agreement



Ahead of the upcoming Foreign Affairs Council meeting scheduled for January 27th, European trade union organisations and confederations, including ICTU, SIPTU and Forsa have [called on](#) the European Commission to fulfil its obligations and review the Israeli Government's compliance with article two of the EU-Israel Association Agreement – a position already adopted by Ireland in concert with Spain but in a display of its support for international humanitarian law, kicked to touch on a number of occasions by the Commission

European trade unions are especially concerned about the European Commission's 'failure to act' in the context of ICC ongoing investigation about Israel's plausible genocide, ICC arrest warrants issued for Israeli leaders, UN resolutions and reports as well as ICJ rulings and ICJ Advisory Opinion.

The EU's colonies

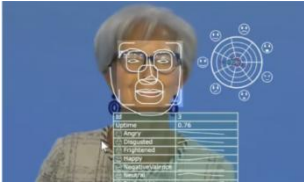
The EU has [thirteen](#) overseas colonies across the Atlantic, Antarctic, Arctic, Caribbean, Indian, and Pacific regions – all of which are islands. These include Denmark's Greenland, whose leader recently called for independence, and the Netherlands' Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, Saba, Sint Eustatius, and Sint Maarten. France oversees French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Saint Barthélemy, Saint Pierre and Miquelon, Wallis and Futuna, and the French Southern and Antarctic Territories. In the case of New Caledonia, an independence movement exists among the indigenous Kanak population.

Former EU Commissioner admits that the EU was responsible for the cancellation of the elections in Romania.

"Let's keep calm and enforce our laws in Europe when there is a risk that they will be bypassed. We did that in Romania and, if necessary, we will have to do it in Germany as well" The iron fist emerges!

- Thierry Breton

What next?



The ECB'S President Christine Lagarde can move financial markets with a frown, while her predecessor, Mario Draghi, used a smile to reinforce his message, a new study has found. An academic paper entitled "The Emotions of Monetary Policy" has found that even a change in facial expression or tone can affect market prices. Researchers from Giessen University in Germany used the latest technology to recognise and classify Draghi's and Lagarde's facial expressions and vocal emotions during the press conferences that follow the ECB's interest rate decisions.

"It seems that Draghi 'kills with kindness' - his words have the intended effect if spoken with a happy face," the six researchers wrote in their paper published this week. Lagarde, by contrast, could boost her market impact with an angry expression. "For President Lagarde... more anger on her face magnifies the hawkish impact on bond yields," the study said. You can read the [paper](#) here!

Musk, unions and the EU



Elon Musk's opposition to unions and growing influence among EU business leaders present a significant threat to workers in the EU, warns Esther Lynch, General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) formerly of ICTU. Lynch emphasises that Musk's extreme political and economic views, particularly his stance on unions, must be challenged to prevent them from becoming normalised in the EU.

Musk has been a vocal critic of collective bargaining rights, and his business practices, including union-busting tactics, have raised concerns. For example, Tesla is engaged in a prolonged dispute with unions over working conditions at a Swedish plant, with Musk labelling the workers' decision to strike as "insane." He has also argued that unions create a divisive "lords and peasants" atmosphere within companies. "I disagree with the idea of unions," Musk said in an interview in 2023. Lynch fears that if Musk's anti-union ideas gain traction, other EU CEOs might adopt similar approaches.

[Read more here](#)

Those undersea cables



We are likely to hear a lot about undersea cables as [our cooperation with NATO](#) on the issue intensifies. Notwithstanding the critical nature of this infrastructure, it is instructive to examine the map of the main Atlantic cables and the relative density and importance of the "Irish" cables on the extreme right. But, [what happens when undersea cables snap?](#)

'Social Europe' is long gone.



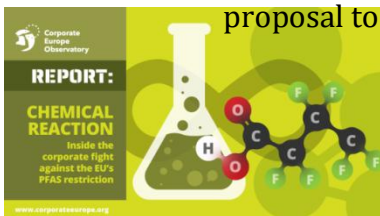
The EU Commission will try to downplay the recent opinion of the European Court of Justice's advocate-general, which could see the EU's minimum wage directive scrapped. The minimum wage directive, adopted in 2022, was a flagship initiative of the last Commission.

