

The UK's relationship with the European Union after Brexit

Case study: implications for Romanian citizens following Brexit

Summary

Throughout history, it has been shown that one of the most effective ways to resolve conflicts is communication. Regardless of their nature, dialogue is an essential tool, which is why diplomacy is often considered fundamental in resolving disputes. The European Union (EU) is increasingly emerging as a global player of growing importance, offering the 27 Member States the opportunity to develop on multiple levels – political, social, economic, cultural, etc.

Relevance of the thesis

The study in this thesis analyzes the impact and implications of Brexit on the European Union and the United Kingdom, taking into account the evolution of relations between the two entities and the effects of the withdrawal of Great Britain from the Union. The thesis focuses on the analysis of the evolution of EU-UK relations before and after Brexit, including economic, political, social and security aspects. The complex negotiations included the economic field, with a special status for Northern Ireland to facilitate the transit of goods between the UK and the EU and the application of specific regulations on the customs union and goods.

The research explores the impact of the UK's withdrawal on the European Union's influence on the global stage and looks at whether the UK will become stronger or more vulnerable internationally. The main objective is to provide a deep understanding of this phenomenon and to compare the pre- and post-Brexit situation in order to assess changes in the economic, social and political fields.

The thesis also analyzes the partnerships and negotiations between the European Union and the United Kingdom in the post-Brexit period, assessing the impact of treaty changes and major political decisions taken by both sides. The recent context, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the economic crisis and international conflicts, has significantly influenced these relations.

An important aspect of the research is the study of the opinion of Romanian citizens regarding Brexit and its impact on the Romanian community in the United Kingdom and

Europe. The paper uses relevant theoretical frameworks, such as federalism, Euroscepticism and European integration, to provide a comprehensive explanation of the Brexit phenomenon and to assess its long-term implications on the European construction.

Even after the official withdrawal from the European Union, the partnerships between the United Kingdom and the EU continue, although the relations between the two entities have changed significantly from multiple perspectives: economic, political, social, commercial and in the field of transport. If previously the focus was on European integration and accession to the Union, this paper aims to provide a detailed analysis of the reverse process – leaving the European Union – and the stages taken by the United Kingdom in this context. This challenge is a first in the history of the European Union, and how it will be managed can influence both the consolidation and the future of the European system, depending on the final results and the impact felt by both sides.

Eight years after the Brexit referendum, both the European Union and the United Kingdom of Great Britain have gone through a series of major events, with a significant impact at the local and regional levels. These events include the global pandemic caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, triggered in March 2020, the economic crisis that has affected both sides since 2022, the acceleration of inflation as a result of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, as well as the economic, social and political changes that have influenced essential sectors such as transport and tourism, with European citizens being among the most affected.

The thesis is based on the analysis of specialized documents in the field of international relations, highlighting the circumstances that led to the exit of Great Britain from the European Union. The paper explores relevant theories, such as federalism, Euroscepticism, European integration and the accession process, in order to provide a comprehensive explanation of this new stage that the European Union has faced. These theoretical frameworks are used to better understand the political and social dynamics underlying Brexit and to assess the long-term implications of this phenomenon on the stability and future of the European construction.

The paper analyzes the diplomatic relations between the European Union and the United Kingdom, the negotiations carried out over the years, the new partnerships established and the impact of this phenomenon from an economic, political and social perspective. Through a comparative approach between the European Union with 28 Member States and the European Union with 27 States, the research aims to highlight the possible future directions of the European project. In the current context, in which the European Union is facing such a challenge for the first time, the paper investigates whether Brexit signals a change of direction for the

Union or represents only a reverse process to that of accession, marking the withdrawal of Great Britain and its transformation into a third country.

A central point of the thesis is the opinion of Romanian citizens regarding Brexit and the impact it may have on the Romanian community in the United Kingdom and Europe, in general. The research aims to provide a clear perspective on the bilateral relations between the United Kingdom and the European Union, as well as on the new political and economic directions that the two entities will adopt in the future.

Methodology of the paper

In this doctoral thesis, qualitative research methods such as scientific documentation and analysis of documents in the field of international relations were used. The research is based on specialized theories, academic articles, books, norms, laws and relevant treatises. The thesis also includes a comparative analysis entitled "Before & After Brexit", which examines the evolution of the European Union before and after the UK's withdrawal from the bloc. To complete this analysis, a case study was also carried out, by applying a questionnaire addressed to Romanian citizens, in order to understand their perceptions of Brexit. The questionnaire was an essential tool in measuring and interpreting the data, thus contributing to the substantiation of qualitative research.

The thesis analyzes the events of the period 2016-2022, focusing on the short and medium-term impact of Brexit on the relations between the European Union and the United Kingdom. The main objective of this research is to assess the short and long-term consequences of Brexit on the United Kingdom, given the negotiations and negotiations with the European Union. The analysis focuses on the political, economic and social effects, as well as the future evolution of relations between the two entities.

