

Foreign Policy Association together with Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung offer you a newsletter on foreign policy and European integration issues of the Republic of Moldova. The newsletter is part of the "Foreign Policy Dialogue" joint Project.

# NEWSLETTER

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## Synthesis and Foreign Policy Debates

The newsletter is developed by Sorina Ștefârță, editor-coordinator

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### News in Brief



Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration of the Republic of Moldova, Iurie Leanca, participated in the Interparliamentary Conference on the Future of the European Union, which took place in Bucharest during the rotating Romania's Presidency of the EU Council. In his speech, the Moldovan Deputy Prime Minister spoke about the benefits that the Republic of Moldova obtained as a result of its rapprochement with the EU and the signing of the Association Agreement. In particular, he emphasized the liberalization of the visa regime in April 2014 and the free trade with the EU space. So far, more than 1.5 million Moldovan citizens have benefited from the visa liberalization regime, while the trade with the EU countries has increased from 50 to 70%. At the same time, Iurie Leanca advocated a more coherent EU strategy towards the Republic of Moldova, but also towards other countries of the Eastern Partnership.



The development and perspective of the joint projects have been the key topic of the discussions recently held by Prime Minister Pavel Filip and Daniel Ioniță, Ambassador of Romania to Chisinau. Thus, among the bilateral projects of major interest were the construction of the Ungheni-Chisinau gas pipeline, the interconnection of the electric grids, the development of the infrastructure and the elimination of the roaming tariffs between the two states. In this context, Pavel Filip said that the implementation of the projects agreed by the Chișinău and Bucharest Governments, which were included in the Road Map, will further enhance the bilateral dialogue. In his turn, ES Daniel Ioniță declared that Romania will continue to support the European path of the Republic of Moldova and that our country remains a strategic partner and good friend.



Also in April, Pavel Filip met with a delegation of the US Congress that visited the Republic of Moldova. According to the Prime Minister, Chisinau pays special attention to bilateral relations and good cooperation with the USA. He highlighted the US support in the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict and stressed the importance of strengthening the country's security in general, but also its energy security, the US support being valuable in this regard. In this context, Pavel Filip mentioned that this year we are marking the 20th anniversary of the Republic of Moldova-North Carolina Bilateral Partnership, which has been an example of beneficial cooperation for two decades. At present, with the support of this American state, several social and educational projects as well as projects in the field of defense, are being carried out in our country.



The developments in achieving the 20 Objectives for 2020 and the launching of reflections on the future of Eastern Partnership (EaP) in the context of its tenth anniversary were the main topics addressed at the recent Eastern Partnership senior officials' meeting. Daniela Morari, State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, reviewed the progress made by our country on the four thematic topics of the EaP and reiterated Chisinau's interest in strengthening the cooperation with the EU on the resilience and security dimension, focusing on crisis management and combating hybrid threats and disinformation. Concerning the economic sphere, she mentioned the importance of continuing the dialogue within the format of the three EU associated states on the implementation of the Free Trade Area, with its gradual expansion to such sectors as transport, energy and the digital economy.

## Brexit that "doesn't concern us," but affects us



### Sorina Ștefârță

On April 10, in Brussels, British Prime Minister Theresa May agreed with the proposal of the 27 EU Member States in favour of a new Brexit postponement until October 2019. "The United Kingdom has another six months to find the best possible solution," the President of the European

Council Donald Tusk said in a Twitter post. "By the end of this period, Britain will also be able ... to cancel Brexit altogether," Tusk added, quoted by *Le Monde*.

Extending the great European divorce could indeed be beneficial for everyone - and when I say this I mean neither "everyone" anti-Brexit

British, who still hopes to get a second referendum; nor "everyone" pro-Brexit British, even though the British Parliament has rejected a few times the Brexit Agreement negotiated with great torment by Theresa May with Brussels... "Everyone" also means the European Union - that despite the extremely harsh tone adopted over the past few months, we

► see (and Donald Tusk's statement is not a singular example of this) it is still hoping for the return of the wandering daughter under the 12-star flag.

"Everyone" also means countries that at first glance do not have anything to do with this process. Just like (as I thought so far) the Republic of Moldova. Because, what could connect Moldova, which is so small and distant, with UK? What can connect us, apart from a few dozen? hundreds? of young people studying at the English universities or apart from a few hundred? thousands? of fellow citizens who have settled down on the island due to the Romanian passports? But appearances can be deceiving and ... who said Brexit is an exception? So, on the same day that a new postponement of an already old separation was negotiated in Brussels, in Chisinau they were talking about and with the United Kingdom.