After decades in which the EU was mostly known for liberalising markets and removing what it considered restrictions on the freedom of movement for goods and services – including labour rights – the Commission wanted to show that these times were finally over. When the proposal was presented in 2020, von der Leyen even said the directive was about the “dignity of work” given “for too many people, work no longer pays.”

The directive did try to account for that by differentiating rules to fit EU countries' existing systems and leaving much of the implementation up to national governments – to the extent that the directive became non-binding in large parts and unlikely to be implemented. And, concerns over its legality never fully disappeared.

In September 1988, [a speech by Jacques Delors](#), then President of the European Commission, promising a Social Europe, helped convince British trade unionists to support the European Community. The Irish trade union movement followed, having strongly opposed accession, and now find they support a neo-liberal EU.

Chemical reaction



proposal to r The EU proposal to restrict PFAS – or ‘forever chemicals’ – is at serious risk of being hijacked by corporate lobbying. Industry lobbies from Europe and across the world are targeting the EU Commission to protect their PFAS profits from regulation. Corporate Europe Observatory's analysis of newly-released documents reveals industry's influencing

tactics, and concludes: it is time for a lobby firewall to protect PFAS decision-making from corporate lobbying.

PFAS are chemicals used in waterproof coats, cookware, fridges, asthma inhalers, and industrial manufacturing. But these man-made chemicals are very hard-wearing and persistent which means they have huge implications for human health, the climate crisis, and the environment. Manufactured by a handful of companies, PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) are a family of over 10,000 man-made chemicals. Almost indestructible without human intervention and persistent in living organisms, humans included, PFAS have been linked to a dozen illnesses.

[Read the report here.](#)

Why are we funding this?

STIMSON Why have Ireland's Dept of Foreign affairs and Trade [funded](#) a US think tank to the tune of \$69,419? Among their research areas is ['defence policy and posture'](#), The [Stimson Center](#) has received almost \$10 million from the US government and Pentagon contractors, which would suggest that it's of benefit to the US military and that we should not be assisting.

A de facto colony of the US

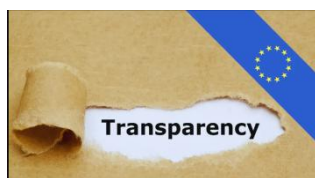


Since his inauguration, Donald Trump has been sending a simple message to the EU: the time to pay up has come. Trump essentially [said](#) yesterday that he loves Europe but not the EU. The latter is “unfair” because it has a high corporate tax, fines US tech firms, and runs a trade surplus in goods with the US. Its [bureaucracy](#) [also](#) poses obstacles to American investments.

Moreover, he wants the EU to buy more American LNG. NATO’s chief also wants the EU to [pay](#) for Ukraine’s future US defence equipment. The question is, who will pay for all this? Germany is facing recession for the third year in a row, while the Commission is struggling to ignore France’s ailing economy.

More EU integration due to Trump sounds unlikely at the moment. Euractive thinks that becoming a *de facto* [colony of the US](#) is the more realistic scenario – as the EU already has militarily..

Who checks the EU?



The EU Commission closely monitors rule of law developments in EU member states and can even sanction noncompliance by withholding EU funds. But who checks how the EU institutions themselves safeguard the rule of law? Until recently, no one! But now, a [report by academics across Europe](#) has investigated

EU bodies' adherence to its own standards for the first time.

As we might expect, the report has a lot to say about EU institutions' lack of transparency and accountability. Its key criticism is that EU bodies rarely, if at all, undergo the type of assessment they perform on member states. They essentially exempt themselves from independent scrutiny. These findings show that regular independent reviews of EU institutions are urgently needed but don't hold your breath, transparency was never its strong point!

NGTs could soon be on your supermarket shelves



You may soon pick up a tomato or a bag of wheat flour at the supermarket – without knowing if it's been genetically modified. That could soon be reality in the EU as governments debate how to regulate a new generation of gene-edited crops.

For years, the EU has [strictly regulated](#) genetically modified organisms (GMOs), which often involve adding genes from other species to enhance traits like pest resistance or higher yields. Most EU countries, except Spain, have banned GMO cultivation due to environmental and health concerns. Now, a new technology called 'new genomic techniques' (NGTs) is stirring debate for the last 18 months.

The government [published a report](#) last June following a public consultation. [Ireland's position on the proposal](#) has been “one of support”, according to the head of crops policy, evaluation and certification division at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), Dr. Barry O'Reilly.

[Read more here](#)

