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The EU 'Peace Project' morphs into a war project



getting ready to reap the benefits.

Now that EU leaders – including our own apparently unaccountable heroes - have agreed a plan for Member States to buy arms together, the bloc is speeding toward a new stage of defense integration and a standardised EU Army. As might be expected, weapons-makers from both sides of the Atlantic have been scrambling for meetings with key commissioners and MEPs, while lobbying firms are employing military experts in their Brussels offices. The EU 'peace project' is setting about building war chest of weaponry — and lobbyists are

[Read more here](#)

Mercosur is now on the table



The EU is coming around to the idea of concluding the Mercosur deal, with "decisive progress" possible by July, a senior EU official and Sweden's trade minister said last week. The EU and the Mercosur bloc completed negotiations 2019 but the deal has been on hold due a number of particularly, French concerns around the environment

Now, the EU believes Lula's defeat of Bolsonaro in the Brazilian presidential election has created a window of opportunity because he supports the deal. "We see the next EU-Latin America summit in July as an important juncture, by when we should have decisive progress," Commission Vice President Dombrovskis said, while the trade minister of EU president Sweden, hoped that the process could be completed in the coming months.

Simon Coveney said fellow ministers believed a final deal could be concluded this year. "There are strong positives and some negatives as well," he said referring to the likely

impact on Ireland. "We will try to be constructive in the context of Mercosur also, while recognising that Ireland has particular concerns that we need to try to protect against" Whats the betting he gives in?

The emerging international order?



[This report](#) from the EU-funded [European Council for Foreign Relations](#) gives a fascinating insight into the emerging international order and how distinct similarities are evident between the world view of US citizens and citizens of the surveyed EU member states.

Unfortunately, Ireland was not among the countries surveyed and it would be instructive to carry out a similar survey here in order to point up the divergence between the views of citizens and those of the government, which always chooses to play with the EU big boys, irrespective of the former's views.



Is the EU Green Deal bad for workers?



[In this article](#), Esther Lynch, general secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation and formerly of ICTU, argues that while the text of the Green Deal Industrial Plan states: "Greater competitiveness must go hand in hand with well-paid quality jobs," that so far, the EU has failed to include any social conditions in the plan to maintain or create those well-paid quality jobs.

"The European Commission has in effect written a blank cheque to corporate CEOs. It would mean billions of euros in public money could find its way in to the hands of union-hating bosses putting downward pressure on wages and working standards." So, might one conclude that as it stands, the EU Green Deal is bad for workers?

No let up in the decline of an industry



The number of fishing boat owners applying for decommissioning under the Department of Agriculture's so-called 'Voluntary Decommissioning Scheme' has more than doubled since last month. 42 fishing boats are to be scrapped – up from a figure of 20 in February. This is out of a total of 57 so-called 'letters of offer' that have been issued to the 64 owners who had initially applied last year from the 180-strong fleet eligible for decommissioning.

[Read more here](#)

Von der Leyen's negotiations resulted in billions in profit for Pfizer



Early last year, when vaccines against Covid were still scarce, Von der Leyen told the New York Times that she personally clinched a deal over 1.8bn doses in calls and messages with the CEO of Pfizer, Albert Bourla.

According to a leaked partial contract, the deal Von der Leyen negotiated with Pfizer raised the price per dose from an initial €15.50 per vaccine dose to €19.50. This amounts to billions in profit for the Pfizer. The high cost of EU vaccine purchases came at the expense of strained public healthcare workers and countries in the Global South.

[Read more here](#)

At our March protest against EU Militarisation

TDs Mairead Farrell, Thomas Pringle, Eoin O Broin, Matt Carty and Joan Collins looked in on the last Peoples Movement protest against EU militarisation at the Dáil.



Our next protest will be held on Wednesday April 19th at Dáil Eireann.

O'Reilly identifies EU “impunity” as an issue



“Sometimes, the reason that I am giving for the non-implementation of a recommendation is not, ‘Because I’ve made a mistake,’ ‘My colleagues have made a mistake,’ or, ‘we’ve got the wrong end of the stick.’ But it’s simply because an institution simply doesn’t want to do something, and sometimes there is an element of impunity there. They feel that they can get away with it.” Her recent report prompted Mick Wallace to tell the Parliament that she is a “seriously good bit of stuff.”

— Emily O'Reilly, EU Ombudsman, [speaking](#) at the EU Parliament about her work in 2022.

EU plans a new satellite constellation with military applications



The [Commission](#) has [launched a tender](#) for a contract to build an EU satellite constellation dubbed IRIS² (Infrastructure for Resilience, Interconnectivity and Security by Satellite).

