

A glance at:

- **The Italian Constitutional Referendum**

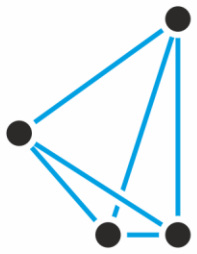
The Italian Constitutional Referendum took place on Sunday, 4/12 following a long and difficult campaign. The outcome of said referendum was as follows: 59.1% expressed itself against the reform of the Italian constitution. Such an outcome had been largely anticipated by many: indeed the euro briefly weakened to \$1.0503 (the weakest since March 2015) in the immediate aftermath of the Italian vote, but already gained 0.96% to \$1.0774 on Tuesday, 6/12. The latter was also due to the European Central Bank meeting, who allegedly contributed in the recovery of the euro. In the aftermath of the “no” win Renzi confirmed his resignation as Prime Minister, which could lead to early elections in February 2017 according to the Interior Minister Angelino Alfano, the head of a small centre-right party that is a crucial part of Renzi’s ruling coalition. Said anticipated elections could benefit the anti-euro 5-Star Movement, as it marks a further populist setback in the EU, but according to many investors and analysts it is more likely that a caretaker government will be put in place until an election in 2018. Indeed, according to an article of The Telegraph, *“it is clear that many Italians who voted no would not necessarily support either party in a general election. Indeed, some were indifferent to Renzi’s fate but believed the rise of populism made proposed changes to the constitution especially dangerous”*. The Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) also published a study cautioning not to equate Renzi’s defeat to another victory of populism. Furthermore, the Bruegel think tank has published a study on the financial implications of the referendum, with a particular focus on the Italian bank Monte dei Paschi di Siena.

Links:

- [Euro gains as Italian vote goes as expected by traders](#)
- [Alfano: new Italian election in February](#)
- [Matteo Renzi resigns after Italian referendum rout](#)
- [Referendum results may lead nowhere for Italy’s Five Star and Northern League](#)
- [Renzi’s defeat is not another victory of populism](#)
- [Financial implications of the Italian referendum](#)

- **The Austrian Elections**

On the same Sunday Austria re-voted in elections that were formerly held on 24 April 2016, with a second round run-off on 22 May 2016. However, the results of the latter were annulled and a re-vote took place on the 4th of December. The result of the latter featured the rejection by the Austrian population of the anti-immigration and euro sceptic Norbert Hofer, and the victory of the Greens-backed independent candidate Alexander Van der Bellen, who swept 53.3% of the votes against Hofer’s 46.7%. The EU welcomed the results with relief, as it is seen as a “good omen”.



Links:

- [European relief at Austrian far-right election defeat](#)

Monitored Policy Areas:

1. Security and Foreign Policy

- **News**

EU-Turkey relations are “*entering a new phase*”, stated Greek EPP member Manolis Kefalogiannis, head of Parliament’s delegation to Turkey (29/11). The statement follows the European Parliament (EP) resolution of 24/11 confirming the suspension of the accession negotiations for the country and the subsequent Turkish reply threatening to let thousands of migrants pass through Europe.

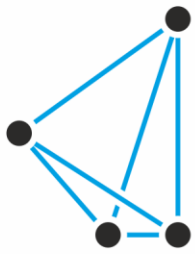
The EUROPOL issued a report on **terrorist attacks** stating that new terror attacks from the Islamic State in the EU are likely, following a change in the organisation’s modus operandi, highlighted in the report made by the Europol’s European Counter Terrorism Centre (ECTC) (02/12). EUROPOL Director, Rob Wainwright stated that “*increased cooperation and exchange of data between all relevant services across Europe is a successful means to mitigate the threat posed by IS*”.

The President of the European Council, Donald Tusk has warned that keeping the **West united against Russia will be harder with President Donald Trump** in the White House as opposed to former President, Barak Obama (02/12).

According to **Hungarian law**, the throwing of rocks at police in an attempt to push through the border gate with Serbia constituted an “act of terror” and cost a Syrian man 10 years in prison (30/11). The latter was handed down the longest sentence by a Hungarian court in connection with the migration crisis, and was also sentenced to be expelled from the country.

The **UK assured Poland** that its nationals will be able to remain within the country after Brexit, if British nationals can stay in the EU (29/11). The British Prime Minister, Theresa May also pledged to take a rough line on Russia.

The **Polish government** has announced the opening of a “national centre for the development of civic society”, whose role is to set priorities and oversee the financing of charities through public means (02/12). The country’s NGOs, however, fear that the latter will be mainly used to transfer public money to pro-government groups.



The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) expressed serious concerns on the **legal amendments adopted by the Polish Parliament** last week that would affect the freedom of assembly (05/12). OSCE representatives urge the Parliament to reconsider said amendments or to at least further consult civil society and other groups that will be affected by the law. In fact, being said freedom protected by a number of International treaties of which Poland is party, the country should not adopt such legislation too hastily.

NATO and the EU deepen ties, as they concluded two days of meetings in Brussels on Wednesday, 07/12. Allies approved a series of more than 40 measures to advance how the two organisations work together – including on countering hybrid threats, cyber defence, and making their common neighbourhood more stable and secure.

