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The Coalition of the Willing – a further development



The EU is considering the Coalition of the Willing as the basis for a new military alliance without US participation, but with the likely membership of Ukraine, considered the most militarised country among its members. This was reported in [Politico](#) and elsewhere. Ireland [is a member](#) of the Coalition and [attends its meetings](#). It has already committed to deploying troops in Ukraine, in the event of a ceasefire and despite current Russian objections.

Levels of trust in these circles are generally high and national security advisers from 35 governments are in regular contact, meeting frequently online and in person, as well as interacting via less formal text messaging, according to people familiar with the way the group operates. Nor is it just at the level of officials: National leaders are themselves working in intimate new groupings. It is possible that the Coalition could become the basis for a new military alliance or EU Army and the government is fully involved.

EU Battlegroup - Irish contingent

[Eurocorps gathered](#) to bid a warm farewell to the Commanders EUBG 25 and the members of the Irish Army delegation, who provided exceptional support to the German-led European Union Battlegroup (EUBG) 2024/25. The ceremony also marked the successful conclusion of Eurocorps' role as Force Headquarters (FHQ) throughout 2025, during which the headquarters maintained the highest levels of readiness, interoperability, and operational capability in support of the European Union's rapid response force. *The Irish contribution has significantly strengthened multinational interoperability and perfectly embodied the true spirit of European defence cooperation.*
Statement from EUBG25



Next Keep the Triple Lock protest

A number of supporters, some of whom are shown below, braved high winds and torrential rain to stage our monthly protest against abolition of the Triple Lock and the effective end of neutrality. Our next protest is on Wednesday February 18th at 1:00pm. The Cabinet has now approved the necessary legislation, so developments may be fast. Please try to get along and show that you reject this measure.



An excellent briefing paper – all you need to know



[This paper](#) examines the policy and legal contexts of neutrality along with the various Acts, EU referendums, domestic defence policy and international law framework set within the UN Charter. It then examines the latest developments in the EU's Common security and Defence Policy followed by an appraisal of the legislative proposal –

the abolition of the Triple Lock. It concludes by presenting selected arguments for and against the proposal. The Paper contains copious links and footnotes and is a very valuable resource.

Rhetoric of 'mutual benefit' obscures Mercosur deal's elite interests



A critical examination of the Mercosur-EU trade deal reveals it as a pact that primarily serves transnational capital and export-oriented elites, potentially accelerating a destructive "race to the bottom" in social and environmental standards on both sides of the Atlantic.

In the Mercosur countries, the primary winners are the powerful agribusiness and extractivist sectors; the large-scale producers of beef, soy, sugar, and minerals. The deal grants them locked-in, tariff-free access to the vast EU market, incentivising further expansion, land concentration, and exploitation of resources. This comes at the direct expense of smallholder farmers, Indigenous communities, and landless rural workers, who face increased displacement and market marginalisation. The local industrial sector will be further hollowed out by cheaper, subsidised EU manufactured goods.

[Read more here](#)

Have you heard of the 28th regime – another attempted power grab?



[Under this measure](#), to be introduced as a legislative proposal by EU Commissioner Michael McGrath (FF) in March, companies would be allowed to opt in to a uniform, EU-wide legal framework that is ostensibly designed to help them register and invest across all 27 member states. This regime would, in theory, bypass long-stalled efforts to harmonise national laws on a piecemeal basis, thus allegedly

helping the EU close its ‘innovation gap’ with China and the US.

The regime is specifically designed to wrench control of core member state competences – including bankruptcy, taxation, [and employment laws](#). If enacted, member states would be handing over large parts of their legal systems to Brussels.

Gung – ho Kallas calls for the phasing out EU states’ key veto powers



The need for unanimous decisions from members is making the bloc slow to react, the EU’s top diplomat has argued. The EU should use qualified majority voting more often for foreign and military policy instead of requiring unanimous decisions, [foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas has said](#).

“We should dare to also consider the Q-word. Meaning a gradual extension of qualified majority in Common Foreign and Security Policy,” she said in a speech at the European Defense Agency’s annual conference. “Unanimity means we cannot always act at the speed of relevance.” She also urged the EU to consider establishing “military capabilities” for the bloc, financed by member states. It’s another strong argument for keeping the Triple Lock as a [Qualified Majority decision](#) by the 15 bigger states would bind us to go to war in its absence.

The abolition of the Triple Lock is a betrayal of democratic principles.



The Government’s accelerated moves to abolish the Triple Lock mechanism represents a profound betrayal of the solemn commitments made to the Irish public during the Nice II (2002) and Lisbon II (2009) referendums. This mechanism—requiring a UN mandate, government approval, and Dáil approval for overseas troop deployments—was explicitly presented as an ironclad safeguard for Ireland’s neutrality. The 2002 Seville Declaration, endorsed by the EU, was a binding commitment that Ireland would maintain this condition for its participation in EU security initiatives. By dismantling it, the government is violating an explicit “social contract” with the Irish people and eroding public trust.