IRIS² aims to provide **EU** member states with guaranteed access to secure, sovereign, and global connectivity services to protect critical infrastructure, surveillance, and military applications, among other uses. The tender is the step towards implementing the constellation, which will have an initial EU budget of €2.4 billion.

Despite some differences, the EU adheres to NATO



The EU and NATO have recently signed a [joint declaration](#) committing to play [mutually reinforcing](#) complementary and coherent roles while also reaffirming NATO as the foundation of Euro-Atlantic security. “Complementarity”, among other things, has been a key message as the two organisations have been operating within one another’s core policy areas in response to the war in Ukraine.

The EU has continued acting beyond its broadly historical division of labour with NATO, according to which the EU would deal with civilian aspects of the conflicts and leave military matters to NATO. For instance, the EU has mobilised its [European Peace Facility](#) to provide [€3.6 billion](#) in support of Ukraine’s armed forces, who are being trained by the EU Military Assistance Mission ([EUMAM](#)).

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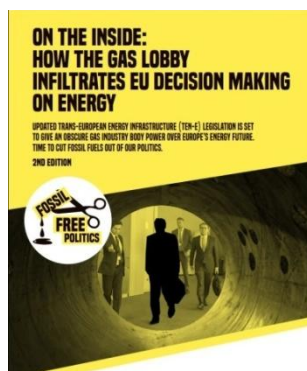
German business lobbying and the EU climate agenda

Germany has been at the forefront in promoting hydrogen, pushing it to the centre of European climate and industrial policies. In recent weeks German politicians have derailed an EU-wide agreement to phase out combustion engines by 2035, and successfully pushed in the EU Parliament for the inclusion of hydrogen boilers for heating homes, responsible for 35 percent of greenhouse gas emissions in the EU. German politicians are in awe of the car manufacturers but the influence of the hydrogen lobby on EU policies is less well-known.



[In a report published](#) last week detailing the lobbying activities of a broad network of German companies, industry associations and consultancies, Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO) has now identified 100 businesses that have driven the 'hydrogen dash' in Germany, influencing the wider EU policy in the process.

Was it lobbying?



Fine Gael MEP Seán Kelly met representatives of the gas industry at three dinners held to debate energy policy did not fall under the EU Parliament's mandatory reporting rules, but then the MEPs make the rules, don't they?

Kelly, who led negotiations on a key directive about improving the energy efficiency of buildings on behalf of the European People's Party (EPP), attended dinners organised by the [European Energy Forum](#), of which he is a member. The events [came under scrutiny](#) after a controversial amendment favoured by the liquid gas industry was included at the insistence of the EPP in the update of the energy performance of buildings directive, a key plank of the EU's green deal efforts to meet its climate goals.

[It was reported](#) that Kelly had met the general manager of lobby group Liquid Gas Europe, at the dinners. He was also a speaker at an online event organised by Liquid Gas Europe in June 2022. You'd wonder!

[Read more here](#)



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Reform of EU Fiscal Rules



The economic think tank TASC has noted in a recent report that though being a central pillar of EU economic policy, the bloc's fiscal rules have grown "more complicated and difficult to understand", been breached frequently and have failed to prevent the emergence of sovereign debt crises.

The legally binding rules, originating in the Maastricht Treaty, compel EU states to keep their public deficit and debt-to-gross domestic product ratios within certain thresholds. EU finance ministers are agreeing a reformed set of rules to be adopted this year. Tasc says that the new rules must facilitate "Europe's public investment challenges in the coming years". Chief among the measures advocated is raising the public debt target from 60 per cent to 100 per cent.

[You can read the report here](#)

A wartime economy model



EU Commissioner for the Internal Market Thierry Breton has a plan to boost the EU's weapons production capacity: turbo-charging a little-known program that encourages home-grown military investments. The program: The European Defense Industry Reinforcement through Common Procurement Act (EDIRPA) only has €500 million in the pot. However, Breton is seeking to grow the initiative, launched last year, into a vehicle for getting EU's manufacturers up to wartime production needs. It's all part of the EU's [recent move](#) to jointly procure ammunition and ramp up local production.

"I believe it is time that the European defense industry moves to a wartime economy model to cater for our defense production needs," Breton, told POLITICO. "I am fully determined to support the production ramp-up of the EU defense industry to face the realities of a high-intensity conflict — starting with the question of ammunition." The arms manufacturers must be rubbing their hands as we move towards an EU military – industrial complex!