Objectives of the thesis

A central aspect of the thesis is the investigation of the unique perspective of the European Union, which is facing for the first time the withdrawal of a member state. The paper examines whether this phenomenon could create a domino effect by encouraging other Member States to leave the Union. This possibility is discussed in the context of theories on Europeanisation, federalism and Euroscepticism, which provide a diverse theoretical framework for assessing Brexit and its consequences.

Another objective of the research is to analyze the stages of the negotiations for the International and Trade Agreement between the European Union and the United Kingdom, with the aim of ensuring an orderly withdrawal. The agreement aims to prevent conflicts and disruptions and provide legal certainty for both British and European citizens. The paper

discusses the advantages and disadvantages of Brexit from the perspective of both sides, highlighting the importance of an orderly and peaceful withdrawal, in line with the objectives of the European Union.

In addition, the thesis addresses the public debates and Brexit scenarios, involving young specialists in the field of international relations, and analyzes the short and long-term consequences of this phenomenon. The research questions guiding the paper are: What will be the relationship between the UK and the European Union after Brexit? and To what extent are the European Union's policies affected after the UK's exit from the EU?

The proposed research hypothesis is that the effects of Brexit (the independent variable) influence the European integration process (the dependent variable).

The relevance of this research to the field of political science is highlighted by the complexity and uniqueness of the Brexit phenomenon. This event offers a unique opportunity to analyse the short- and long-term effects on the European Union and international relations. The study contributes to clarifying the multiple implications of Brexit, bringing a better understanding of how it affects both Romanian citizens and the political and economic balance at European level.

Structure of the thesis

The structure of the thesis is well organized and detailed, covering all the essential aspects of the Brexit phenomenon so as to provide a complete and comprehensive understanding of the topic. The recap of the main sections and objectives is as follows:

1. Theoretical Concepts and Historical Context:

- Addressing fundamental concepts in the field of international relations, such as European integration, Europeanisation and federalism.
- Historical analysis of relations between the United Kingdom and the European Union, including the accession stages and the evolution up to the withdrawal decision.

2. Partnerships and Negotiations:

- Examining new post-Brexit partnerships and diplomatic relations.
- Analysis of the negotiations between the United Kingdom and the European Union, with a focus on the impact on external relations and future prospects.

3. Comparative Analysis:

- Comparing the state of the European Union before and after Brexit, exploring the advantages and disadvantages for both sides.
- Assessing the short- and long-term consequences for politics, the economy and society.

4. **Case Study:**

- Presentation of the results of the questionnaire applied to Romanian citizens, in order to understand their perception of Brexit and the impact on the Romanian community in the United Kingdom.

5. **Conclusions:**

- Synthesis of the research findings, including the effects of Brexit on the European Union and the United Kingdom, as well as the prospects for the future of international relations.

Theoretical framework

In this thesis, essential theories of international relations, such as Europeanization, federalism, and integration, are analyzed and applied to assess the Brexit phenomenon and its effects on international interactions. It highlights the potential of this phenomenon to trigger a domino effect, in which other Member States could follow the example of the United Kingdom, given the rise of Euroscepticism. In this context, the paper proposes a new theory, that of "de-Europeanization," a process opposed to European accession and integration, unique in the current framework of international studies.

Limits of research

The main limitations of the research include:

- The lack of precedent of a member state that has left the European Union, which makes the subject difficult to analyze in depth.
- Little research available on the Brexit phenomenon, especially due to other global events such as the pandemic and the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, which have diminished attention on this topic.

The paper makes a valuable contribution in the field of international relations, providing a basis for future discussions and research on the Brexit phenomenon and its implications for the European Union and the Member States.

Post-Brexit economic context

As of January 1, 2021, the United Kingdom has ceased to have the rights and obligations of a member state of the European Union, which has led to a series of significant economic changes. Among the main effects of this withdrawal are:

1. **Single Market and Customs Union:** The United Kingdom no longer enjoys free access to the European Single Market or the Customs Union. This means that goods and services between the EU and the UK are now subject to new trade barriers, including



customs duties and additional regulations, which can lead to higher prices for consumers.

2. **Trade Barriers:** Even with the free trade agreement concluded, businesses face new trade barriers. These include higher tariffs for various product categories. For example, in the absence of an agreement, tariffs on food products such as beef, dairy and pork could have exceeded 50%, while fish products and cars would have been subject to tariffs of more than 25% and textiles and footwear would have been subject to tariffs of 12%.
3. **Free Trade Agreement:** Under the new free trade agreement, both parties (the EU and the UK) agreed to create a tariff-free trade area to ensure fair competition. This agreement was essential to avoid major economic damage to agricultural producers and other economic sectors affected by Brexit.
4. **Trade Defense Instruments:** Under World Trade Organization rules, the agreement allows both parties to apply trade defense instruments to protect their economies from unfair trade practices or adverse economic impact.
5. **Recognition of Authorised Economic Operator programmes:** Both sides agreed on the recognition of Authorised Economic Operator programmes, which facilitate the marketing of products between the EU and the UK by cutting red tape and simplifying trade processes.
6. **Airfares and Visa Regulations:** Other important discussions focused on regulations related to airfares, visa and passport requirements, according to regulations set by both sides to ensure the continuity of travel and international trade.