It happened at the headquarters of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, where two teams - one representing Chisinau and the other representing London - discussed the Moldovan-British cooperation in the context of Britain's exit from the European Union. Although the press release broadcast on this occasion by the Foreign Office was informing us more than diplomatically about the content of those discussions - *the consultations focused on the implications of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland's exit from the EU on the bilateral relations with our country on the political and sectoral dimension* - one thing suddenly became evident (to me, at least): Brexit is not going to pass by without having an impact on us. Though just a little, it is going to affect us... About how "little", as much as it may mean today for the Republic of Moldova, we wanted to speak in the April issue of the newsletter.

The press release says also "the interlocutors reaffirmed the common goal of strengthening the Moldovan-British dialogue". Meanwhile, the UK is preparing for the European Parliament elections, which, according to experts, could become a second referendum on leaving the EU. Or remain.

## Our goal is not to admit any legal vacuum in our further co-operation with London

### Tatiana Molcean, State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova



**O**n 10 April 2019, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova informed us, through a brief press release, that Moldovan-British consultations took place in Chisinau. It's a title that most often goes unnoticed by the media, because this is usually supposed to be part of a diplomatic routine that doesn't have a certain novelty. We don't rule out that this is often the case, and yet, in the situation of these consultations, things have taken a more nuanced turn. This is because, as noted on the first page of the Newsletter, the given consultations "focused on the implications of the exit of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from the European

*Union on the bilateral relations with our country on the political and sectoral dimension."* What are namely the "implications" mentioned in the press release? I have discussed about this with Tatiana Molcean, State Secretary at the Moldovan Foreign Office, responsible for the Moldovan bilateral and multilateral foreign policy and the official who led the Delegation of the Republic of Moldova within the consultations.

**The political component will not undergo major changes, but the economic one needs to be revised**

■ Ms. Molcean, the UK exit from the European Union, initially postponed for 12 April 2019, has been given a reprieve until October 31 this year. In the meantime, it has turned out that this process, even if it does not directly target us, has certain implications for our country and its relations with the EU, but also with the UK. Why is Brexit, contrary to the general opinion, a phenomenon that should be of interest to us, at least at the foreign policy level?

■ We can pretend Brexit doesn't refer to us as a country, but it is not so - and I am going to explain it from

the perspective of the institution I represent and of the sector I am responsible for. First and foremost, it is about the fact that our relations with the UK are currently developing on the basis of the Association Agreement with the EU and all that it is supposed to be, whether we are talking about the political, the economic or the educational framework. Together with the UK exit from the EU, we (and not just us) need to replace the Association Agreement with a bilateral agreement with London. And while the political component is not going to suffer major changes - for London is not giving up the fundamental principles of human rights, freedom of expression or the rule of law - the economic component will be revised to reflect the specificity of a strictly bilateral relationship, where the priority remains the facilitation and liberalization of trade, not the integration into a certain market, as it is the case with the European Union. At the same time, I would like to mention that, for the moment, nothing will change in the field of travel, because the UK had anyway a bilateral and national regulatory framework in this respect, separate from the single Community policy in this field.

■ **What are the current priorities in the relationship with London?**

■ At present we are working on two main documents: we are having consultations on what and how we are going to take over from the Association Agreement with the EU and adapt it for the bilateral Moldovan-British Agreement, and at the same time we are looking for optimal solutions to ensure continuity of the Airspace Agreement, based on which we have been operating since 2012 and which, if the UK leaves the EU without any

deal, will no longer apply to London. That is why, together with the Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure we have worked to develop the necessary legal framework as soon as possible, so that the changes in the aviation field don't affect the citizens of the Republic of Moldova. In this respect, the new postponement for London is time saving also for us, because we have time now to bridge the gaps in order to avoid any legal vacuum. In fact, initially, the idea was the following: after the UK's exit from the community club originally set up for 29 March 2019 and expected to be produced on the basis of the agreement negotiated by Prime Minister Theresa May with Brussels, to allow for a transition period within which all countries, including those under the Eastern Partnership, adapt their legislation to the new realities and the new EU-London relationship.