[Read more here](#)

Does FG support removing the veto on EU foreign and military policy?



Leaders from the EPP group – the largest in the EU Parliament, and of which Fine Gael is a member - meeting in Zagreb last week reduced the group’s 2026 priorities to four pillars: defence, competitiveness, demographics and irregular migration. They were particularly [keen to put the EU’s mutual defense clause into effect](#). EPP President Manfred Weber arguing that it offered a stronger mutual defence pledge than NATO’s Article 5. Everything will be “on the table,” he insisted.

The EPP will task two heads of state or government with looking at how to implement the [EU Treaty’s Article 42.7](#). [A policy paper](#) pointed to nine areas where the EU needs to develop military capacity, including drones, space and missile defense.

The EPP’s policy still considers NATO as the cornerstone of EU defense. Unanimity in foreign policy was a unanimous target. Weber wants to allow coalitions of EU capitals to act without being blocked by others. Germany’s Merz openly backs a shift to majority voting echoing Kaja Kallas’ earlier call. The Councils’ December [decision](#) on Ukraine showed that EU “coalitions of the willing” can move ahead despite veto threats – a precedent that may not remain exceptional for long. And what position does Fine Gael take? Is the government about to sign away our veto? Will there even be a debate?

The EU plans to share your data with ICE

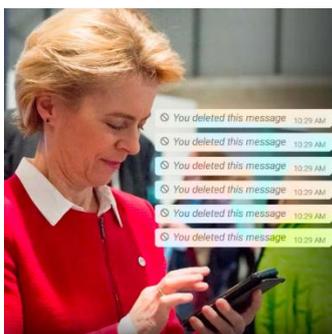


Despite mounting scrutiny over the use of surveillance technology by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the EU is [moving forward with negotiations](#) to grant unprecedented access to Europeans’ personal data. The EU Commission is working on a deal to share information about travellers, including fingerprints and law enforcement records, with the U.S., [enabling American authorities](#) to assess whether individuals “pose a risk to public security or public order.”

Negotiations began last week with a delegation from the EU Commission visiting Washington, as part of discussions for a new framework. This would create bilateral agreements called [Enhanced Border Security Partnerships](#) (EBSPs), which would provide U.S. border agencies access to European police databases. Critics, warn that this could allow U.S. authorities to review sensitive data on anyone, from activists to journalists, who may be deemed a “threat” and potentially barred from entry or detained.

The U.S. seeks access to biometric data, including fingerprints, to tackle irregular migration, serious crime, and terrorism. The deal comes with pressure: EU countries must finalize agreements by 2026 or risk being excluded from the U.S. visa waiver program, which could have major travel and diplomatic repercussions.

von der Leyen's texts - again



The EUObserver reports that the EU Ombudsman is set to investigate yet again how von der Leyen handles – and withholds – her text messages. The [present case](#) revolves around a text sent by Emmanuel about the Mercosur trade deal. The Commission claims that the text was not sufficiently original to be kept and [admitted](#) deleting a journalists requested access. The Commission has never archived – or released – a single text message in response to an access-to-documents request.

The Commission [told](#) the Ombudsman that it would, in principle, keep messages between von der Leyen and EU leaders – just not in the case of Macron's Mercosur text. The renewed probe may shed light on how the Commission manages digital communications at the highest levels, with huge implications for transparency – and perhaps for von der Leyen herself.

A cool [Trillion Euro](#) wasted



The EU has embarked on a massive revival of its military industry. According to estimates, it will take [about €1 trillion](#) to completely replace US military capabilities, reports *The Wall Street Journal*. The production of drones, tanks, ammunition, and other equipment is growing at its fastest pace in decades. The EU spent \$560 billion on defense in 2025, twice as much as ten years ago. By 2035, spending on equipment will be 80% of the Pentagon's level. The German company Rheinmetall has opened or is building 16 new factories and will soon be able to produce 1.5 million artillery shells per year — more than the entire US industry. War preparations continue apace while housing and healthcare are ignored and our government prepares to jettison the Triple Lock and increase military spending.

From [The CSDP report just adopted by the EU Parliament](#)



'Stresses that the EU and NATO play complementary and mutually reinforcing roles in enhancing international security; underlines the need for further progress in EU-NATO cooperation, including through increased intelligence- and information-sharing, considers, that the term 'European pillar of NATO' lacks definition and masks the failure of EU Member States to properly implement the CSDP, in particular Article 42(2) and Article 42(7) TEU considers that the EU and its Member States must be ready to act autonomously on the basis of Article 42(2) and Article 42(7) TEU, in particular in the unlikely event of paralysis of NATO decision-making.'

The Triple Lock and the Case of Ireland in Mali



If the Triple Lock is dismantled, EU-led full-combat peace-enforcement missions will be the first port of call for future Irish military engagement abroad. The case of the EU-led neo-colonial war in Mali and the Sahel is a stark example of why the Triple Lock should be strengthened, not removed. [This article](#) gives an insight into what EU-led 'peacemaking' missions involve - the kinds of missions many more Irish Defence Forces will be sent on if the Triple Lock is removed.

