

THINK TANKS' THOUGHTS No. 8

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

The debate on the future of Europe gained momentum in 2017. In [Towards a more democratic European Union \(Delors Institute\)](#), Valentin Kreilinger provides an overview of the range of contributions to this debate. According to the author, there is the need to make the EU more democratic. The author reviews four limited institutional reforms that could make a contribution to strengthening the legitimacy of the European integration project. Should the Presidency of the Commission and the European Council be merged? What about the nominating lead candidates for election to the role of EU President? Do we need transnational lists for the European Parliament elections? How can national parliaments be strengthened in the European context?

The European Commission has laid out a new roadmap for reforming EMU with the goal to "enhance the unity, efficiency and democratic accountability of Europe's Economic and Monetary Union by 2025". However, according to Daniel Gros in [Comprehensive EMU reform or tinkering at the margins? \(CEPS\)](#) it is unlikely that the mostly formal and cosmetic changes proposed would have a significant impact on any of these three aims. He finds it surprising that the Commission had nothing new to propose on the matter of completing the Banking Union for example.

The European Commission new roadmap for reforming EMU finally only seems to focus on the enhancement of the the European Stability Mechanism (ESM). The reform of the ESM has become a focal point of the debate on the future of economic and monetary union. Under the label of this reform, a wide variety of proposals is discussed: debt restructuring; a possible backstop for banking union; the future of crisis management; and even changing economic surveillance in the euro area. In [LOOKING FOR THE SILVER BULLET – A GUIDE TO THE ESM DEBATE \(Delors Institute\)](#), Lucas Guttenberg structures a debate which is too often all over the place and offers a guide through the proposals on the table.

EU-policies on Social dimension, Labour Market Protection and Trade Agreements

In Europe, the number of deprived people remains much too high. The EU and Member States, who set a collective goal to decrease poverty levels prior to the crisis, must take up the fight more vigorously according to Sylvie Goulard. In [POVERTY, A EUROPEAN BATTLE TO BE FOUGHT WITH THE DISADVANTAGED \(Delors Institute\)](#) she argues that it is an economic and social challenge that also affects competitiveness. A European wake-up call which requires the participation of the poor and excluded in the policies that concern them.

Democracy, Citizens, Human Rights and Independence of Media

According to Mark Leonard in [Europe's crisis starts at home](#) (Project Syndicate) and on the contrary to the conventional wisdom, the biggest threat to the European project is not the "illiberal" democracy on the periphery of the EU who has decided not to play by the rules. Indeed, it is more the deep divide within member states, including bastions of liberalism such as France, Germany, UK, Netherlands etc. According to the author, the EU is both a society of states and of citizens meaning intra-national divides are as important as the diplomatic spats between countries.

Yann Algan, Sergei Guriev, Elias Papaioannou, Evgenia Passari in [The European trust crisis and the rise of populism](#) (CEPR) argue that increased unemployment results in loss of trust in political institutions and in increased support for anti-establishment populists. However, to reduce unemployment, European policymakers were forced to pursue unpopular structural reforms that require people's trust to be implemented and successful. Thus, there is a vicious unemployment-distrust-populism circle. According to the authors, the current momentum of recovery in the European economy offers a chance to break this vicious circle. But perhaps it is also time to strengthen democracy in Europe to regain the trust of citizens?

As in the Polish and Hungarian cases, the EU is confronted with violations of the democratic principles underlying membership of the EU. In a climate of mutual distrust, other EU states could be tempted to follow suit, while the Commission remains paralysed. Alain Dauvergne in [The Rule of Law under threat: What can Europe do?](#) (Delors Institute) analyses the situation and the notorious article 7 of the European Treaty, which can deprive a member state of its voting rights in the EU, but which remains impracticable and makes the author look at fiscal means as they way forward.

Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine stand out for their relatively high level of democratic freedoms and political pluralism; none of them, however, can be considered a consolidated democracy, and most analysts describe them as uncertain or hybrid political regimes that combine features of autocracy and democracy. Ghia Nodia, Denis Cenușă and Mikhail Minakov in [Democracy and its Deficits: The path towards becoming European-style democracies in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine](#) (CEPS) offer a comparative analysis of the three countries' political systems and aims to interpret both the roots of their relative success, and the nature of the deficits that prevent them from consolidating their democratic institutions. It is argued that closer ties to the EU are important in explaining their relatively high level of democratic development. For this reason, the consistent and enhanced commitment of the European Union to this region is crucial to their continued success in this area.