■ **I admit I would not have thought things could go that far. Personally, I was mostly affected by the symbolic part of this rupture...**

■ The symbolic part is there and we also feel it. And it is not just symbolic. Until recently, we regarded this country as one of the pillars of the European Union and now we have to change our optics and approach. For some time, traditionally and historically, Britain has had an open policy towards the enlargement process. London was one of the western governments that did not oppose this process... Likewise, it had a much more open economic policy than other European partners. But at the practical and more "down-to-earth" level, there are quite many aspects, the airspace being just one of the examples. At present, together with our British colleagues, we think about the shape the new framework

for cooperation between our countries should take. In this context, I would like to mention that we salute and appreciate the consistent support in various areas of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for the development of the Republic of Moldova.

**It is a new agreement that will focus on bilateral relations**

■ **What does de facto "re-examining of the bilateral framework" with the EU and the UK respectively mean?**

■ It depends on the situation, subject and context. I would say we are going to remove everything that is not relevant to the bilateral relations. For example, from the political perspective, the Association Agreement with the European Union - which is extremely complex - is based, largely, on the European integration aspirations of our country. In the case of the new agreement with London, these aspirations will have only a declarative nature without taking over the numerous annexes with directives and regulations. As I said, only what is relevant to the bilateral framework will be included. It is the same with the economic component. Although, in a certain way, the bilateral agreement is the successor of the Association Agreement, it is going to be a new document that will have to be consulted again with the producer associations, the specialized institutions... I can also say that it is going to be a rather in-depth agreement, which is a novelty.

■ **And if, in the autumn, the English change their minds and leave no more, will that mean you have worked in vain?**

■ Personally, I think things have gone way too far for a reversal to happen- at least, I don't see how this would be possible now. But leaving or remaining is and will be the decision of the British, in the end. We are doing our work on our segment and, no matter how things evolve, it is not going to be in vain, because it will help us clarify situations and be prepared for other critical situations. It is true that there is still much ambiguity, including at the level of the European Union. But there are procedures that are not only dependent on Moldova, so the Republic of Moldova will not manage them unilaterally. Therefore, we are in constant communication with Brussels - which has to respond to the same challenges, by the way - and I am convinced that we will find the optimal solutions. Now it is important that in our negotiations we do not violate our commitments to the EU.

■ *You mentioned earlier about the travel regime, which is going to remain the same. The difficulty of obtaining a British visa is also a fact known to everybody. What are the chances for the Moldovan authorities to be able to influence this process?*

■ For the Government of the Republic of Moldova, the facilitation and even the liberalization of the travel regime with the UK is a priority and an issue that we are constantly discussing with our counterparts in London. We will try again this time. But let's not forget that the United Kingdom has always had, even in the EU, a distinct migration policy from the rest of the EU. And if we remember where Brexit started and that one of the key reasons triggering this process was migration ... I don't rule out that also this time they will not be willing to discuss the issue, despite

the fact that our experience with the EU countries over the last five years- since the liberalized visa regime- has shown that the Moldovan citizens, with very few exceptions, respect the visa agreement. To conclude, since we are drawing up a new bilateral framework anyway, we will try again to put this issue on the negotiation table. What is going to happen next? We will continue posing the issue, hoping to obtain a positive answer...

■ *However, the UK remains one of the most popular destinations for the Moldovan citizens, most of whom got there with Romanian passports...*

■ Yes, but most are there either for study or work visas, or with Romanian passports. The latter will have to see what the UK's policy will be regarding the citizens of the European Union on its territory.

***There are problems in the neighbourhood, but also progress***

■ *What have been other challenges and, perhaps, accomplishments in the bilateral field in 2019?*

■ As you know, last year we announced the opening of several diplomatic representatives of the Republic of Moldova. A Moldovan diplomat has already been posted to Ireland, we are there and there are results as it can be seen from the first notes. We have an intense dialogue with the United States and proof to that fact is the visit to Washington of the Prime Minister Tudor Ulianovschi earlier this year. We are also putting an important emphasis on the economic diplomacy. Recently, we have had a series of bilateral political consultations

with representatives of the Swiss Confederation, a country that is a loyal partner, not just according to the size of its development assistance. I have discussed with my counterpart in Berna about the possibilities of intensifying the cooperation in the area of cyber security, education, culture, and of signing a bilateral agreement on social security. In addition, in the margins of political consultations, we have also signed an agreement on regular air services between the two countries in order to simplify travel there as well.

