

CAN YOU MAKE IT TO THE TOP ONCE YOU HAVE KIDS?

Margaret E Ward
World of Work



What the f**k, in the parlance of the US president, is Ursula von der Leyen doing, phoning a fugitive from the International Criminal Court to egg him on with his killing crusades?

Justine McCarthy
Opinion



IRELAND'S LONG AND SHAMEFUL HISTORY OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Diarmaid Ferriter
Opinion

Ireland backs €150bn defence plan as EU moves to rearm

Government believes joining will allow State to secure equipment at lower cost

Decision likely to draw criticism from pro-neutrality campaigners

CONOR GALLAGHER and MARTIN WALL

Ireland is to sign up to a major new EU defence initiative that will allow member states to jointly procure military equipment as the bloc seeks to rapidly rearm in the face of Russian aggression.

The EU regulation, known as Security Action for Europe (Safe), relaxes procurement rules for defence purchases and allows countries to work together to develop and acquire military capacities.

The Government believes becoming a member will allow Ireland to secure military equipment at a lower cost and faster pace – in some cases up to two years earlier than under existing procurement arrangements.

The Safe initiative also makes €150 billion available to member states, in the form of low-interest, long-term loans, to rapidly increase defence spending amid doubts over the United States' commitment to European security.

Ireland is not signing up to the loan facility yet, but is closely examining it as a potential funding mechanism for the modernisation of the Defence Forces. A decision on availing of the defence loans is expected in the near future, sources said.

The decision to sign up to the Safe regulation represents a significant step towards closer co-operation between Ireland and the EU on defence issues.

Further erosion

It is likely to draw significant criticism from pro-neutrality campaigners who will view it as further erosion of Ireland's non-aligned status within Europe.

During previous discussions on the proposals, Taoiseach Micheál Martin said joint defence procurement is about achieving value for money and would have no impact on neutrality.

The Safe initiative is a core pillar of the European Commission's ReArm Europe Plan, which aims to inject €800 billion into the EU's defence industry over the coming years.

Tánaiste and Minister for Defence Simon Harris is expected to announce the decision to join Safe today.

Ireland will use its membership of the plan to focus on acquiring artillery, cyber and air defence systems as well as replacing the Army's fleet of armoured personnel carriers.

Partially financed

Under Safe, Ireland will partner with other countries to purchase this equipment, resulting in cost savings. In some cases, the equipment will be partially financed by EU loans obtained by the partner countries.

For example, if Germany is acquiring a new batch of artillery shells, it will be able to amend its order to include Ireland as a partner. This would allow Ireland to obtain a small portion of the shells at a much lower price than if it had ordered them alone.

Safe's goal is two-fold; to build up the military capabilities of member states and to support a native EU defence industry independent of the United States.

In order to qualify for Safe support, 65 per cent of the value of purchases must be from an EU country or Ukraine.

Mr Harris is expected to argue that joining Safe will allow Ireland to speed up the acquisition of capabilities such as air defence and sonar systems, two priority spending areas for the Government.

He said he is determined to "provide for the development of a full spectrum of Defence Force Capabilities that will bring Ireland in line with other similar-sized European countries," he said.

"I have agreed, therefore, that the Department of Defence should leverage the common procurement opportunities offered under the Safe Regulation as much as possible to progress delivery of Ireland's defence capabilities needs as quickly as possible."

Interest from other countries on Occupied Territories Bill: page 2



Flowerpot power
Glastonbury kicks off

Glastonbury festival was up and running yesterday with more than 200,000 ticket-holders set for a long weekend of performing arts and music. Campers can expect a mixed bag of sunshine and rain at what promises to be a politically charged gathering at Worthy Farm in Somerset, with the spotlight firmly fixed on Irish-language rap trio Kneecap, who have been subject to ongoing scrutiny over their strong opposition to Israel's actions in Gaza.

Photograph: Ben Birchall/PA

Mental health watchdog critical of some HSE-run centres

SHAUNA BOWERS

Health Correspondent

Patients at a number of HSE-run mental health centres are receiving substandard care due to "persistent, critical" non-compliance with regulations, requiring "urgent redress", the sector's watchdog has found.

The Mental Health Commission is to publish its 2024 annual report today, which also points to a number of positive improvements in recent years.

According to the report, six

centres – four of which were HSE-run – were 100 per cent compliant with regulations, and there was a reduction in the use of restrictive practices.

However, Prof Jim Lucey, inspector of mental health services, said the number of breaches of minimum standards and critical non-compliances has increased, and "the bulk of these is concentrated in a small number of HSE-led services".

