

THINK TANKS' THOUGHTS

Europe's People's Forum has selected various think tanks' articles focused on themes that we find most current and interesting for the activists, politicians and connoisseurs engaged in the policies of the European Union. The articles were published in October.

EU's Future institutional Structure and Policies

Since the election of Emmanuel Macron as French President and the new tandem he is foreseen to form with Angela Merkel, a new wave of optimism can be seen among those wishing a reform of the European Union. Indeed, the Franco-German 'tandem' has always been a motor for European integration, but as pointed out by Henning Deters and Magnus G. Schoeller in the paper [Waiting for Merckron: The Franco-German Relationship and Eurozone Reform after the Elections](#) (CEPOB), France and Germany have fundamentally different interests concerning the Eurozone. Contrary to the prevailing sentiment, the recent elections in both countries might not necessarily reignite the Franco-German motor to bring about substantial Eurozone reform.

Grégory Claeys in [The missing piece of the euro architecture](#) (Bruegel) assesses the institutional reforms that were put in place during and after the economic crisis and evaluates the remaining fragilities of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) architecture. The author then makes proposals for a governance framework with a 'financial union' consisting of a completed banking union and a capital markets union (CMU) and better macroeconomic policy framework.

On the contrary, Vincenzo Bavoso in [Capital Markets, Debt Finance and the EU Capital Markets Union: A law and finance critique](#) (CEPS) proposes a different perspective on the EU policy aiming at further integrating European capital markets through the CMU. He finds that the European policy design fails to appreciate the dangers associated with capital markets financing and its ensuing debt-creating effects. He argues that, despite some regulatory efforts, a suitable architecture for the regulation of disintermediated capital markets is still missing.

Regionalist movements are becoming stronger nowadays, and could be a growing threat to European political stability. However, paradoxically, most of these "regionalist" citizens claim their European anchorage. Following this idea and the importance that the cohesion policy can play in this case, Robin Huguenot-Noël, Alison Hunter and Fabian Zuleeg worked on the question: [Can the EU structural funds reconcile growth, solidarity and stability objectives?](#) (EPC). There is a growing consensus that cohesion policy (CP) must be reformed to address today's needs, and the findings of the authors indicate that the integration of economic governance objectives into CP can help illustrate EU's added value in the growth and investment agenda.

EU-policies on Social Dimension, Labour Market Protections and Trade Agreements

No articles selected that were published in October

Democracy, Citizens, Human Rights and Independence of Media

Are economic factors to blame for the rise of what they call populism, or is it a cultural backlash against liberalism and immigration? This is the question that John Springford and Simon Tilford discuss in their article [Populism – culture or economics?](#) (CER). As expected they find that the answer is a bit of both. While economic weakness clearly is a cause of the ascent of nationalist populism because it tends to strengthen social conservatives' distrust of parliaments, it is a necessary but not sufficient condition. If some countries resist to this trend, it could be because their electoral systems are not in favour of populist parties (Italy and France) or because of the countries' histories and political cultures (Spain and Germany). Finally, the authors claim that if populism is rising in some countries, it is also because of the behavior of elites and mainstream parties that have been too willing to adopt the policies and language of the populists.

In [Turkey and the EU: No end to the drift](#) (CER) Luigi Scazzieri focuses on Turkey that in his opinion has slid away from the EU values and foreign policy since the mid-2010s. After explaining why there today is a crisis in EU-Turkey relations, the author argues that if the EU ended the accession negotiations without an alternative framework in place, it would only worsen the problem by fueling the political dynamics pushing Turkey further away from the West. Accepting the fact that the refugee deal between EU and Turkey is important in keeping the number of migrants low, the author argues that it is not crucial because the number of "arrivals in Greece" started to fall before the refugee deal. Then EU has much more leverage on Turkey than vice versa. The author concludes that it is a good point to negotiate alternative frameworks to accession.