■ *And, to paraphrase a play, what are we doing with the neighborhood?*

■ In the immediate and traditional neighbourhood, the dialogue with Bucharest is quite intense. It happens on the bilateral as well as on the European integration level, especially in the context of Romania's Presidency of the European Union. As for the eastern direction, we are in some kind of expectation, dictated by the recent electoral processes that took place both in Moldova and Ukraine. But I am convinced the things are going to get more dynamic after the appointment of the Chisinau and Kiev governments. For the time being, I am glad that at the beginning of April we managed to organize the working group meeting on the Nistru issue, on various topics of common interest - demarcation, ecology, etc. Obviously we cannot say that the file is closed, as we have seen in some media headlines, but progress is there.

■ *We wish you success and thank you for the interview.*

**Sorina Ștefârță**

## Editorial

# Brexit: a term, a phenomenon, a process...

**Victoria Bucătaru,**  
*Executive director,*  
*Foreign Policy Association*



For almost three years, the news about Brexit and its consequences have become a more frequent and increasingly natural media presence. First, both the foreign and local media talked about the causes of the Referendum on June 23, 2016, when more than 30 million British citizens expressed their wish for Britain to break away from the European Union. Then came the news, reports, analyses and debates through which the journalists have tried to explain the situation after the “Leave” vote.

Was that manipulation, hybrid influences, or simple lack of communication... surely, it had it all. Or did we witness the “triumph” of populism, fuelled by the increasing disparities between the political and social environment? These phenomena too cannot be totally ignored... Today, however, the most pressing issues that bother the British around the world, but also the foreign residents of this country, are related to the future and ... the purpose of this process. What will the exit of Great Britain from the European Union eventually mean: disintegration or evolution? And how is Brexit going to affect (if it is not already doing it) the everyday life of people.

The uncertainties and concerns are generated, to a large extent, by the realities about which none of those who has promoted the Referendum has spoken. Almost three years since the Referendum, the British authorities who have negotiated an EU exit deal, cannot win Parliament’s confidence vote, while the population is less convinced that the vote was a conscious one. Against the backdrop of the new trends in the developments of political classes, hybrid threats, and massive migration flows to colonialist countries, in the case of Great Britain, the no-confidence vote against the authorities has led to a deep existential crisis. The territorial integrity of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is questioned once it leaves the EU.

How is London going to deal with these concerns and what will Britain look like after Brexit remains an open question. For now, it is clear that the European Union will continue its journey in

a new composition, yet in the same format. For institutionally, except for the loss of one Member State, the European club is not going to suffer major changes. Moreover, although immediately after the pro-Brexit vote similar tendencies appeared in other Member States - see the example of Italy- the inability of the British to complete the processes that somehow started in a “loosey-goosey” way have discouraged these attempts and increased the EU unity.

It is not excluded that, in time, we may even talk about positive effects of the Brexit phenomenon. Because Brexit has just reminded the Member States and their citizens of the reason why the European Union was created - the need for Europe to become a stronger global actor, pooling resources and ensuring the interoperability of political, social and economic forces. Today, the single European market is the largest in the world, while the European values allow European citizens to enjoy all forms of mobility, removing the technical barriers and facilitating free movement in all spheres of human life. How is London with all this community experience behind going to organize London’s relationship with Brussels, remains to be seen in a few months. However, considering the major negative consequences facing Britain, no one has yet given up the idea that a return is possible ...

Awaiting the outcome of this tragicomedy with an uncertain end, we are continuously wandering: How was that possible? How was it possible in a developed society with century-long democratic traditions to develop and expand such a desire when, de facto, the overall tendency and message regarding the EU was integration and not disintegration? And, in other words, to what extent does it concern us, the ones on the edge of Europe, what the subjects of the British Crown think, do, and feel?

There is certainly a close link between the pro-Brexit vote and the English’s lack of satisfaction with the political class on Albion, which no longer represents them and is far too far from the real interests and needs of the people. The vacuum between politicians and society, the lack of communication and understanding of everyday life lead to the development of populism and ... to the politicians’ penalisation by citizens. ►

It's a logical chain that is characteristic not only of European states, but that cannot exist outside the democratic framework. That framework, which in a similar manner allowed for the so-called "Ukrainian scenario," when the comedian Volodimir Zelensky, thanks to a massive protest vote, won on April 21, the race for the presidential seat.