Links:

- [EU-Turkey relations: "We are entering a new phase"](#)
- [Islamic State changing terror tactics to maintain threat in Europe](#)
- [Tusk: Trump poses risk on Western unity on Russia](#)
- [Hungary gives 10-year sentence to Syrian man for border riot](#)
- [UK and Poland discuss post Brexit workers' rights](#)
- [Polish government in bid to defund NGOs](#)
- [European Human Rights officials voice serious concerns over changes to Polish laws on freedom of assembly](#)
- [NATO and the EU deepen ties as ministerial meeting wraps up](#)

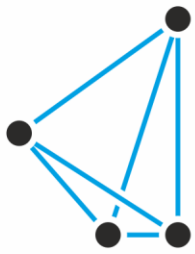
• Legislative Developments

The **Foreign Affairs Council** which took place on Monday, 28/11, discussed the revision of the European consensus on development, future relations with African Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries as well as migration and development issues.

The European Commission (EC) proposes a set of actions, amongst which a European Defence Fund, to support member States to spend more efficiently in joint defence capabilities, strengthen European citizens' security and foster a competitive and innovative industrial base (30/11).

The EP has backed a law criminalizing **foreign fighters as well as "lone wolves" training and preparing terrorist attacks on European soil** (05/12). For the act to be criminalised, the text specifies that it must be carried out intentionally or knowingly and a clause within said text guarantees the respect for human rights. The deal still needs to be endorsed by Parliament as a whole and EU ministers.

The European Council has reached an agreement with the EP on the **revision of the suspension mechanism of VISA liberalization agreements** (07/12). The new agreement extends the possible grounds for suspension and includes a decrease in cooperation on readmission, a substantial increase in the refusal rate of readmission



applications, including for third-country nationals in transit, and a substantial increase in the risk to public policy or internal security of the member states.

Links:

- [Conclusions of foreign affairs council](#)
- http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-4088_en.htm
- [Clampdown on terrorism](#)
- [Visa suspension mechanism](#)

- **Events coming up:**

Monday, 12/12: next meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council;

- http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/12/09-indicative-programme-fac/?utm_source=dsms-auto&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Indicative+programme+-+Foreign+Affairs+Council+of+12+December+2016

2. Economic Issues

- **Publications**

The Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) has published an analysis on the **market expectations derived from Brexit** (29/11). Said analysis has been made by a team of distinguished economists who tried to assess the magnitude of the economic impact beyond the UK and which other countries might be affected by it.

Links:

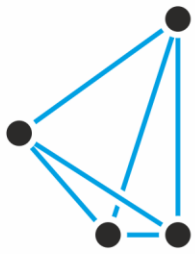
- [Policy Uncertainty and the International financial Market: The case of Brexit](#)

3. Energy Issues

- **Legislative developments**

The European Commission (EC) has approved a support scheme amounting to CZK 836.5 billion (around €30.95 billion) for installations producing renewable energy built in the **Czech Republic** between 2006 and 2012 under EU state aid rules (28/11).

The European Council has adopted conclusions on **energy and development** and in particular noted how access to energy is vital to eradicate poverty and to deliver on the 2030 agenda (28/11). The Council further called for the EU to “*become the world leader in renewable energy, including research, innovation and technologies*”.



The EC opens **infringement procedures against 7 Member States, amongst which also the Czech Republic**, for breach of EU rules on car emissions on the grounds that they have disregarded EU vehicle type approval rules (08/12).

Links:

- http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-4083_en.htm
- [council conclusions on energy and development](#)
- http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-4214_en.htm

• Publications

The European Parliament (EP) think tank has published a briefing on **EU-US cooperation on energy issues** (02/12). The possibility of cooperation is enhanced not only by the recent lifting of US export restrictions on crude oil and natural gas, but also by building on the framework of the EU-US Energy Council. This briefing follows a series of others which are part of a larger research project on perspectives on transatlantic cooperation in the US election year, requested by the Chair of the European Parliament's delegation for relations with the United States.

With the **EU energy system** transitioning to a decentralized and digitalized system, the latter has increasingly been the object of cyber-attacks with potentially catastrophic consequences. In order to contrast said attacks, the development of energy specific cyber security solutions and defensive practices are essential. The EP think tank has published a study regarding the matter (05/12).

With the '**Clean Energy for All Europeans**' legislative package proposed by the EC on Wednesday (30/11), a major step towards the realisation of the Energy Union is marked. The EP think tank has published a briefing enclosing links to all major international think tanks and what they have to say on the subject (05/12).

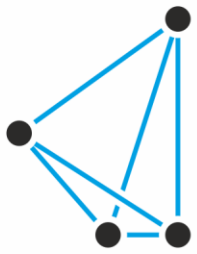
Links:

- [Perspectives on transatlantic cooperation: EU-US relations](#)
- [Cyber security strategy for energy sector](#)
- [EU energy policy: what think tanks are thinking](#)

4. Digital Agenda

• News

On Thursday, 01/12, the European Parliament (EP) backed the **EU-US agreement on the protection of personal data**, ensuring high, binding data protection standards for data exchanged by police and law enforcement authorities across the Atlantic. The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) Group had voted against said



agreement following the concerns on the effective implementation from the US of the agreement itself expressed by legal experts of the Working Party 29 and the legal service of the European Parliament. In fact, the ALDE Group had pushed that the EP seek an opinion of the Court of Justice on the agreement.

