

## Ideas Monitor #21/2016

### The Road to Brexit

Given its proximity, the Brexit referendum has vigorously dominated this week's debates concerning the EU. [Jean Quatremer](#), on *The guardian*, writes a provocative letter to British voters asking them to vote to leave the EU because such a vote would be beneficial for the EU: only a devastating crisis, as the one that would be caused by a Brexit, can shock and force European leaders to act and save the Union. [Robert Cox](#), on *Euractiv*, agrees that the referendum should be considered an opportunity to rethink and restructure EU's architecture. And it should be noted that Leave is becoming a more and more concrete option, in particular because of the problems with the Remain campaign. As [The Telegraph](#) argues, the Remain front has relied too heavily on famous names to make its case, has attempted to ignite a panic, but has not provided positive arguments and a positive alternative to Leave. However, as [Peter Marshall](#) writes on *Conservative Home*, Brexit does not seem really to be a policy or a political program. Rather, it is a protest. And its defenders are not providing rigorous and consistent analysis for their ideas either. [Jan Zielonka](#), on *OxPol*, seems to share this thought and claims that the referendum is an exercise in political madness: rational arguments are off the table in favour of populist claims. Furthermore, given that referenda are, by their nature, the heyday of populists, they should be considered particularly troublesome by EU supporters, who cannot deny the problems of democratic deficit, and technocratic driven policymaking. Although the Leave front is getting stronger, there are still good reasons to remain, as [Sir Andrew Large](#) on *The Telegraph* and [Mohammed Amin](#) on *Conservative Home* write. They deeply agree on the idea that it is crucial for the UK to remain because, only by retaining membership of the EU, the UK could keep its political influence internationally. Moreover, although the Union is in need of urgent political and economic reforms, it is a fact that economic arguments point conclusively toward Remain. And it is true that economists agree that Leave would be bad for the UK economy, as [Thomas Sampson](#), [Swati Dhingra](#), [Gianmarco Ottaviano](#) and [John Van Reenen](#) show on *EUROPP*. However, those very economists disagree over the degree of impoverishment a Brexit would turn into. As [Emmanuel Mourlon-Druol](#) writes on *Bruegel*, both sides of the referendum are willing to use figures and numbers to provoke reactions from voters, and most of the times ignore that the vast majority of economists agree that the costs of a Brexit would be significant anyway. In the end, with [Marek Dabrowski](#) on *Bruegel*, it should be noted that, despite the result of the referendum, the concession granted to the UK will encourage Eurosceptic parties to demand and require special treatment from the Union.

### Dealing with the refugee and migrant crisis

[Joost Lagendijk](#) and [Monica Frassoni](#), on *Euractiv*, note that the refugee crisis is clearly demonstrating that the EU is in decline and it cannot be considered the crucial player in finding common solutions within the Union anymore. However, this should not turn into some form of scepticism towards Schengen. As [Katja Sarmiento-Mirwaldt](#) argues on *EUROPP*, the principles underlying such agreement are still of value and thus there are good (ethical and economic) reasons to open borders. However, a precondition for it is, without doubt, that a certain level of trust between countries is ensured. If we are to really solve the crisis and build solidarity, we

need to understand the political, financial and ethical interests within and outside the EU, as [Pierluigi Musarò](#) writes on *OpenDemocracy*.

## **It's the EU economy, baby**

When it comes to EU economy, the role of the ECB is commonly considered a concern. For [Yanis Varoufakis](#), on *Social Europe*, although a commitment to independence is crucial for central banks and vital for their tasks, the ECB cannot be considered independent because of the eurozone's current political and institutional design, which does not allow it to serve as lender of last resort. But the independence of the ECB is not the only thing the EU should worry about. [Stuart Holland](#), on *Social Europe*, invokes the urgent need of a European New Deal with the issuing of Eurobonds to solve the crisis. This idea seems particularly important because of the French protests against the labour reform. As [Jacques Sapir](#) writes on *Politico.eu*, such protests are not only against the French government, but against Europe: they are an attempt to stop the liberal labour changes imposed by Brussels and a challenge for the strict rules of the Eurozone and the EU membership.