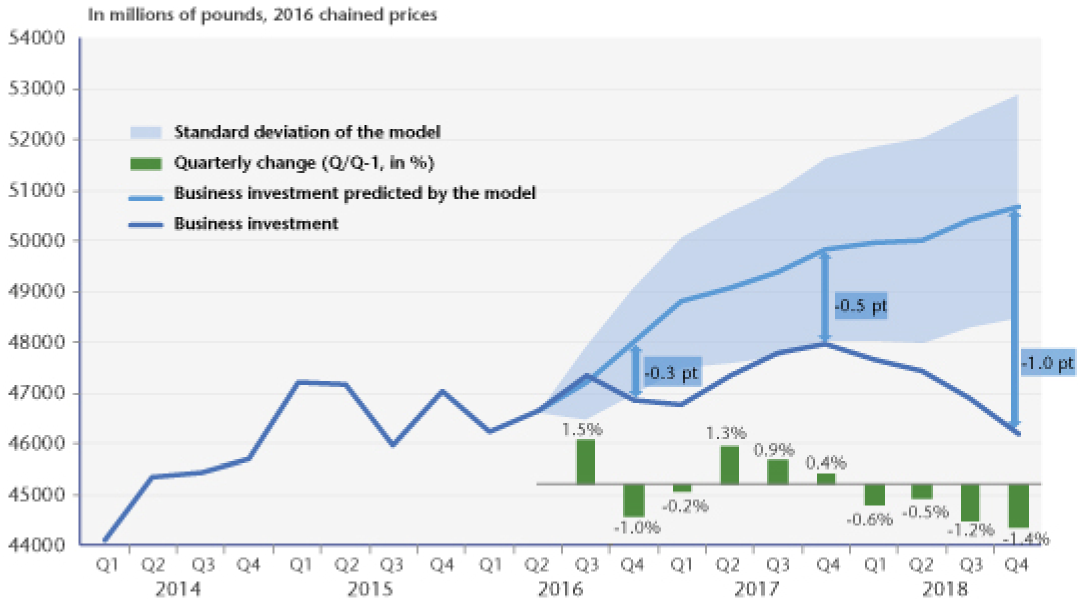
Business investment hurt by Brexit

By Magali Dauvin

At a time when the outlook for world trade outlook remains glum [1], British domestic demand is struggling to remain dynamic: household consumption has run out of steam at the end of the year, while investment fell by 1.4 points in 2018.
This latest fall can be attributed almost entirely to the investment of non-financial corporations [2] (55% of GFCF in volume), which fell consecutively during the four quarters of the year (Figure 1), for a total fall of -3.7% in 2018.
Investment can be predicted by an error-correction model [3], and the one used for the investment forecasts of non-financial firms in the United Kingdom benefits from an adjustment that can be considered "correct" in terms of its explanatory power (86%) over the pre-referendum period (1987Q2 – 2016Q2). If we simulate the trajectory of investment following the 2016 referendum (in light blue), we can see that it deviates systematically from the investment data reported by the ONS (dark blue) [4].
This result is consistent with the results found in the recent literature, which also show that the models have consistently tended to overestimate the investment rate of UK firms since 2016 [5]. The gap has steadily risen in 2018, from 0.5 percentage point of GDP in 2017, to almost one point of GDP in the last quarter.

Figure. Evolution and simulation of investment by non-financial corporations in the United Kingdom



Source: ONS, OFCE calculations.

What explains the gap? We interpret this deviation as the effect of the uncertainty arising from Brexit, particularly that on the future trade arrangements between the UK and the EU. Nearly half of Britain's foreign trade comes from or goes to the single market. Although the inclusion of an uncertainty indicator (Economic Policy Uncertainty – EPU, see Bloom et al., 2007) in the investment equation failed to identify it clearly, several studies on data from UK firms point in this direction. First, periods of heightened uncertainty moved in line with significantly lower investment after the 2008 crisis (Smietbanka, Bloom and Mizen, 2018). In a scenario without a referendum (no Brexit), the transition to a regime with renegotiated customs tariffs would have had the effect of:

– Reducing the number of companies entering the European market and increasing the number exiting (Crowley, Exton and Han, 2019);

– Weighing on business investment with the prospect of tariffs similar to those prevailing under WTO rules (Gornicka, 2018).

The reduction in investment "cost" 0.3 percentage points of GDP in 2018, and this cost could rise as second-round effects are taken into account (which is not the case here). If the uncertainties do not rise, the "Brexeternity" – an expression used to characterize the relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union, that is to say, inextricable – could have a much more depressing effect on Britain's future growth and its citizens' standard of living.

[1] The WTO composite indicator has stayed below (96.3) its long-term trend (100) since mid-2018.

[2] Reported by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) as Business Investment. Non-financial corporations partially or wholly owned by the government are included in this field, but they account for less than 4% of the total. This measure of investment does not include spending on housing, land, existing buildings or the costs related to the transfer of ownership of non-produced assets.

[3] See the article by Ducoudré, Plane and Villemot (2015) in the *Revue de l'OFCE*, for more information on the strategy adopted.

[4] A slight gap can be seen from 2015, when the law on the referendum was adopted.

[5] In particular the work of Gornicka (2018).

The euro is 20 – time to grow up

By Jérôme Creel and Francesco Saraceno [1]

At age twenty, the euro has gone through a difficult adolescence. The success of the euro has not been aided by a series of problems: growing divergences; austerity policies with their real costs; the refusal in the centre to adopt expansionary policies to accompany austerity in the periphery countries, which would have minimized austerity’s negative impact, while supporting activity in the euro zone as a whole; and finally, the belated recognition of the need for intervention through a quantitative easing monetary policy that was adopted much later in Europe than in other major countries; and a fiscal stimulus, the Juncker plan, that was too little, too late.

Furthermore, the problems facing the euro zone go beyond managing the crisis. The euro zone has been growing more slowly than the United States since at least 1992, the year the Maastricht Treaty was adopted. This is due in particular to the inertia of economic policy, which has its roots in the euro’s institutional framework: a very limited and restrictive mandate for the European Central Bank, along with fiscal rules in the Stability and Growth Pact, and then in the 2012 Fiscal Compact, which leave insufficient room for stimulus policies. In fact, Europe’s institutions and the policies adopted before and during the crisis are loaded down with the consensus that emerged in the late 1980s in macroeconomics which, under the assumption of efficient markets, advocated a “by the rules” economic policy that had a necessarily limited role. The management of the crisis, with its fiscal stimulus packages and increased central bank activism, posed a real challenge to this consensus, to such an extent that the economists who were supporting it are now questioning the direction that the discipline should take. Unfortunately, this questioning has only marginally and belatedly affected Europe’s decision-makers.

On the contrary, we continue to hear a discourse that is meant to be reassuring, i.e. while it is true that, following the combination of austerity policies and structural reforms, some countries, such as Greece and Italy, have not even regained their pre-2008 level of GDP, this bitter potion was needed to ensure that they emerge from the crisis more competitive. This discourse is not convincing. Recent literature shows that deep recessions have a negative impact on potential income, with the conclusion that austerity in a period of crisis can have long-term negative effects. A glance at the World Economic Forum competitiveness index, as imperfect as it is, nevertheless shows that none of the countries that enacted austerity and reforms during the crisis saw its ranking improve. The conditional austerity imposed on the countries of the periphery was doubly harmful, in both the long and short terms.

