

The Impact of Brexit on Romania

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A month has passed since the UK decided to leave the EU. What impact will the Brexit have on Romania and Romanians living in Britain? by Alina Agafitei

On June 23rd, citizens from all over the United Kingdom casted their vote on an issue that had an impact on the entire world. With 52% percent, the majority of Britons decided to leave the European Union. It was the first time in the history of the EU that a member state decided to leave the union. Thus, June 23rd became one of the dates that will be remembered for many years to come. A month has passed since the vote and the consequences of the Brexit are starting to appear.

Migration

One of the factors which provoked mass-movements in Britain and, apparently, had been also behind the organization of the referendum was the situation of the immigrants coming to the UK. According to the Office for National Statistics, between March 2015 and March 2016, there has been an increase of 224,000 in the number of EU nationals working in Britain, among which are a significant number of Romanians. This reason started to stir things up. With such bold figures as Nigel Farage (UKIP) and Boris Johnson (Tories) as opinion leaders, the nationalists started to speak their truth. And they did it strikingly.

The official statistics show around 180,000 Romanians legally working in the UK, most of them in construction, hotels and restaurants. The results of the UK referendum left them fearing for the future. Not only employees are concerned, but also Romanian students that decided to leave their home country to study abroad. Although some of the British universities have already announced that the taxes for those registered in 2016 will not be affected, the situation is unclear for those to begin studying in 2017.

According to Cristina Irimie (representative of the Romanian community living in the UK) present at the Congress of Romanians everywhere held on June 24-25 in Bucharest, Romanians are concerned about the visas as well as their legal status in Britain. Dan Stoenescu, the delegate minister for the relations with Romanians all over the world, stated that the rights of those living in Great Britain would be respected, regardless of what happens once the Brexit is implemented. President Klaus Iohannis (Independent) did not delay in his reaction and underlined: "Romania is convinced that it requires unity between the 27 member states that remain in the EU. It is very important for the Romanian people to understand that we must keep our calm. There is no sign of worry."

The Brexit won't happen quickly. Experts are estimating a period of two years of negotiations. "I can assure the fact that Romania is part of this negotiation and that we will negotiate in a way that will advantage the Romanians living and working in the UK", added Iohannis.

This point of view was shared by Prime Minister Dacian Cioloș (Independent): "In 2019, Romania will hold the presidency of the Council of the European Union and so it will have the opportunity and even the responsibility to proactively participate in the process of redefining the EU." Further, he transmitted another message to the Romanian citizens living and working in the UK: "There won't be an immediate impact on the rights and, sure, on the obligations they have over there as Romanians and European citizens".

Economy and Financial Markets

The UK is the fifth largest economy of the world and its connections to the international markets are highly important for the global trade. That means, Britain's political actions do not only impact the domestic economy, but have a major influence on global markets and the world economy.

The Romanian Minister for Finance, Anca Dragu, shared her thoughts on the situation and the impact on Romania, pointing to the fact that the reaction of the financial markets (seen in the UK right after the vote) was an immediate one and that Romania has a monetary reserve. This cautious financial politics seems suitable for the country. "For the long term, Romania expects a moderate impact, due to the economical increase. The economy will survive the external shocks. There won't be a sudden

change neither for the Romanians working in the UK. They are appreciated in their areas of work and I do not think that the employers will let them go”, Dragu concluded.

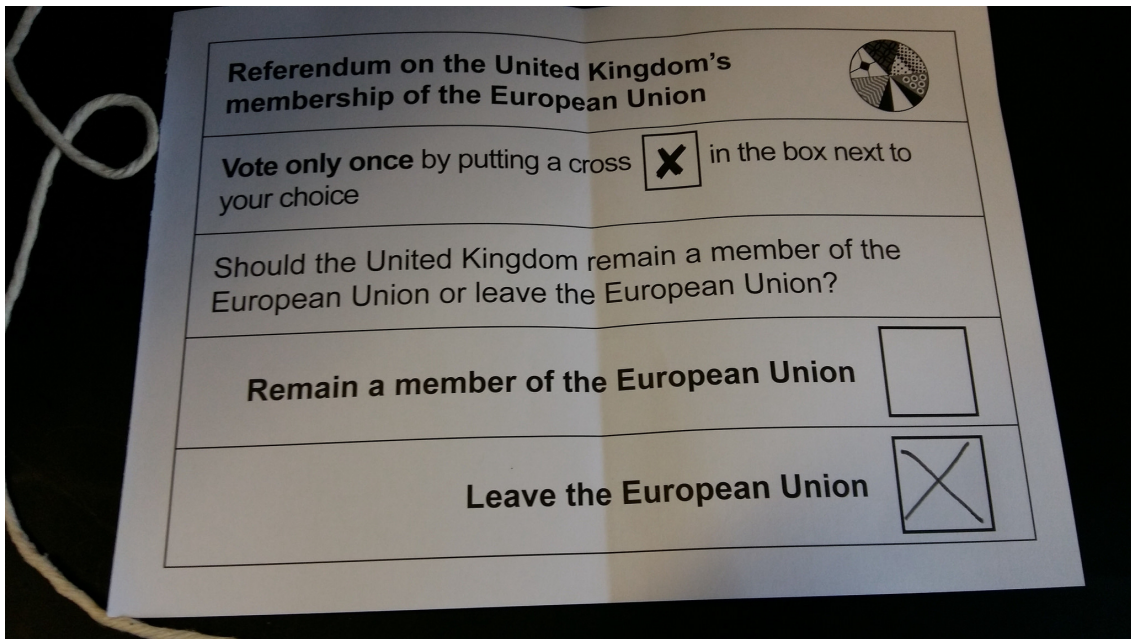
Society

Not only politicians shared their impressions on Brexit. Emil Hurezeanu, writer, journalist and current ambassador of Romania in Germany, stated in an interview given for republica.ro that “the UK, through its democratic leave from the EU, reopens the gates for the perils which have always been threatening the peace in Europe. In the first weeks and months after the Brexit, the problem of the social immigration will be put on the table”.

Another point of view was given by the journalist Cristian Tudor Popescu, who is of the opinion that the effects of Brexit would be felt all over Europe not only in the UK. “As we can see, the old fracture lines between England, Scotland and Northern Island are reappearing, and the shock wave could affect other European regions where strong separatist movements are on the rise”.

It appears that Cristian Tudor Popescu was right. After the Brexit, the situation for Romanians living in the UK started to take a new shift when it came to the social status. Several examples of discrimination occurred over the UK. In Norwich for example, the Village Shop, owned by a Romanian was set on fire with a Molotov cocktail.

Taking into account the fact that the USA elections are shortly approaching and the nationalistic trend is on the rise, perhaps the date of November 8th will turn out to be another memorable date for the global economics and politics.



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Brexit or Bremain? Referendum on the UK's membership of the EU