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## **Editorial: The Brexit, the UK referendum and the recent elections under the shadow of terrorism**

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The British euroskepticism is not a new trend. The UK has applied twice in order to enter the European Union during the '60s, in 1963 and 1967 but was vetoed by France. It finally entered the European Union in 1973. The UK entrance in the EU has been sealed with the 1975 referendum where the 2/3 of the citizens has reaffirmed the nation's decisiveness to join the Union. Nevertheless, while the British euroskepticism was augmented during the Thatcher administration, also in the background a skepticism regarding the role of the UK in the EU existed. Initially, it was the skepticism of Charles De Gaulle who considered the UK as incompatible to the European project, which afterwards became a skepticism towards a member-state that felt 'uneasy' with the EU evolution, constantly negotiating its role and participation in it.

On June 23, 2016 a referendum regarding the UK exit from the UK according to Art. 50 of the Lisbon Treaty has been held. The leave won by 51.9% to 48.1% with an extremely high participation counting approximately 30 million citizens voting, a percentage of 71.8%. England and Wales have voted in favour of leaving the EU, while Scotland and Northern Ireland voted in favour of remaining. The question of the referendum was extremely clear targeted asking the citizens: 'Should the UK remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?'

The campaign leading to the referendum was marked by the assassination of the labour party MP Jo Cox. The referendum campaign was occupied among others by a populist agenda that connected the participation of the UK in the EU with the rise of immigration. One day after the referendum, the Prime Minister David Cameron, in favour of the participation of the UK in the EU, resigned from his post. Theresa May succeeded him in his post. Theresa May on March 29, 2017 has initiated the procedures of UK exiting the UK according to the prerequisites set on Art. 50 of the Lisbon Treaty. According to Art. 50, a member-state can withdraw after notifying the European Council of its intention and after negotiations and an agreement between the Union and the withdrawing member state.

In the light of the upcoming negotiations with the EU, the UK Prime Minister called for elections that took place on June 8, 2017. The Conservatives leading party with Theresa May came first but without the needed parliamentary majority. In the framework of a possible 'hanging parliament', the Conservatives formed a government with the support of DUP, the Democratic Unionist Party, a right wing party of Northern Ireland. A few days before the election two horrific terrorist attacks hit the UK, first in Manchester and then in London.

This troubled for the UK political framework gives the opportunity for some observations. First, it is important to acknowledge the right of the people in deciding on

extremely important political decisions affecting their identity and future. The right to decide on whether you will acquire a second identity, as an EU citizen, lies to the people and only them and thus it can only be decided with a referendum appealing to their choice. Second, the referendums are decided based on the principle of majority which means that a decision can be obtained on a small percentage difference. Normally also, since the referendums on a single, simple question, they can divide the participating citizens in two parts: those in favour and those against of what is proposed in a referendum. This is the case of the UK referendum, where the decision has been made on a 51.9% which is a close race because those who were in favour and against of Brexit. This is why referendums should take place when the conditions for their realisation are really mature and the citizens are well informed on their results in order to avoid social and political divisions and tensions. Nevertheless, still in such close races the social wounds take time to heal and a certain amount of skepticism and debate regarding a referendum result should be expected. In the UK case, this skepticism is reflected in the results of the recent elections and in the relevant public debate and they should have been expected.

The third observation is connected with the terrorist actions taking place at the UK recently. It is unfortunate that political and social transition at the UK, marking its non-EU beginning has been traumatised by horrific actions of terror against its free citizens. From another point of view, while the nation grieves those for who have unfairly lost it's also a time for rethinking on the need for working even more closely together in a spirit of social unity and understanding in order to overcome difference of opinions and form a political and social consensus. The fourth and last observation refers to the upcoming EU agreement with the UK regarding the so-called Brexit. One has to say that the democratic and human right values so much cherished among the EU-member states dictate that the Brexit will take place in the spirit of cooperation and solidarity that characterises the European Union as an idea, vision and reality. This is our wish, that the UK will find its internal piece and continue to work along with the EU member-states separately and as a Union as a friend nation and a former colleague.