In sum, a look at the policies carried out in the euro zone leads to an irrevocable judgment on the euro and on European integration. Has the time come to concede that the Exiters and populists are right? Should we prepare to manage European disintegration so as to minimize the damage?

There are several reasons why we don’t accept this. First, we do not have a counterfactual analysis. While it is true that the policies implemented during the crisis have been calamitous, how certain can we be that Greece or Italy would have done better outside the euro zone? And can we say unhesitatingly that these countries would not have pursued free market policies anyway? Are we sure, in short, that Europe’s leaders would have all adopted pragmatic economic policies if the euro had not existed? Second, as the result of two years of Brexit negotiations shows, the process of disintegration is anything but a stroll in the park. A country’s departure from the euro zone would not be merely a Brexit, with the attendant uncertainties about commercial, financial and fiscal relations between a 27 member zone and a departing country, but rather a major shock to all the European Union members. It is difficult to imagine the exit of one or two euro zone countries without the complete breakup of the zone; we would then witness an intra-European trade war and a race for a competitive devaluation that would leave every country a loser, to the benefit of the rest of the world. The costs of this kind of economic disorganization and the multiplication of uncoordinated policies would also hamper the development of a socially and environmentally sustainable European policy, as the European Union is the only level commensurate with a credible and ambitious policy in this domain.

To say that abandoning the euro would be complicated and/or costly, is not, however, a solid argument in its favour. There is a stronger argument, one based on the rejection of the equation "euro = neoliberal policies". Admittedly, the policies pursued so far all fall within a neoliberal doctrinal framework. And the institutions for the European Union's economic governance are also of course designed to be consistent with this doctrinal framework. But the past does not constrain the present, nor the future. Even within the current institutional framework, different policies are possible, as shown by the (belated) activism of the ECB, as well as the exploitation of the flexibility of the Stability and Growth Pact. Moreover, institutions are not immutable. In 2012, six months sufficed to introduce a new fiscal treaty. It headed in the wrong direction, but its approval is proof that reform is possible. We have worked, and we are not alone, on two possible paths for reform, a dual mandate for the ECB, and a golden rule for public finances. But other possibilities could be mentioned, such as a European unemployment insurance, a European budget for managing the business cycle, or modification of the European fiscal rules. On this last point, the proposals are proliferating, including for a rule on expenditures by fourteen Franco-German economists, or the replacement of the 3% rule by a coordination mechanism between the euro zone members. Reasonable proposals are not lacking. What is lacking is the political will to implement them, as is shown by the slowness and low ambitions (especially about the euro zone budget) of the decisions taken at the euro zone summit on 14 December 2018.

The various reforms that we have just mentioned, and there are others, indicate that a change of course is possible. While some policymakers in Europe have shown stubborn persistence, almost tantamount to bad faith, we remain convinced that neither European integration nor the euro is inevitably linked to the policies pursued so far.

[1] This post is an updated and revised version of the article "Le maintien de l'euro n'est pas synonyme de politiques néolibérales" [Maintaining the euro is not synonymous with neoliberal policy], which appeared in *Le Monde* on 8 April 2017.

Brexit: Roads without exits?

By Catherine Mathieu and Henri Sterdyniak

The result of the referendum of 23 June 2016 in favour of leaving the European Union has led to a period of great economic and political uncertainty in the United Kingdom. It is also raising sensitive issues for the EU: for the first time, a country has chosen to leave the Union. At a time when populist parties are gaining momentum in several European countries, Euroscepticism is rising in others (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Slovakia), and the migrant crisis is dividing the Member States, the EU-27 must negotiate Britain's departure with the aim of not offering an attractive alternative to opponents of European integration. There can be no satisfactory end to the UK-EU negotiations, since the EU’s goal cannot be an agreement that is favourable to the UK, but, on the contrary, to make an example, to show that leaving the EU has a substantial economic cost but no significant financial gain, that it does not give room for developing an alternative economic strategy.

According to the current timetable, the UK will exit the EU on 29 March 2019, two years after the official UK government announcement on 29 March 2017 of its departure from the EU. Negotiations with the EU officially started in April 2017.

So far, under the auspices of the European Commission and its chief negotiator, Michel Barnier, the EU-27 has maintained a firm and united position. This position has hardly given rise to democratic debates, either at the national level or European level. The partisans of more conciliatory approaches have not expressed themselves in the European Council or in Parliament for fear of being accused of breaking European unity.

The EU-27 are refusing to question, in any respect, the way that the EU is functioning to reach an agreement with the UK; they consider that the four freedoms of movement (goods, services, capital and persons) are inseparable; they are refusing to call into question the role of the European Court of Justice as the supreme tribunal; they are rejecting any effort by the UK to “cherry pick”, to choose the European programmes in which it will participate. At the same time, the EU-27 countries are seizing the opportunity to question the status of the City, Northern Ireland (for the Republic of Ireland) and Gibraltar (for Spain).

Difficult negotiations

On 29 April 2017, the European Council adopted its negotiating positions and appointed Michel Barnier as chief negotiator. The British wanted to negotiate as a matter of priority the future partnership between the EU and the UK, but the EU-27 insisted that negotiations should focus first and foremost on three points: the rights of citizens, the financial settlement for the separation, and the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland. The EU-27 has taken a hard line on each of these three points, and has refused to discuss the future partnership before these are settled, banning any bilateral discussions (between the UK and a member country) and any pre-negotiation between the UK and a third country on their future trade relations.

On 8 December 2017, an agreement was finally reached between the United Kingdom and the European Commission on the three initial points[1]; this agreement was ratified at the European Council meeting of 14-15 December[2]. However, strong ambiguities persist, especially on the question of Ireland.

The European Council accepted the British request for a transitional period, with this to end on 31 December 2020 (so as to coincide with the end of the current EU budgeting). Thus, from March 2019 to the end of 2020, the UK will have to respect all the obligations of the single market (including the four freedoms and the competence of the CJEU), even though it no longer has a voice in Brussels.

The EU-27 agreed to open negotiations on the transition period and the future partnership. These negotiations were to culminate at the European summit in October 2018 in an agreement setting out the conditions for withdrawal and the rules for the transition period while outlining in a political statement the future treaty determining the relations between the United Kingdom and the EU-27, so that the European and British authorities have time to examine and approve them before 30 March 2019.

However, both the EU-27 and the UK have proclaimed that “there is no agreement on anything until there is an agreement on everything”, meaning that the agreements on the three points as well as on the transition period are subject to agreement on the future partnership.