Digital Euro on the way



ECB President Christine Lagarde has said that [a digital euro](#) would play a key role in safeguarding European [payment autonomy](#) (video). Looking at the cards or mobile apps we use, "you very soon realize that those means of payments are not necessarily European," she said; the European Commission is expected to put forward a proposal on the digital euro by June.

EU and space strategy



The Commission has launched a new [strategy document](#) on [space and defence](#) to little publicity, despite the fact that it will launch another €3 billion worth of publicly-funded satellite hardware into orbit. Among the Commission's objectives is to "enhance the technological sovereignty of the EU by reducing strategic dependencies and ensuring security of supply for space and defence, in close coordination with the European Defence Agency and the European Space Agency."

Ireland rejects nuclear – made hydrogen move



EURACTIV reports that seven EU countries led by Germany and including Ireland have rejected calls to incorporate nuclear-made hydrogen into the bloc's green transport targets, reigniting a dispute with France that has held back an agreement on the bloc's renewable energy directive. [In a letter to the European Commission](#), the seven countries reiterate their opposition to including nuclear power in calculating green transport fuel targets.

"We share the view that the production and use of low-carbon hydrogen and low-carbon fuels should not be incentivised through a directive on the promotion of renewable energy," says the letter, dated 16 March and signed by Austria, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Portugal, and Spain.

France, a major nuclear power and eight other EU countries have called for exempting nuclear-derived fuels from green transport targets in the renewables directive. In practice, this would be done by withdrawing those from the denominator used to calculate binding targets for green transport fuels.

Sovereign nation-states – not a federal EU



Polish Prime Minister Morawiecki [has highlighted](#) the role of sovereign nation-states against an EU federation. Poland has always expressed doubts over deepening EU institutions and Morawiecki highlighted the role of sovereign nation-states in "maintaining the freedom of nations."

"Nothing will safeguard the freedom of nations, their culture, their social, economic, political and military security better than nation states," Morawiecki said, adding that "other systems are illusory or utopia," warning of a further federalisation of the EU. The alternatives to a EU of sovereign nation-states would be a "technocratic utopia, which some in Brussels seem to envision" or a "neo-imperialism", the Polish prime minister said. "If the individual nations of the European Union seek to dominate others, Europe may fall prey to the same mistakes of the past," Morawiecki added.

Ukraine's application progresses?



The evaluation by the EU Commission of Ukraine's progress in fulfilling the recommendations for EU accession will be presented in May and by then, most of them will be implemented, Ukraine's Deputy Prime Minister for EU Integration, Stefanishyna, told European Pravda. The Commission recommended EU candidate status for Ukraine last June, on the understanding that Kyiv undertakes a series of legislative and policy steps, dubbed the seven recommendations.

The EU will also include an 'anti-oligarchic' criterion, though Ukraine is in no hurry to implement it. Instead, the Ukrainian government has promised to shift to reducing the influence of oligarchs through anti-monopoly and anti-corruption measures without drawing up a controversial "oligarch register." "In times of war, naming and shaming, especially naming certain persons who are subject to this law, is not a priority," Stefanishyna said. So oligarchs will continue to rule in one of the most corrupt of countries while the EU relentlessly pursues its political objectives.

Sports cars are fine but ditch your auld banger



EU environment ministers agreed last week on a 2035 phase-out of combustion engine cars, concluding a controversial leg of negotiations with Germany. The agreement will ban the sale of carbon-emitting cars after 2035 and requires car producers to achieve 55 percent CO2 emission reduction from 2030 to 2034 compared to 2021.

"The direction is clear: in 2035, new cars and vans must have zero emissions. It brings a big contribution to climate neutrality by 2050 and is a key part of the EU Green Deal," according to the EU's green deal commissioner Frans Timmermans. Only Poland rejected the regulation outright. Italy, Bulgaria and Romania abstained. Italy wanted biofuels to be included in the final text, but the EU Commission rejected this. Some sports cars are exempted from meeting the earlier target and may be allowed to run on e-fuels following pressure from Germany, which threatened to reject the proposal.

New jobs



Former Irish EU permanent representative Declan Kelleher has been appointed chair of the governing board of the European Policy Centre. Kelleher, a former Irish ambassador to China, succeeds fellow Irishman David O'Sullivan, who is now the EU Commission's sanctions envoy. Kelleher's brother is Colm Kelleher, the banking executive and chair of UBS — Credit Suisse's new owner.

Eamonn Brennan, who has stepped down as head of Europe's air traffic control agency Euro control in December, will start as a non-executive director of Ryanair's board on April 1. The move is raising eyebrows in the aviation sector, as reported in the EU Influence newsletter as he apparently offered Ryanair privileged access to Euro control.