Policies on Migrants and Refugees, Schengen and Development Aid

According to Stefano M. Torelli? Europe is underestimating the primary cause of migration from sub-saharan Africa: climate change. In [Climate-driven migration in Africa](#) (ECFR), the author is deeply concerning by the total absence of European policies to address climate-driven migration from Africa. For him, people forcibly displaced by climate change don't have to be treated as economic migrants, they need a legal recognition for "climate migrants". The EU migration governance architecture is struggling to control migratory flows to Europe.

According to Nils Feller in [Turning the tide on EU migration policy \(Delors institute\)](#) the EU and its Member States need to commit to a broad spectrum of operational interventions and progressive policy options in order to stay in the driver's seat and maximise the positive impact of migration. This paper has highlighted some of the central challenges of the EU migration architecture and presents a set of recommendations to better manage migration and to strengthen third country cooperation in EU migration management.

Tommaso Branzaglia in [Migrant crisis, NGOs and the snares of the Mediterranean region \(Mediterranean Affairs\)](#) explains that the last years made a deeper intervention in the Mediterranean area necessary, and this is why different NGOs decided to begin a collaboration with European governments in Search and Rescue (SaR) activities. After two years of intense operations, SaR operations are more dangerous and less useful as a consequence of Libyan management of migration, therefore these organizations are facing a series of unexpected upcoming dilemmas and different vessels already suspended their activities.

Priorities and Values in EU Foreign and Security Policy

In [Is There Hope for EU Foreign Policy? \(Carnegie Europe\)](#), Stefan Lehne believes that forging a coherent foreign policy is the biggest challenge facing the EU and he gives an analysis on how Europe can step up its soft power. According to him the Lisbon Treaty reforms have, to some extent, strengthened EU foreign policy machine but EU's overall international position has weakened in the ten years since the signing of the treaty. There are structural reasons for the EU's inability to respond adequately to a deteriorating security environment, but the author explains it partly by the dysfunctional decision-making arrangements that still hamper the union's effectiveness as a global actor with the emphasis on soft power, the preference for legal solutions, and the enthusiasm for multilateral diplomacy.

In the paper [Occupation and Sovereignty: Renewing EU Policy in Israel-Palestine \(FEPS\)](#), the author Hugh Lovatt argues that the EU must take seriously the implications of an emerging one-state reality for EU-Israel relations and EU policy more generally. This should not be about discarding the two-state solution but rather acknowledging that an immediate course correction is required to avoid a fully fledged one-state reality of perpetual occupation and unequal rights. Despite the absence of credible US leadership, the EU and its members have the power to save the two-state solution. If they are serious about this, they must act now and with determination.

Brexit Negotiations and National Political Issues.

In the phase-two discussions on the future EU-UK relationship after Brexit, Maria Demertzis and André Sapir in [Brexit, phase two \(and beyond\): The future of the EU-UK relationship \(Bruegel\)](#) explain that the EU side is sticking to offer the UK a trade deal that looks either like the CETA arrangement with Canada, or the EEA agreement with Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein. However, the UK is looking for a 'CETA-plus' or an 'EEA-minus' agreement. The authors argue that the trade deal that emerges this phase should not be the limit of ambition for future partnership between the EU and the UK and after the negotiations, the EU and the

UK have to sit down again at the table of negotiations to try to reach a more ambitious agreement than the trade deal that will be the outcome of the phase-two negotiations.

In [The biggest Brexit boom for Germany ? Migration \(CER\)](#), Christian Odendahl and John Springford explain that Germany has little to gain from the Brexit, but a biggest gain for Germany will come if European migrants choose to work there, mitigating its agrowing shortage of workers, instead of in Britain. Indeed, Germany's economy desperately needs qualified immigrants to fill 780,000 jobs and Brexit has handed Germany an opportunity to bring in young, often highly-educated, workers in the future. The authors argue that with Britain's attractions dimming, Germany is set to gain the most from the movement of labour from other EU member-states.