Negotiations for the British side

The members of the government formed by Theresa May in July 2016 were divided on the terms for Brexit from the outset: on one side were supporters of a hard Brexit, including Boris Johnson, who was then in charge of foreign affairs, and David Davis, then tasked to negotiate the UK’s departure from the EU; on the other side were members who favoured a compromise to limit Brexit’s impact on the British economy, including Philip Hammond, Chancellor of the Exchequer. The proponents of a hard Brexit had argued during the campaign that leaving the EU would mean no more financial contributions to the EU, so the savings could be put to “better use” financing the UK health system; that the United Kingdom could turn to the outside world and freely sign trade agreements with non-EU countries, which would be beneficial for the UK economy; and that getting out of the shackles of European regulations would boost the economy. The hard Brexiteers argue against giving in to the EU-27’s demands, even at the risk of leaving without an agreement. The goal is to get free of Europe’s constraints and “regain control”. For those in favour of a compromise with the EU, it is essential to avoid a no-deal Brexit – “going over the cliff” would be detrimental to British business and jobs. In recent months, it has been this camp that has gradually strengthened its positions within the government, leading Theresa May to ask the EU-27 for a transitional period during her Florence speech of September 2017, which also responded to the demands of British business representatives (including the Confederation of British Industrialists, the CBI). On 6 July 2018, Theresa May held a government meeting in the Prime Minister’s Chequers residence to agree on British proposals on the future relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union. The concessions made in recent months by the British government together with the Chequers proposals led David Davis and Boris Johnson to resign from the Cabinet on 8 July 2018.

On 12 July 2018, the British government published a White Paper on the future partnership[3]. It proposes a “principled and practical Brexit”[4]. This must “respect the result of the 2016 referendum and the decision of the UK public to take back control of the UK’s laws, borders and money”. It is about building a new relationship between the UK and the EU, “broader in scope” than the current relationship between the EU and any third country, taking into account the “deep history and close ties”.

The White Paper has four chapters: economic partnership, security partnership, cross-cutting and other cooperation, and institutional arrangements. As far as the economic partnership is concerned, the agreement must allow for a “broad and deep economic relationship with the rest of the EU”. The United Kingdom proposes the establishment of a free trade area for goods. This would allow British and European companies to maintain production chains and avoid border and customs controls. This free trade area would “meet the commitment” of maintaining the absence of a border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The UK would align with the relevant EU rules to allow friction-free trade at the border; it would participate in the European agencies for chemicals, aviation safety and medicines. The White Paper proposes applying EU customs rules to the imports of goods arriving in the UK on behalf of the EU and collecting VAT on these goods also on its behalf.

For services, the UK would regain its regulatory freedom, agreeing to forego the European passport for financial services, while referring to provisions for the mutual recognition of regulations, which would preserve the benefits of integrated markets. It wishes to maintain cooperation in the fields of energy and transport. In return, the UK is committed to maintaining cooperative provisions on competition regulation, labour law and the environment. Freedom of movement would be maintained for citizens of the EU and the UK.

The security partnership would include the maintenance of cooperation on police and legal matters, the UK's participation in Europol and Eurojust, and coordination on foreign policy, defence, and the fight against terrorism.

The White Paper proposes close cooperation on the circulation and protection of personal data as well as agreements for scientific cooperation in the fields of innovation, culture, education, development, international action, and R&D in the defence and aerospace sector. The UK wishes to continue to participate in European programmes on scientific cooperation, with a corresponding financial contribution. Finally, the United Kingdom would no longer participate in the common fisheries policy, but proposes negotiations on the subject.

In institutional matters, the UK proposes an Association Agreement, with regular dialogue between EU and UK Ministers, in a Joint Committee. The UK would recognize the exclusive jurisdiction of the CJEU to interpret EU rules, but disputes between the UK and the EU would be settled by the Joint Committee or by independent arbitration.

Up to now Theresa May has tried to assuage both the hard Brexiteers – the UK will indeed leave the EU – and supporters of a flexible Brexit – the UK wants a deep and special partnership with the EU. Theresa May regularly repeats that the UK is leaving the EU but not Europe, but her compromise position is not satisfying supporters of a net Brexit. In September 2018, Boris Johnson has been accusing Theresa May of capitulating to the EU: "At every stage in the talks so far, Brussels gets what Brussels wants…. We have wrapped a suicide vest around the British Constitution – and handed the detonator to Michel Barnier. We have given him a jemmy with which Brussels can choose – at any time – to crack apart the union between Great Britain and Northern Ireland”[5]. According to Johnson, the Chequers plan loses all the benefits of Brexit. The Remainers, those in favour of staying in the EU, are campaigning for a new referendum. This is nevertheless unlikely. Theresa May rejects it out of hand as a “betrayal of democracy”.

The Conservative Party’s annual convention, to be held from September 30 to October 3, could see Boris Johnson or Jacob Rees-Mogg[6] run for head of the Party. They do not have majority support, however, and the polls show Theresa May with greater popularity than her challengers. Barring a dramatic twist, Theresa May will continue to lead the Brexit negotiations in the coming months.

The British Parliament decided last December 13 that it will have a vote on any agreement with the European Union. So Theresa May must also find a parliamentary majority concerning the UK’s orderly withdrawal, in the face of opposition from both Remainers and hard Brexiteers, which will require the support of some Labour MPs and will therefore be difficult.

The proposals of the July White Paper were not deemed acceptable by Michel Barnier. In August, Jeremy Hunt, the UK’s new Foreign Minister, estimated the risks of a lack of agreement at 60%. On 23 August 2018, the government published 25 technical notes (out of 80 planned) that spell out the government’s measures to be taken in case of a no-deal exit in March 2019. Their objective is to reassure businesses and households about the risks of shortages of imported products, including certain food products and medicines. At the time these notes were published, Dominic Raab, the new Minister in charge of the Brexit negotiations, took care to recall that the government does want an agreement be signed and that the negotiators agree on 80% of the provisions of the withdrawal agreement.

If the EU-27 remains inflexible, the British government will face a choice between leaving without an agreement, which the “hard” Brexiteers are ready to do, and making further concessions. Philip Hammond recalled the risks of failing to reach an agreement. But Theresa May is sticking to her line that the lack of an agreement would be preferable to a bad deal. On 28 August, she echoed the words of WTO Director-General Roberto Azevedo, that leaving without an agreement would not be “the end of the world”, but nor would it be “a walk in the park”. In an opinion column in the *Sunday Telegraph* of 1 September 2018, she reaffirmed her desire to build a United Kingdom that is stronger, more daring, based on meritocracy, and adapted to the future, outside the EU.

The negotiations from the EU viewpoint

The EU-27 is refusing that the UK could stay in the single market and the customs union while choosing which rules it wants to apply. It does not want the UK to benefit from more favourable rules than other third countries, in particular the current members of the European Economic Area (the EEA: Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein) or Switzerland. EEA members currently have to integrate all the single market legislation (in particular the free movement of persons) and contribute to the European budget. They benefit from the European passport for financial institutions, while Switzerland does not.

In December 2017, Michel Barnier made it clear that lessons had to be drawn from the United Kingdom’s refusal to respect the four freedoms, its regaining of its commercial sovereignty, and its termination of its recognition of the authority of the European Court of Justice. This rules out any possibility of its participation in the single market and the customs union. The agreement with the UK will be a free trade agreement, along the lines of the agreements signed with Canada (the CETA), South Korea and more recently Japan. It will not concern financial services.