Links:

- [MEPs back EU-US data protection deal on exchanges for law enforcement purposes](#)
- <http://alde.eu/en/news/>

• Legislative developments

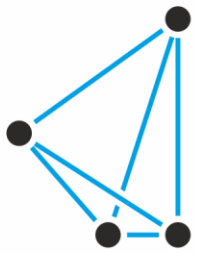
The European Council has agreed on a draft regulation to **ban unjustified geo-blocking** between member States (28/11). Geo-blocking is a practice that prevents customers from accessing and purchasing products or services from a website based in another member State.

The European Council has adopted conclusions on mainstreaming **digital solutions and technologies in EU development policy** (28/11). The Council recognizes the important role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and the Internet, in creating opportunities in terms of sustainable development and inclusive growth, as well as people empowerment and enhanced democratic governance. However, the Council underlines how important it is for digitalisation to be mainstreamed properly, addressing both the cyber challenges and assuring the protection and promotion of human rights, especially the freedom of expression online.

Caps on the prices that telecommunication operators charge each other for using their networks to carry cross-border “roaming” calls have been agreed by the MEPs of the Industry, Research and energy Committee, bringing the **end or roaming charges a step closer** (29/11). The Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council has also adopted a general approach concerning wholesale roaming markets which defines the starting point for the negotiations with the EP (02/12). The Council supports a quick agreement so that roaming fees can be abolished by June 2017, as agreed. Below is enclosed the link to the overall conclusions of said Council.

The European Commission (EC) has launched a **public consultation on the evaluation of the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)** (28/11). The CEF is a European funding programme set up to support the development of high-performing, sustainable and efficient interconnected trans-European networks in energy, telecommunications and transport.

The EC has launched the **Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition** involving Member States, companies, social partners, NGOs and educational establishments to help reduce the digital skills gap in Europe and therefore meet the high demand for digital skills which



are essential in today's society and at the workplace: 39 organizations have already come forward and made 43 pledges to take action in this respect (01/12).

The Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council has adopted a partial general approach to promote **free internet in local communities** by means of an EU-funded scheme, 'WiFi4EU' (02/12). The latter would be available in town halls, public parks and other centres of public life.

The EC invites all businesses to take part in a survey on **using online platforms** in the framework of a study aimed at learning more about the business-to-business (B2B) relations between online platforms and businesses active on these platforms conducted by the EC itself (06/12).

Links:

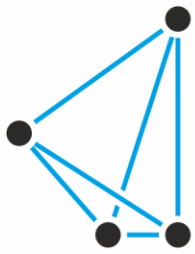
- [Geo-blocking: Council agrees to remove barriers to e-commerce](#)
- [Council conclusions on mainstreaming digital solutions and technologies in EU development policy](#)
- [End of roaming charges: Industry MEPS cap wholesale prices for use of networks](#)
- [Wholesale roaming: Council ready for talks with EP](#)
- [Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council](#)
- [Commission launches open consultations on CEF](#)
- [Commission launches digital skills and Jobs coalition](#)
- [Join the digital skills and jobs coalition](#)
- [Free WiFi4EU](#)
- <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/what-your-experience-trading-online-platforms>

• Publications

The EP think tank has published a briefing on the new **legislative framework on copyright** proposed by the EC this September (29/11). The briefing highlights the main topics of debate surrounding the issue, namely the creation of a new neighbouring right for press publishers, the measures imposed on platforms storing and giving access to user-uploaded content, and the scope of the new text- and data-mining exception.

The EP think tank also published a briefing on the **EU roaming regulation framework** (06/12). The briefing brings together all information regarding said roaming charges, starting from [Regulation 2015/2120](#) which established that from 15 June 2017 roaming charges for mobile phone use would be abolished in the EU, passing through the EC's review on the wholesale roaming market and subsequent decision of the latter that national wholesale roaming markets are not working well and need regulatory intervention. The briefing also looks into the divided stakeholders' reactions: while consumers would enjoy free roaming, operators are worried about recovering costs at wholesale level.

The EC supported a [Legal Study on Ownership and Access to Data](#), which studies European legal landscape on access to and rights over data. The latter found **lack of**



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coherence of treatment of data in national laws, let alone harmonisation (other than in respect of data privacy and, in future, trade secrets) between different Member States. This lack of coherence makes it difficult for businesses to manage their data efficiently: entrepreneurs need to be extremely careful when giving others access to their data, or else they risk losing their control over their data (06/12).

Links:

- [Copyright in the Digital Single Market](#)
- [Wholesale roaming regulation: a precondition for 'roam like at home'](#)
- [National laws lack coherence on data treatment, shows the study on Ownership and Access to Data](#)

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