Policies on Migrants and Refugees, Schengen and Development Aid

Mikkel Barslund and Lars Lundolph distinguishes in their [Migrants in the Mediterranean: Easy and difficult solutions](#), (CEPS) between easy and difficult political solutions to the refugee crisis. The easy is to liaise with countries of poor human rights records like Libya and stop what the authors call the unsustainable refugee stream by paying whoever is in control. The difficult approach is to establish cooperation systems with the Saharan and Sub-Saharan African States by offering them beneficial cooperation against committing the countries to take back refugees. More about this in the article...

Priorities and Values in EU Foreign and Security Policy

Andreas Umland insists in his [Eastern and Central Europe's Strategic Provincialism](#) (Carnegie Europe) that Geopolitical myopia among the elites of the new East European members of EU and NATO risk causing refugees and conflicts from a zone of unstable countries like Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and to some degree Azerbaijan because the new members do not coordinate far more intensively with their Eastern neighbours. However, Umland does not in this article point to what should be the substance of such coordination.

In his paperback [The Obsolescence of the European Neighbourhood Policy](#) (CEPS) Steven Blockmans points to the changes in EU's strategy towards the Eastern and Southern Neighbourhoods as atomising EU's relations with its neighbours because liberal values are no more the basis for the relationship but security interests that change randomly. It is a booklet raising interesting questions to the current Global and Neighbourhood strategies.

In Ellie Geranmayeh's article [The coming clash: Why Iran will divide Europe from the United States](#), (ECFR) she points to the risks of ruining the JCPOA agreement between Iran, Russia, China, US and EU as a result of US increasingly distancing itself from keeping it. While she sees worrying elements on the Iranian side Ellie Geranmayeh encourages EU to stick to the agreement with the other partners and not bow under for American trade sanctions.

Dick Zandee discusses in [Developing European defence capabilities](#), (Cligendael), how to implement EU's intentions to build a common European military capability through a European Defence Fund (EDF). Not only must it connect military demand and industrial supply, but an effective decision-making process must be brought in place. Not only a common defence fund but also a Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) must be brought in place and raises several questions that Dick Zandee seeks to recommend solutions for.

Similar questions are discussed by [Sven Biscop](#), in his [European Defence: What's in the CARDS for PESCO?](#), (Egmont). Sven Biscop is almost overwhelmed by the grandeur of the questions. What shall the PESCO do, How in practice and Why? He finally raises the question: Will it happen? Soberly Biscop mentions that he has written several articles claiming that not we will have a European defence and every time this opportunity has vanished. With Germany and France and the Commission championing a European defence he is more optimistic than ever with a relatively modest ambition for the number of countries taking actively part.

Brexit Negotiations and National Political Issues

In his article [Catalonia and European Democracy](#) (Carnegie Europe), Richard Youngs underlines two wider ramifications that the Catalan crisis will have for EU politics. Firstly, he finds that the events in Catalonia capture an emerging tension across Europe between different understandings of democracy - between a rule of law understanding and a participative democracy. According to the author, the EU clearly prioritizes the rule of law over participative democracy, as illustrated by the economic rules that were expressly enforced over the dynamics of local democratic accountability as in the case of Spain as the author ironically underlines. The author concludes that citizens must have the ability to influence rules and ensure their fair and equal application and if not, the notion of “rule of law” is not fully democratic. Richard Youngs finds that the Catalan separatist are neither nationalists, nativists or populists but reflect the desire of citizens to bring democratic accountability back down to local level, a wider trend also present in other EU countries. Thus, the problem according to the author is that the EU has underplayed the importance of local participation.

In [A new dawn of anti-immigrant policy hegemony? The Austrian election and its \(potential\) consequences](#) (FEPS), Oliver Gruber briefly explains the political situation in Austria, and is wondering what could be the consequences of the Austrian election concerning the EU migrant policy ? The author believes that Austria as expected will implement restrictive migrant policies. However, the new government coalition is lead by the Austrian People Party (ÖVP) and the author would not expect that the (ÖVP) jeopardize its traditional role as the most pro-European party in Austria, not even in the area of asylum.