During the 2018 negotiations, the EU-27 was not particularly conciliatory about a series of issues: the UK's obligation to apply all EU rules and the guarantee of the freedom of establishment of people until the end of the transitional period; the Irish border (arguing that the absence of physical borders was not compatible with the UK's withdrawal from the customs union, demanding that Northern Ireland remain in the single market as long as the UK does not come up with a solution guaranteeing the integrity of the internal market without a physical border with Ireland); the role of the CJEU (which must have jurisdiction to interpret the withdrawal agreement); the EU's decision-making autonomy (refusing the establishment of permanent joint decision-making bodies with the UK); and even Gibraltar and the British military bases in Cyprus.

Thus, on 2 July 2018, Michel Barnier[7] accepted the principle of an ambitious partnership, but refused any land border between the two parts of Ireland, while indicating that a land border is necessary to protect the EU (this would mean that the only acceptable deal would involve a border crossing between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK, which is unacceptable to the UK). He refused that the EU "loses control of its borders and its laws". Barnier therefore rejected the idea that the UK would be responsible for enforcing European customs rules and collecting VAT for the EU. He insisted that future cooperation with the UK could not rely on the same degree of trust as between EU member countries. He called for precise and controllable commitments from the United Kingdom, particularly with respect to health standards and the protection of Geographical indications. He wanted the agreement to be limited to a free trade agreement, with UK guarantees on regulations and state subsidies, and with cooperation on customs and regulations.

The UK would have to renegotiate all trade agreements, both with the EU and with third countries. These agreements will probably take a long time to set up, and in any case more than two years. The lack of preparation and the disorganization with which the UK has tackled the Brexit negotiations augurs poorly for its ability to negotiate such agreements quickly. The matter of re-establishing customs controls is crucial and delicate, whether in Ireland, Gibraltar or Calais. Many multinational corporations will relocate their factories and headquarters to continental Europe. The loss of the financial passport is a given. It is on this point that the British could see further losses, given the weight of the City's business (7.5% of British GDP). The United Kingdom will have to choose between abiding by European rules to maintain some access to European markets and entering into confrontation by a policy of liberalization. The EU-27 could seize the opportunity of the UK's departure to return to a Rhine-based financial model, centred on banks and credit rather than on markets or, on the contrary, it could try to supplant the City's market activities through liberalization measures. It is the second branch of these alternative that will prevail.

Choosing between three strategies

So far, the EU-27 countries have taken a position that is tough but easy to hold: since it is the UK that has chosen to leave the Union, it is up to it to make acceptable proposals for the EU-27, with regard both to its withdrawal and to subsequent relations. This is the approach that led to the current stagnant situation. The EU-27 now has to choose between three strategies:

– Not to make proposals acceptable to the British and resign themselves to a no-deal Brexit: relations between the UK and the EU-27 would be managed according to WTO principles; and the financial terms of the divorce would be decided legally. The United Kingdom would regain full sovereignty. There are two reasons to fear this scenario: trade would be disrupted by the re-erection of customs barriers in ports and in Ireland; and this "hard Brexit" would encourage the UK to become a tax and regulatory haven, meaning that the EU would be faced with the alternative either of following along or retaliating, both of which would be destructive;

– Face the issue head on and establish a third circle for countries that want to participate in a customs union with the EU countries in the short term, i.e. the United Kingdom and the EEA countries. It is within this framework that agreements on technical regulations and standards for goods and services would be negotiated. Thus, "freedom of trade" issue would be dissociated from issues of political sovereignty. However, this poses two problems: these agreements would need to be negotiated in technical committees where public opinion and national parliaments such as the European Parliament would have little voice. The fields of the customs union are problematic, in particular for fiscal matters, financial regulations, and the freedom of movement of persons and services;

– Choose the "special and deep partnership" solution, which would entail reciprocal concessions. This would necessarily be able to serve as a model for relations between the EU and other countries. It would include a customs union limited to goods, committees for harmonizing standards, piecemeal agreements for services, the right of the UK to limit the movement of persons, undoubtedly a court of arbitration (which would limit the powers of the CJEU), and a commitment to avoid fiscal and regulatory competition. As is clear, this would satisfy neither supporters of a hard Brexit nor supporters of an autonomous and integrated European Union.

[1] See: *Joint report from the negotiators of the EU and the UK government on progress during phase 1 of negotiations under Article 50 on the UK's orderly withdrawal from the EU*, 8 December 2017.

[2] See Catherine Mathieu and Henri Sterdyniak: Brexit,

réussir sa sortie, *Blog de l'OFCE*, 6 December 2017.

[3] HM Government: "The future relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union", July 2018.

[4] The expression is in the original text: "A principled and practical Brexit". Translations of the summary note in the 25 languages of the EU are available on the web site of the Department for Exiting the European Union. The French version uses the term: "Brexit vertueux et pratique".

[5] Opinion column by Boris Johnson, *Mail on Sunday*, 9 September 2018.

[6] Favourable to a hard Brexit – from Eton-Oxford, a traditionalist Catholic who is opposed to abortion, public spending and the fight against climate change.

[7] See Un partenariat ambitieux avec le Royaume-Uni après le Brexit , 2 July 2018.

The 2018 European economy: A hymn to reform

By Jérôme Creel

The OFCE has just published the 2018 European Economy [in French]. The book provides an assessment of the European Union (EU) following a period of sharp political tension but in an improving economic climate that should be conducive to reform, before the process of the UK’s separation from the EU takes place.

Many economic and political issues crucial to better understanding the future of the EU are summarized in the book: the history of EU integration and the risks of disintegration; the recent improvement in its economic situation; the economic, political and financial stakes involved in Brexit; the state of labour mobility within the Union; its climate policy; the representativeness of European institutions; and the reform of EU economic governance, both budgetary and monetary.

The year 2018 is a pivotal year prior to the elections to the European Parliament in spring 2019, but also before the 20th anniversary of the euro on 1 January 2019. The question of the euro’s performance will be central. However, in 2018 gross domestic product will finally begin to increase at well above its pre-crisis level, thanks to renewed business investment and the support of monetary policy, henceforth unhindered by fiscal policy.

The year 2018 will also mark the beginning of negotiations on the future economic and financial relationship of the United Kingdom and the EU, after at end 2017 the two parties found common ground on arrangements for the UK leaving the Union. The EU’s renewed growth will reduce the potential costs of the divorce with the British and could also lessen Europeans’ interest in this issue.

Brexit could have served as a catalyst for reforming Europe; the fact that the mechanisms for this may now seem less crucial to the EU’s future functioning should not take away from the reforms needed by the EU, as if these were superfluous. In the political and monetary fields, there is a great need to strengthen the democratic representativeness of EU institutions (parliament, central bank) and to ensure the euro’s legitimacy. In the fields of fiscal and immigration policy, past experience has demonstrated the need for coordinated tools to better manage future economic and financial crises.

