

*Let's begin*

One year after the fall of the Berlin wall, Robin Williams and Robert de Niro, arguably two of the best actors of our collective memory, presented the world with a magnificent movie: *Awakenings*. The plot is rather disturbing: a doctor, Malcolm Sayer, working with a group of catatonic patients he believes are trapped in their own bodies, and could - with a combination of stimuli, including music and drugs - be awakened. Sayer's persistence is awarded with a temporary success. The real victory, though, was unexpected even to himself: another kind of awakening, the joy to appreciate and live life to the fullest. The film ends with a promising "Let's begin".

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*Case study: Brexit*

*Exercise one: to conceptualise responsibility*

Who is assuming responsibility for Europe? Who is not? And what is this responsibility after all? The Preamble of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU attempts to provide an indication of the path to be followed: "In view of further steps to be taken in order to advance European integration".

Responsibility can mean two things: i) to have a duty to deal with something; ii) to be accountable or to be blamed for something. Who has the responsibility to deal with Brexit, a direct threat to what the founding fathers instructed Europe to pursue? And who is to blame for it?

There is no easy answer. Inasmuch as it is true that the pro-Leave movement was a textbook of populism and a country-wide misinformation campaign rooted on electorate manipulation and fake news, it cannot be ignored that some of these arguments still prevail, and a general discomfort towards Europe's chosen route can be found throughout the continent. The effects of decades of neoliberal policies, financial deregulation, anti-employment austerity and anti-growth are still painfully noticeable.

*Exercise two: re-definition of a rotten strategy*

And while Brexiters were fast to leave the sinking ship, European leaders must take a good look at the causes of the divorce. We need a more clairvoyant and ambitious Europe in economic and social policies, to fight and not to increase inequalities; we need an EU capable of providing coordinated responses in the fight against terrorism, tax havens and the fiscal jungle between Member States; capable to show solidarity with refugees and asylum-seekers; capable of more democratic control of the euro zone.

But is it worth it? Is there something inside, ready to be awakened? Undoubtedly so.

Some seem to believe there is a chance of Brexit being nothing but a bad dream - a reversible incident that history will soon vanish. Regardless of their hopes, UK leaders (where are they?) have a responsibility to deal with the already disastrous consequences for the UK's economy and reputation. The desperation for a so-called *transition period*

and the rapidly silenced approach of a *hard brexit* or *no-deal solution*, show the lack of preparation for what is now a *hard reality*.

*Exercise three: the awakening*

Still, in the aftermath of the referendum, the UK debated more Europe than perhaps ever before. People, young people, invaded the streets to celebrate and demand their European citizenship - their future, as many said - to not be taken away.

There is, suddenly, an impatient desire to express ourselves, to be active citizens and political agents. As José Gil, a Portuguese philosopher once wrote: people are ready for the *inscription* - to participate, to debate, to awake from intellectual pacifism and a "limbo between reality and imagination".

EU Member States - *the block* - are united and the negotiations have been an amazing example of a one-voice front. EU leaders are finally debating the way forward. Juncker, Macron and Merkel have all proposed forward-thinking ideas for the reform of the EU. Let them now act.

Let's begin.

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