These changes reflect the complexity of the economic and trade relations between the European Union and the United Kingdom post-Brexit, highlighting both the challenges and opportunities arising from this new economic reality.

The effects of Brexit on the United Kingdom and the European Union

1. Labor Shortage

- **Immediate Impact:** After Brexit, around 40% of large British companies faced a shortage of European employees, especially in the transport, warehousing, Horeca, healthcare, construction and utilities sectors. ¹This was caused by new migration rules, which made it more difficult to hire workers from the European Union.

¹ Directorate for the European Union, "EU Policies Guidelines" – Synthesis of European Activities, no.1/2021, coordinator Dr. Cristina Stroescu, pag.24



- **Decrease in the Number of Workers:** Since January 1, 2021, the number of European workers in the UK has decreased by 8.7% compared to the pre-pandemic period, thus affecting economic activity and leading to higher prices.²

2. Disinformation and Social Impact

- **Fake News and Panic:** Brexit has been accompanied by a proliferation of fake news, which has generated panic and confusion among citizens. Misinformation, often disseminated through social networks by fake accounts, has had a significant impact on public perception and decisions made by citizens.

3. Commercial and Economic Regulations

- **New Regulations:** Products moving between the EU and the UK are now subject to stricter checks and technical regulations, which has led to lower imports from the European Union and increased costs for traders.
- **Depreciation of the British pound:** The depreciation of the British pound has made British exports more competitive, but it has also led to a decrease in the value of imports.

4. Changes in the Fee and Visa System

- **Fuel Pricing:** The UK has introduced a fuel pricing system and no longer participates in EU emissions trading.
- **Temporary Work Visa:** Citizens who wish to work in the UK for less than 6 months must obtain an entry visa. During the transition period, until September 30, 2021, entry into British territory was allowed on the basis of a passport or identity card.

5. Changes in the Field of Transport and Security

- **Aviation Safety Agency:** The United Kingdom is no longer a member of the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), which affects aviation operators.
- **Connectivity in Transport:** Emphasis is placed on maintaining connectivity in the field of air, road, rail and maritime transport, although the area of foreign and defence policy has not been discussed in detail.

6. Impact on Foreign Policy and Security

- **P.E.S.C. (Common Foreign Security Policy):** Brexit had an impact on the Common Foreign Security Policy, given that Britain was an important military power in Europe. Economic and political instability, exacerbated by the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine conflict, has influenced European security.

² European Commission, 'Questions and Answers: EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement', Brussels, 24.12.2020, p.2-3



- **Solidarity in the face of crises:** While Brexit has created divisions, recent crises, including the war in Ukraine, have led to a strengthening of solidarity among EU member states and spurred progress in European integration, including Ukraine's possible accession to the EU.

The case study provides a detailed picture of Romanian citizens' perception of Brexit, using an online questionnaire to collect the necessary data. Here are some key points for analyzing and interpreting the results:

Context of the study:

- **Purpose:** To assess Romanians' perception of the impact of Brexit.
- **Period:** May 23 – June 1, 2022.
- **Methodology:** Online questionnaire (Google Form), with structured and open-ended questions.
- **Number of respondents:** 208.
- **Statistical tool:** Quantitative data analysis.

Description of the sample:

- **Age categories:**
 - 26-35 years: 40.9%
 - 15-25 years: 36.1%
 - 36-50 years: 18.3%
 - Over 50: 4.8%
- **Gender distribution:**
 - Female: 63% (131 respondents)
 - Male: 37% (77 respondents)

Impact interpretation:

1. **General Perception:** The results will help to understand how Romanian citizens perceive the changes caused by Brexit, including the effects on labour rights, mobility and access to health and education services.
2. **Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic and the Ukraine-Russia War:** It is important to correlate the perception of Brexit with the effects of these global events, as they have significantly influenced the economic and social context.
3. **Barriers and Opportunities:** The analysis will be able to highlight recent barriers for Romanians in the UK and the EU, as well as possible opportunities that have arisen as a result of the changes.



This case study provides a solid basis for a better understanding of the perceptions and effects of Brexit on Romanian citizens and can contribute to the formulation of policies better adapted to their needs. These effects underline the complexity of the changes brought about by Brexit and their impact on the economy, society and international security

The analysis suggests that, in the long term, relations between the UK and the European Union will stabilise and develop positively as economic and social problems are resolved. Cooperative relations will continue to evolve in a constructive direction, given external challenges such as Russia's actions and the emergence of China. Brexit is seen as an important lesson for EU member and non-member states. There is an opinion that the UK could consider joining the European Economic Area, similar to Norway and Switzerland, in order to overcome future economic challenges.