There is therefore an urgent need to revitalize a project that is over sixty years old, one that has managed to ensure peace and prosperity in Europe, but which lacks flexibility in the face of the unpredictable (crises), which lacks vigour in the face of the imperatives of the ecological transition, and which is singularly lacking in creativity to strengthen the convergences within it.

Brexit: Pulling off a success?

By Catherine Mathieu and Henri Sterdyniak

Will the EU summit of 14-15 December 2017 usher in a new phase of negotiations on the exit of the United Kingdom from the European Union?

British Prime Minister Theresa May wants to make Brexit a success and to arrange a special partnership between the UK and the EU, a tailor-made partnership that would allow trade and finance to continue with minimal friction after the UK leaves the EU, while restoring the UK's national sovereignty, in particular by regaining the ability to limit the immigration of workers from the EU and by no longer being subject to the European Union Court of Justice (EUCJ). For the EU-27 countries, on the contrary, it must be made clear that leaving the EU incurs a significant economic cost, with no *significant budgetary gain, that those who leave must continue to accept a major share of European rules and that they cannot claim the benefits of the single market without bearing the costs. Other Member States should not be tempted to follow the British example.*

This post examines the negotiating positions of the EU-27 and the British government and the divisions in the UK in the run-up to the European summit. The negotiations, which have been going on for almost six months, are difficult and cover numerous issues: citizens' rights, financial regulations, the Irish border and the future partnership between the United Kingdom and the EU-27.

Will the EU summit of 14-15 December 2017 usher in a new phase of negotiations on the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union? As we approach the summit, the stakes are high for the British. On 23 June 2016, a majority of the British people voted in favor of leaving the EU, but it was not until 29 March 2017 that Theresa May officially notified the British decision to leave by triggering Article 50 of the Treaty on the European Union. This article stipulates that, "A Member State which decides to withdraw shall notify the European Council of its intention. In the light of the guidelines provided by the European Council, the Union shall negotiate and conclude an agreement with that State, setting out the arrangements for its withdrawal, taking account of the framework for its future relationship with the Union." The triggering of Article 50 opens a two-year period to negotiate the exit of the UK on 29 March 2019.

The negotiations have been going on for almost six months. They are difficult and cover numerous issues. This is the first time a country has asked to leave the EU, and neither the UK nor the EU-27 want to lose out. For the British government, the key goal is to establish a future commercial and financial partnership with the EU. Theresa May wants to make Brexit a success and to arrange a special partnership between the UK and the EU, a tailor-made agreement that would allow trade and finance to continue with minimal friction after leaving the EU, while restoring the UK's national sovereignty, in particular by regaining the ability to limit the immigration of workers from the EU and by no longer being subject to the EU Court of Justice. For the EU-27 countries, on the contrary, it must be shown that leaving the EU incurs a significant economic cost, with no significant budgetary gain, that those who leave must continue to accept a major share of European rules and that they cannot claim the benefits of the single market without bearing the costs. Other Member States should not be tempted to follow the British example.

The EU-27 position and the divisions in Britain

On 29 April 2017, the European Council set out its negotiating lines and appointed Michel Barnier chief negotiator on behalf of the EU. In the EU's view the negotiations need to focus initially on an "orderly withdrawal", i.e. exclusively on three points: the rights of European citizens in the UK; a financial settlement for the British departure; and the border separating the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The EU-27 has taken a tough stance on each of these three points and is refusing to discuss any future relationship between the EU and the UK before these are settled. It has banned any bilateral talks (between the UK and an EU member country) and blocked any pre-negotiations between the UK and a third country on their future trade relations. This has placed the United Kingdom in a difficult position, as companies (British and foreign) want to remove any uncertainties about UK-EU trade conditions after March 2019, and are threatening to cut their investments in the UK, or even to relocate within the EU-27, if this uncertainty is not removed.

The EU is in a strong position, since trade with the EU is five times larger for the UK than trade with the UK is for the EU. Moreover, the EU demonstrated its unity in the face of the British exit (as it did during the Greek crisis). In both cases, firm positions prevailed. More conciliatory lines did not come out in the European Council or in the European Parliament, as if the partisans of such positions were afraid to be accused of breaking Europe’s unity.

The British, in contrast, are split into four positions that divide the ranks of both Conservatives and Labour. Among the supporters of staying in the EU, the Remainers, some, like Tony Blair and Michael Heseltine, who are very much in the minority, still hope that, in the face of difficulties, the United Kingdom will give up on leaving the EU. Lord Kerr, who drafted Article 50, has pointed out that the decision to trigger the article is reversible. But it would be contrary to British democratic tradition not to respect the popular vote. A new referendum could be organized, but in view of the polls there is no guarantee that a vote would have a different result today than it did on 23 June 2016.

For most Remainers, Brexit will indeed take place, and what is needed now is to minimize its economic cost. Some Remainers, especially in Labour, are currently advocating a “soft Brexit”, which would allow the UK to remain in the single market. But, given the conditions imposed by the EU-27 (respect for the “4 fundamental freedoms” – free movement of goods, services, capital and labor – and maintaining the CJEU’s authority), Brexit would then ultimately simply deprive the United Kingdom of having a voice in the decisions that it would have to implement. Proponents of a soft Brexit are also in favor of a transition period (provided for by the Treaty, subject to the unanimous agreement of the EU countries), which would postpone for two years the UK’s exit and avoid the risk of it leaving the EU on 29 March 2019 without a negotiated agreement.

The most ardent Brexiteers are willing to run the risk of a “hard Brexit”, i.e. leaving with no agreement with the EU. The UK would no longer have to contribute to the EU budget (about 0.5 GDP point per year in net terms), and it would have the status of a third country under WTO rules. The United Kingdom would then renegotiate trade agreements with all its partners, including the United States. Border controls would be reinstated. Proponents of a hard Brexit are not in favor of a transitional period, which they feel would only delay the moment when the United Kingdom "would regain control" and prevent it from negotiating agreements with non-EU countries. In the case of a hard Brexit, the risk is that the multinationals would relocate their factories and head offices to continental Europe, that in general it would become less attractive to invest in the United Kingdom and that a large part of the euro zone's banking and financial activities would leave London for Paris, Frankfurt, Amsterdam or Dublin.

London could, however, play the card of tax competition (in particular by cutting the corporation tax rate) and become a regulatory paradise, especially in financial matters. However, it would be very difficult for the United Kingdom to free itself of international constraints (agreements such as COP21, on the fight against tax optimization, on the exchange of tax and banking information, or Basel III). The financial conditions for the UK's departure would be subject to a judicial settlement. For more ardent free marketeers, Brexit would help to strengthen the UK's laissez-faire model. However, it is unlikely that the United Kingdom, whose legislation is already very liberal, would enjoy a substantial growth shock induced by even more liberal reforms.

The British government is evolving an intermediate position. In 2016, when Theresa May was a minister in David Cameron's government, she called for voting to stay in the EU, but she is now aiming to make Brexit a success: the UK must become a champion of globalization ("A global Britain") and of free trade, in the British liberal tradition, which must turn its face towards the open sea. The country also has a trade surplus vis-à-vis its non-EU partners, primarily with the United States, and has maintained historical ties with the

Commonwealth countries, while it has a large trade deficit with the EU countries (although it runs a surplus in services).