The National Forensic Mental Health Service had 17 breaches with regulations,

while Elm Mount in Dublin, Tallaght University Hospital, St Stephen's Hospital in Cork and the Department of Psychiatry in Letterkenny were also highlighted for non-compliances.

In terms of "critical" non-compliances, Cork University Hospital had the highest with eight, followed by Tallaght University Hospital in Dublin, which had six, and Portlaoise Hospital, which had four non-compliances rated critical.

The Department of Psychiatry in Letterkenny and the independent sector provider St John of God Hospital in Stillorgan, Co Dublin each had three non-compliances rated as critical.

"Human rights and dignity" According to Prof Lucey, regulations around therapeutic services, general health, risk management procedures and privacy are "matters of human rights and dignity".

"The fact that these humanistic care standards are breached so persistently in some HSE-ap

proved centres and at this level is a matter of great concern to the inspector," he said, stating these breaches are "matters in need of urgent redress".

"Substandard levels of staffing, and persistent neglect of approved centre premises, are not matters to be minimised. I find it increasingly necessary to ask this question: why do some HSE centres persistently operate with poor levels of compliance?"

The commission has written to the HSE seeking interven-

tion in centres that are found to be persistently non-compliant.

Overall, the report highlights significant progress in the standard of care provided in mental health centres in Ireland.

According to the report, there was a 18.6 per cent decrease in the number of reported episodes of physical restraint compared with 2023. There were also seven instances of centres being over capacity, a significant reduction on the 46 instances in 2023.

Cost to take priority over 'aesthetics' in future State infrastructure projects

MARK PAUL

London Correspondent

The Government will prioritise "cost and efficiency over design standards and aesthetics" when it comes to future infrastructure spending after the cost overruns and delays of the €2.24 billion national children's hospital, the Minister for Public Expenditure Jack Chambers has said.

"There needs to be much better discipline in cost effectiveness in projects," Mr Chambers said in London. "That means making choices around cost and efficiency over design standards and aesthetics in some instances. There are important lessons out of the children's hospital," he said.

The Minister confirmed the Government will publish a review next month of the State's €165 billion National Development Plan that will map out multiannual spending on specific projects into the medium term, instead of planning funding year-by-year.

"We have heard the concerns about the annualised nature of [current] funding and how that affects the pipeline of projects," the Minister said.

"Some commercial State bodies aren't even sure on a year-to-year basis what projects they can commence."

New approach to funding

He said a new approach to decide funding for a pipeline of projects over the longer term would "send a strong signal to the market that the projects are coming".

Water, wastewater and energy projects will be prioritised, along with transport infrastructure targeted at areas where new housing can be built. The review will also allocate an extra €20 billion for investment, comprised of back-taxes received from Apple, the State's

sale of AIB shares and other funds.

Mr Chambers spoke to The Irish Times on the margins of an insurance industry event at the City of London offices of the Fidelis Partnership, a specialist firm that covers risky events such as wars.

He said he was still in talks with other Ministers over infrastructural spending but hinted he planned to disappoint them with a "disciplined" focus on his core priorities of water, energy and transport to boost housing.

"There is always ambition in Government that exceeds what's possible," He said the core areas he intends to prioritise "are not optional extras". He singled out investment in the power grid as one area to be prioritised at the expense of less urgent projects.

Weather

After a blustery start with outbreaks of rain and drizzle, rain will become lighter. Highs of 17-21 degrees.

THE IRISH TIMES
24-28 Tara Street, Dublin 2.
D02 CX89
Telephone: (01) 9203900
Online: irishtimes.com
The recommended retail price of THE IRISH TIMES in the Republic of Ireland is €2.60
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Peat extraction: A sign has been erected on a bog warning anyone accessing the land will be charged '€100,000 per minute'. Page 4

World News



Iran: Assessments provided to European governments indicate that Iran's uranium stockpile remains largely intact, two officials have said. Page 7

Business This Week

Hershey: The US confectionery giant has bought the Irish founder of Fulfil out of their joint venture selling protein bars in North America

Golf: The sport is directly worth about €717m to Ireland's economy each year following significant growth in participation

Sports Friday

Rugby: Leinster hooker Dan Sheehan is to captain the British & Irish Lions against Australian side Western Force tomorrow. Page 12

Cricket: Warren Deutrom is to step down from the role of chief executive of Cricket Ireland at the end of August. Page 13

michael marcagi

2026 EU/UK winter tour

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