'Regrets' but forge ahead



Ireland's EU Commissioner Michael McGrath (FF) has said says he "regrets" the decision by the European Parliament to refer the EU-Mercosur trade agreement to the European Court of Justice. "I am certain it is in the interest of Ireland and of the wider European Union" he continued despite the widespread opposition among Irish farmers and environmental groups.

EU Agriculture Commissioner Hansen later told the Dáil that: "The mandate given by the Council is very clear: the Commission has the possibility to go for provisional application," While no decision has been taken, he added, this will be "done together with co-legislators," - the EU Parliament. If this process succeeds then the agreement will be applied prior to any Court decision, as the Council has already endorsed it.

Albanese's view of the EU



Never would I have imagined seeing European leaders turn against their own citizens- crushing protest, free journalism, academic freedom-all to avoid holding a genocidal state to account. Yet, history rarely announces itself as barbarism; it often arrives disguised as civilization.

Francesca Albanese

If you have savings, Brussels has its eye on them



Brussels issues final call for integrated capital markets – The Commission will urge willing EU members to forge ahead with [integrating their capital markets](#) if there is no EU-wide '[Savings and Investment Union](#)' - [supported by IBEC](#) - by the end of this year, according to von der Leyen. The SIU seeks to channel trillions of euros in EU citizens' private savings towards productive investments to boost the bloc's faltering economy.

The EU needs the bomb

German [Chancellor Merz said](#) on 29 January that EU countries are beginning to consider the idea of a shared nuclear shield and confirmed that European nations have begun early-stage discussions regarding a shared European nuclear shield.



This, in a week when the only remaining nuclear arms control treaty between the U.S. and Russia, the [Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty](#), NewSTART, expired. Russia withdrew from NewSTART in 2023, though both sides adhered to the numerical limits of *deployed* nuclear weapons, 1550 each. Though President Putin has made several overtures to the U.S. administration has offered to renegotiate NewSTART. Tepid responses - President Trump; [“If it expires, it expires”](#) - have left the treaty defunct. Here’s [the latest](#)

[Read more here](#)

A Two – Speed EU surfaces again



Germany is leading an initiative to create a “two-speed” EU, proposing that a core group of six major economies (E6) bypass the bloc’s traditional consensus-based decision-making to accelerate defense cooperation and industrial competitiveness. The German Finance Minister Klingbeil and his French counterpart, jointly convened finance ministers from Poland, Spain, Italy and the Netherlands on Jan. 28 for a video conference to establish what is being called the E6.

“Now is the time for a Europe of two speeds,” Klingbeil said. He presented a four-point agenda that makes military spending a priority alongside a [Savings and Investment Union](#), strengthening the Euro and securing critical raw materials. The document calls for enhanced collaboration on military spending and urges making defense a key focus in the next EU multiannual budget.

The letter also calls for “turning defense into an engine for growth” for the continent’s economy, which is one of the seldom spoken rationales behind EU militarisation. Klingbeil plans to have a follow-up meeting on the sidelines of the next Eurogroup meeting, a gathering of finance ministers of the Euro-zone. Let’s hope Micheál Martin doesn’t get any more ideas!

Spain calls for an EU Army



Spain’s foreign minister, José Manuel Albares, has called on the EU to take full control of its own security, arguing that the continent must move “towards a European army. We need firstly a coalition of the willing of EU security, secondly, an integration of our industries of defence and in the end an EU army.”

An EU ICE



The right across the EU is increasingly drawing inspiration from the aggressive tactics of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), infamous for its militarised raids in Minneapolis that left Alex Pretti and Renee Good dead. In Bavaria, Germany's Alternative for Germany (AfD) has suggested forming a force modelled on ICE to detain and deport migrants, while Belgium's Vlaams Belang and members of Slovenia's Democratic Party (SDS) have echoed similar calls.

Alarming, the EU itself is moving toward policies that mirror this harsh approach, with proposals for deportation centres outside the EU, pushbacks of asylum seekers, and sophisticated digital surveillance systems. A late addition to last year's EU deportation bill would even permit police to break into homes suspected of sheltering undocumented migrants. Such measures, framed as vital for border control, erode fundamental rights and normalise authoritarian practices. This creeping shift poses grave dangers—not only to migrants, but to all European residents who could one day become targets of state overreach.

[Read the latest from EUObserver here](#)

The Democratic Deficit laid bare

EU leaders meet this week to navigate a geopolitical landscape that requires them to make some of the most consequential strategic decisions in decades. In the name of 'necessity' and 'urgency', choices about defence, industry, trade, and strategic autonomy are being made at a break-neck speed, often with minimal debate and limited scrutiny. Public participation is increasingly assumed rather than sought. Organised civil society is shut out. Several successful European Citizens' Initiatives have gone unanswered. And elected representatives, in both Parliament and Commission, are sidelined, while corporate lobbyists increasingly dominate the EU political agenda.

[Read more here](#)