Theresa May has taken note of the EU-27 position that the UK will not be able to remain in the single market if it does not respect the four “fundamental freedoms”. She is nevertheless trying to maintain privileged trade and financial relations with the EU by setting up a specific free trade partnership. Since the UK wants to be able to regain control of its borders, manage the entry of workers from the EU, and no longer submit to the EU Court of Justice, and unlike the EFTA countries refuses to submit to standards on which it will have no say in exchange for free access to the European market, Theresa May is proposing that a “specific and in-depth partnership” be established between the UK and the EU. In addition, since her September 2017 speech in Florence, she has called for a two-year transition period from March 2019 to March 2021.

Theresa May held early parliamentary elections in June 2017 in an effort to strengthen her Tory majority in Parliament. In fact, Labour’s attacks on austerity and on Tory positions favouring a reduction in welfare benefits led to the loss of the Tory majority. Theresa May had to reach an agreement with the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), a Northern Ireland pro-Union party that is conservative on social affairs, but opposed to austerity and to any compromise with the Republic of Ireland. Theresa May has therefore entered the Brexit negotiations with a weakened and divided majority, with some of her ministers (David Davis, Secretary of State for Brexit Negotiations; Boris Johnson, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs; Liam Fox, Secretary State for International Trade) declaring themselves ready to take the risk of leaving without an agreement.

On 15 November 2017, the UK Parliament finally passed the EU Withdrawal Bill, called the “Great Repeal Bill”, ending the application of EU law in the UK and giving the government the task of transposing (or not) European laws and regulations (i.e. 12,000 texts) into British law. However, it was agreed that any agreement signed with the EU will be submitted to Parliament, with the latter's refusal implying an exit with no agreement.

The state of negotiations on the eve of the 14-15 December summit

Five rounds of negotiations were initially planned in 2017, from June to October. The objective was that, by the European summit of 19-20 October, sufficient progress was to be made in negotiations on the three points set in April so that the EU-27 countries would agree to start negotiations over the future partnership. On 19 June in the first round, David Davis accepted the EU's request for sequencing. Thus, only the three points desired by the EU-27 have been discussed, while for the UK government (and the country's businesses), what is crucial is the future partnership. At the end of the fifth round, on 12 October 2017, the EU's chief negotiator Michel Barnier declared that the negotiations on the financial aspects were deadlocked and that he could not propose to the October 19th European summit that discussions be started on an agreement. Barnier hoped, however, that progress would be made in time for the 14-15 December EU summit. On 20 October, however, the European Council nevertheless agreed to the possibility of a transition agreement and proposed that preparatory talks be held for the December summit, which would therefore be crucial.

With regard to the rights of citizens, especially the 3.2 million EU citizens living in the UK, Theresa May proposed that all EU citizens who had settled in the UK by 29 March 2017 could obtain a residency status that guarantees them the same rights as British citizens in terms of employment and social rights. This would be automatic for those who have resided there for more than 5 years, and for the rest when they reach 5 years of residence. The nnegotiations hit stumbling blocks on the reference date (March 2017 or 2019?), on maintaining the right to family reunion and especially on supervision of the application of the agreement by the EUCJ, which the EU-27 is demanding in order to ensure that the UK does not tighten its regulations, but which the UK cannot accept (it could, however, agree to the establishment of an arbitration tribunal).

On the issue of the Irish border, both parties have agreed to preserve the peace agreement in Northern Ireland and to maintain the absence of a land border, so as not to put obstacles to the lively trade between the two parts of the island or to freedom of movement between the two areas (30,000 people a day cross the border), which is difficult if the United Kingdom is no longer in the single market or in the customs union. The Republic of Ireland is refusing any hard border, and threatens to veto any agreement that would erect additional barriers between the Republic and Northern Ireland. It is asking for special status for Northern Ireland, which would keep it in the customs union. The DUP, working in a contrary sense, opposes Northern Ireland staying in the customs union after Brexit, or at least any agreement that would not apply to the whole of the United Kingdom; the British government, desirous of maintaining the integrity of the United Kingdom, must refuse to allow Northern Ireland to be subject to EU regulations with a border between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK. The DUP proposes setting up an invisible border, which will require great creativity. On this point, the EU-27 believes that it is up to the UK to make acceptable proposals. Faced with the difficulties of reconciling the irreconcilable, the two parties could agree to postpone the issue to the end of negotiations on their future partnership.

On the issue of the financial settlement, the positions seem to have drawn closer. On the EU side, some 60 billion to 100 billion euros were mentioned as a British contribution to the European expenditures already committed, while the United Kingdom did not want to tackle the issue of a financial settlement independently of negotiations on the future agreement. In September 2017, however, Theresa May made it clear that the UK would honour its financial commitments to the EU, namely its share of spending in 2017-19, its commitments for 2020, the investment expenditure committed beyond that, and its share of the pensions of European officials. The United Kingdom is to pay between 45 and 50 billion euros. As part of the negotiations on the future partnership, the UK government could commit to possible future contributions to the functioning of the single market.

Although none of the three initial negotiating points are really resolved today, it seems that the EU-27 will agree that negotiations on the future partnership can begin in 2018. This will require the EU-27 countries to agree on a common position, which will mean postponing the beginning of a new round of negotiations until March 2018. It is likely, and desirable, that the European Council meeting of 14-15 December accepts the British request for a two-year transition period in order to eliminate the risk that it could leave without an agreement in March 2019.

It will then be necessary to come to an agreement on the future partnership between the EU-27 and the United Kingdom. The EU-27 must not give in to the temptation to punish a departing country by applying only WTO rules to it, which would also harm EU exports to Britain, especially as the EU has a current account surplus of 130 billion euros vis-à-vis the country. Similarly, industrial cooperation agreements (Airbus, arms, energy, etc.) can hardly be called into question. It seems impossible for the EU-27 to accept that the UK remains in the single market and chooses which rules it wishes to apply. The minimum would be a trade agreement, modeled on the Canada-EU Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA). The most promising outcome for both parties would undoubtedly be to reach an agreement for a balanced commercial partnership that would serve as a model for creating a third circle in Europe, which could eventually make it possible to bring on board Norway, Iceland, Switzerland, Ukraine, Turkey, Morocco and other countries, and which would avoid leaving third countries to face a choice between keeping their national sovereignty and the benefits of trade liberalization.

A new Great Moderation?

by Analysis and Forecasting Department

This text summarizes the OFCE's 2017-2019 forecast for the global economy and the euro zone; the full version can be found here.

Ten years after the financial crisis broke out in the summer of 2007, the world economy finally seems to be embarking on a trajectory of more solid growth in both the industrialized and most of the emerging countries. The figures for the first half of 2017 indicate that global growth is accelerating, which should result in GDP growth of 3.3% over the year as a whole, up 0.3 percentage point over the previous year. Some uncertainty remains, of course, in particular concerning the outcome of Brexit and the ability of the Chinese authorities to control their economic slowdown, but these are the types of irreducible uncertainties characteristic of an economic system that is subject to political, technological, economic and financial shocks[1]. Beyond these risks, which should not be underestimated, lies the question of the ability of the world's economies to reduce the imbalances inherited from the crisis. While current growth is sufficient to bring down the unemployment rate and improve the employment rate, it needs to be long-lasting enough to get back to full employment, reduce inequalities, and promote debt reduction.

In this respect, not all the doubts have been lifted by the current upturn in the world's economic situation. First, growth has remained moderate in light of the past recession and previous episodes of recovery. Since 2012, the global economy has grown at an average rate of 3.2%, which is lower than in the 2000s (graphic). The growth trajectory seems to be closer to what was observed in the 1980s and 1990s. This period, the so-called Great Moderation, was characterized by lower macroeconomic volatility and a disinflationary trend, first in the advanced countries, then in the emerging countries. This second element is also an important point in the global economic situation today. Indeed, the pick-up in growth is not translating into renewed inflation. The low rate of inflation reflects the persistence of underemployment in the labor market, which is holding back wage growth. It also illustrates the difficulties the central banks are having in (re)-anchoring inflation expectations on their target.

Finally, there is the matter of the growth potential. Despite numerous uncertainties about measuring growth potential, many estimates are converging on a projection of weaker long-term growth, due mainly to a slowdown in trend productivity. It should be noted, however, that the methods used to determine this growth trajectory sometimes lead to prolonging recent trends, and can therefore become self-fulfilling if they lead private and public agents to reduce their spending in anticipation of a slowdown in growth. Conversely, boosting future growth requires private and public investment. Economic policies must therefore continue to play a leading role in supporting the recovery and creating the conditions for future growth.

Figure. The recovery of the global economy

Sources: National accounts, OFCE calculations, October 2017.

[1] See OFCE (2017): La routine de l'incertitude [in French].

The European economy in 2017 – or, the post-Brexit EU

By Jérôme Creel

The just released *L'économie européenne 2017* provides a broad overview of the issues being posed today by the European Union project. Brexit, migration, imbalances, inequality, economic rules that are at once rigid and flexible… the EU remains an enigma. Today it gives the impression of having lost the thread of its own history or to even to be going against History, such as the recent international financial crisis or in earlier times the Great Depression.

A few months after the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers, the G-20 Summit of the heads of State and Government held in London in April 2009 drew up a list of recommendations to revive the global economy. These included implementing active fiscal and monetary policies, supporting the banks and improving banking regulation, rejecting the temptation of protectionism, fighting against inequality and poverty, and promoting sustainable development.

These recommendations were in contrast to the policies implemented shortly after the Great Depression back in the 1930s. At that time, economic policies started with restrictive measures, thereby fueling the crisis and rising inequality. Protectionism in that epoch became not just a temptation but a reality: tariff and non-tariff barriers were erected in an effort to protect local business from international competition. We know what happened later: the rise of populism and extremism that plunged Europe, and then the world, into a terrible war. The economic lessons learned from the catastrophic management of the 1930s crisis thus contributed to the recommendations of the London G-20 Summit.

What now remains of these lessons in Europe? Little, ultimately, other than a resolutely expansionary monetary policy and the establishment of a banking union. The first is meant to alleviate the current crisis, while the second is intended to prevent a banking crisis in Europe. While this is of course not nothing, it is based on a single institution, the European Central Bank, and is far from sufficient to answer all the difficulties hitting Europe.

Brexit is one of these: as the first case of European disintegration, the departure of the United Kingdom poses the issue of the terms of its future partnership with the European Union (EU) and re-raises the question of protectionism between European states. The temptation to turn inwards is also evident in the way that the refugee crisis has been managed, which calls for the values of solidarity that have long characterized the EU. Differences between EU Member States in terms of inequality, competitiveness and the functioning of labour markets require differentiated and coordinated policies between the Member States rather than the all-too homogeneous policies adopted up to now, which fail to take an overall view.

This is particularly true of the policies aimed at reducing trade imbalances and those aimed at cutting public debts. By applying fiscal rules to manage the managing public finances, even if these are not perfectly respected, and by imposing quantitative criteria to deal with economic and social imbalances, we lose sight of the interdependencies between the Member States: fiscal austerity is also affecting our partners, as is the search for better price competitiveness. Is this useful and reasonable in a European Union that is soon to be the EU-27, which is seeing rising inequalities and struggling to find a way to promote long-term growth?

L'économie européenne 2017 takes stock of the European Union in a period of severe tensions and great uncertainty, following a year of average growth and before the process of separation between the EU and the UK really begins. During this period, several key elections in Europe will also serve as stress tests for the EU: less, more or better Europe – it will be necessary to choose.

An end to growth?

Analysis and Forecasting Department (international team)

This text relies on the 2016-2018 forecast for the global economy and the euro zone, the full version of which is available here, in French.

After avoiding a Grexit in the summer of 2015, Europeans will now have to face a Brexit. In addition to what should be a significant impact on the UK economy lies the question of the effect this shock will have on other countries. Given that all the indicators seemed to be green for finally allowing the euro zone to recover from the double-dip recession following the 2007-2008 financial crisis and then the sovereign debt crisis, will a Brexit risk interrupting the trend towards a recovery? This fear is all the more credible as the delayed recovery was not sufficient to absorb all the imbalances that built up over the years of crisis. The unemployment rate for the euro zone was still over 10% in the second quarter of 2016. A halt to growth would only exacerbate the social crisis and in turn fuel doubt – and therefore mistrust – about Europe's ability to live up to the ambitions set out in the preamble to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and reiterated in Lisbon in 2000.

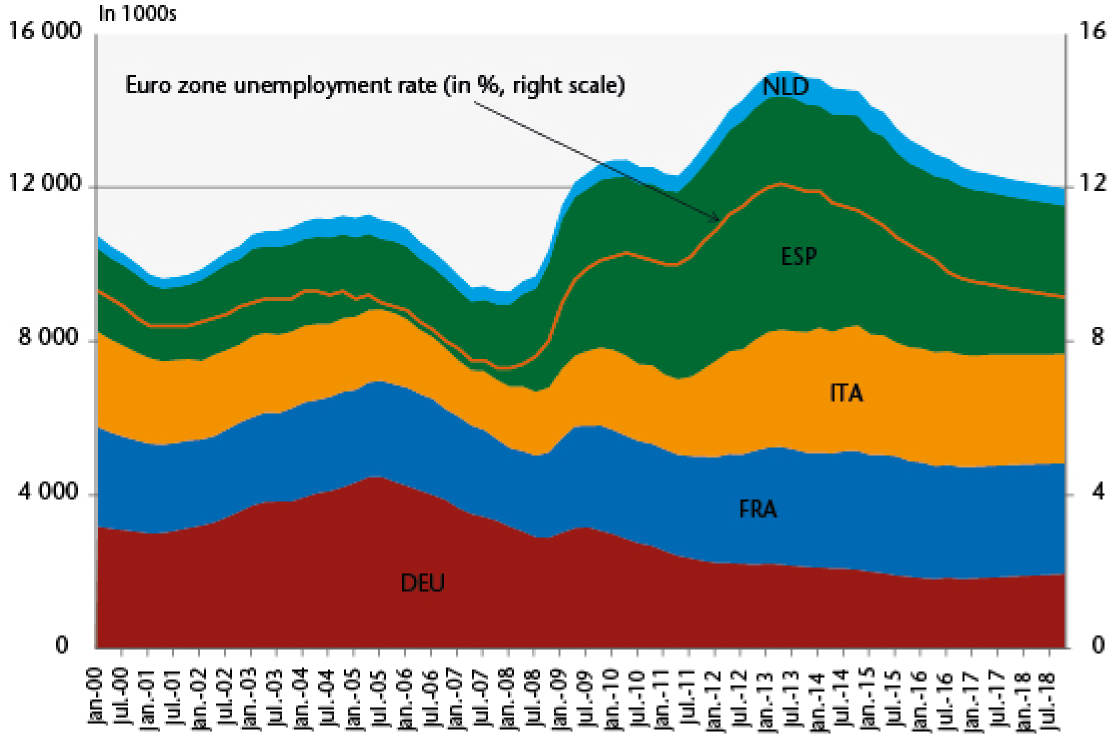
Nevertheless, despite fears of a new financial shock, it is clear that it hasn't happened. Brexit will of course be the fruit of a long process that has not yet started, but it seems that the worst has been avoided for now. The British economy will see growth halved in 2017. But the short-term negative effects on other euro zone countries should be fairly limited, except perhaps Ireland which is more interdependent on the United Kingdom. In any case the global recovery should continue, but growth will be down in the euro zone from 1.9% in 2015 to 1.3% in 2018.

The many factors that helped initiate the recovery[1] will to some extent lose steam. The price of oil has already begun to rise after hitting a low of under USD 30 in January 2016. It is now once again over 50 dollars a barrel. As for the euro, it has fluctuated since the beginning of the year at around 1.10 dollar, while in 2014 and 2015 it depreciated by 12.5% and 11.3%, respectively. In contrast, the European Central Bank has stuck to its expansionary monetary policy, and fiscal policy is much less restrictive than from 2011 to 2014. In 2015 and 2016, the aggregate fiscal impulse was even slightly positive.

Finally, world trade is slowing significantly, well beyond what would be expected simply from the change in China's economic model, which is resulting in a deceleration of imports. There were hopes that after the recovery kicked off, a virtuous cycle of growth would be triggered in the euro zone. Higher growth partly driven by exogenous factors would lead to job creation, higher incomes and better prospects for households and businesses. These elements would be conducive to a return of confidence and in turn stimulate investment and consumption. The dynamics of productive investment in France and Spain in the last quarter have given credence to this scenario.

The recovery will certainly not be aborted, but this rate of growth seems insufficient to reduce the imbalances brought about by long years of recession and low growth. At the end of 2018, the unemployment rate in the euro zone will still be nearly 2 percentage points higher than at end 2007 (graphic). For the five largest countries in the euro zone, this represents nearly 2.7 million additional people without jobs. In these conditions, it is undoubtedly the social situation of the euro zone which, even more than Brexit, is putting the European project in jeopardy. Europe certainly cannot be held solely responsible for low growth and high unemployment in the various countries, but the current forecast indicates that we have undoubtedly not achieved the goals that were set in Lisbon in 2000, i.e. making the European Union "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion".

Figure: Unemployment in the euro zone



Source: Eurostat, OFCE forecasts – October 2016.

[1] View See the OFCE's earlier synthesis (in French) of the international outlook (summarized here in English).

Britain's referendum of 23 June 2016: The leap into the

unknown

By Catherine Mathieu

On 23 June 2016, the British people decided (by 52% to 48%) to leave the European Union. After having long criticized the functioning of the EU and the constraints that it placed on the United Kingdom, on 19 February 2016 David Cameron obtained an agreement intended to allow the UK to remain in the EU – but it was not enough to convince the voters. In an OFCE Policy Brief (No. 1 of 13 July), we analyze how the British people's concerns went beyond economic issues and that what counted was their desire to maintain (or regain) their political sovereignty.

The departure from the EU is, in the words of David Cameron, "a leap into the unknown", and all that is possible now is to develop scenarios based on hypotheses about the outcome of the negotiations to be undertaken with the EU: from a rosy scenario in which both sides want to maintain as much as possible of the existing relations, to a dark scenario where the EU wants to set an example and the UK becomes a tax and regulatory haven.

As of early July, the UK clearly had not yet decided to formally leave the EU (by triggering Article 50), and will probably not do so before September. The resignations of the Brexit camp's leaders and continuing changes in the political situation are leaving a fog over the establishment of negotiations: the pound has lost more than 10% against the euro and 12% against the dollar, and may not stabilize until the UK's situation is clarified. It seems that we are entering into a grey scenario where the various shades are still unknown.

In the short term, depending on the hypotheses adopted, the impact of a Brexit could be slightly negative for the British economy, on the order of 0.2 point of GDP in 2016 according to the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR), but this could reach several percentage points of GDP after two years depending on the scenario, with the UK Treasury entertaining the gloomiest prospects (-3.6% to -6%).

In the long term, again depending on the hypotheses adopted, the economic impact of the UK's exit would be decidedly negative, especially according to the British Treasury, but the assumptions of a sharp decline in British trade are undoubtedly exaggerated.

Europe is dead – Long live Europe!

By Maxime Parodi and Xavier Timbeau

The British people's vote for Brexit merely reinforces the political logic that has become an imperative. On the one hand, people want to be consulted, while on the other, Europe is summoned to change. François Hollande believes that, "the vote of the United Kingdom is putting Europe to the test"; Alain Juppé holds that, "we must write a new page, a new chapter, in the history of Europe"; the leaders of France's National Front, but not they alone, are calling for a referendum on France's membership in the EU and in the euro. Throughout Europe, debate along these same lines is underway.

A few days ago, we wrote on the Terranova Foundation site: "The referendum on the UK's membership in the European Union will lead to a shock that is more political than economic. It will be difficult to contain demands for similar consultations. Meeting these demands by ‘more Europe’ will only heighten the distance between the peoples and European construction. To think that referendums could on the other hand legitimize the status quo would also be a mistake. We propose responding to the democratic need not by a ‘all or nothing’ approach but by a process of democratic ownership that helps to legitimize European integration and to imagine future possibilities.”

This method of democratic ownership of Europe and the euro has to be taught. Referendums “for or against” won’t cut it. The federal leap now acts as a foil for probably a large majority of Europeans. But a public domain does nevertheless exist in Europe. Articulating what today are the sites of democracy, the EU Member States, with the need, for some subjects, of a supranational legitimacy is the alternative to the invention of the European citizen. But it is the method that counts. And all the levers of participatory democracy, of broad national and transnational debates, including through citizen juries, must be mobilized to take stock of the current state of Europe and propose reforms that will render it more democratic. **This could lead to concrete advances such as a parliament of the euro zone or an extension of the European Parliament’s powers.** It is also the way to reverse the trend towards the breakdown of Europe.