To what extent does it deserve to be subjected to a referendum such complex issues as leaving the community space? Is it okay for the public to decide such a thing without being sufficiently informed? The answer to these questions may be diverse, but the Brexit phenomenon has clearly demonstrated that the existence of European institutions and European bureaucracy does not necessarily reflect the knowledge of the European system by ordinary citizens, the lack of communication at national level giving green light to propagandistic messages and false news.

Ultimately, another element that has defined the Brexit phenomenon is the migration process and the inability of the EU and London to provide social inclusion policies. The ethnic British, who after many immigration waves no longer identified with their own country, voted "exit" precisely because they associated the EU and the freedom of movement with the migratory (historical, based on the colonialist past) processes. From this perspective, they have punished their politicians, but also the European institutions, which often provide complex development assistance outside, including for the EU's popularization, but less so within the Union. And when you remember that Moldova is the largest beneficiary of European aid in the region, you understand that Brexit is about "them", but it is also about "us" ... What is the lesson to be learned? The benefits need to be protected and understood, otherwise their loss is inevitable.

## Brexit was also a method of protest - not just ideologically

**Julian Fruntașu, former Ambassador of the Republic of Moldova to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**



**In 1992, after graduating from the Faculties of Philology and Law of the Moldovan State University, Mr Fruntasu was employed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, after which he worked for various diplomatic structures: the OSCE Mission to Georgia; The Permanent Delegation of the Republic of Moldova to the OSCE and the Joint Consultative Group, dealing with the negotiation of the adapted FACE Treaty and the decisions of the OSCE Summit in Istanbul; the OSCE missions in Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia. Meanwhile, he got his PhD in political science and wrote several books, including "An Ethnopolitical History of Bessarabia". From February 2012 to October 2016,**

**he was the Ambassador of the Republic of Moldova to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland – exactly during the time Brexit was born, got ripe and ... happened. I asked Julian Fruntașu, currently moderator of the foreign policy talk-show "Connections" broadcast every Sunday on TVR Moldova, how this phenomenon was seen there from inside...**

■ **Mr. Fruntașu, why did Brexit look so easy and became so hard? Maybe it looked easy for people like me who followed it from outside, and less so for those who have been living with that mess?**

■ It is true that in the beginning Brexit was predominantly a Britain's foreign policy issue, and the outside world knew little about its essence. What was known is that there has always been a certain anti-European tendency in the UK - both for earlier historical considerations and for more "fresh" judgments in terms of time. In addition, in the Conservative Party, there has always been a group that has fought for Britain's exit from the European Union. So it all happened gradually, until David Cameron proposed the organization of the referendum. It was not absolutely unexpected, though.

There have been causes dealing with a certain exceptionalism of Anglo-Saxon politics, which somehow unites the United Kingdom and the United States. It was also the fact that many people, as a result of austerity, became poorer – the wages in real terms had not risen in the last 15 years. The British were upset about the state policies and increasingly frustrated, so Brexit was also a method of protest - not just ideologically. This is a trend that is also noticeable in many countries in Europe.

### **Nobody knows what is going to happen, not even British politicians**

■ *And yet, no one believed the “exit” would take place in June 2016, not even the promoters of the referendum, as no one thought the exit would happen now, in April 2019, when there was a new postponement. Is exit really that complicated or we are witnessing a new (geo) -political game?*

■ Exit is complicated and it shows how bad it was to put such a complex issue to referendum. One thing is when you are for or against abortion or same-sex marriages - because both the question and the answer are more or less clear, depending on the beliefs and values one shares. However, Brexit means knowing a lot - the same *acquis communautaire*, for example, that has over one hundred thousand pages. And many other things that were not explained, being even manipulated. Unfortunately, nobody knows what is going to happen, not even the British politicians.

■ *A possible “chance” would be the revision of Brexit and the return of Britain to the European Union. Do you think this is possible?*

■ It's hard to say. I think that for the

most part the country and people remain divided, even though probably the rate of those who would opt for staying in the EU today is higher than four years ago. And there are many other things that indicate that... A few weeks ago, about a million English people took to the streets in London to show their pro-EU option- and I have never seen such a pro-European spirit and mobilization in any other capital of the EU. An online petition has also been launched for a second referendum, which has collected about five million signatures. Also a pro-EU party- “Change UK”- was created... These look at least paradoxical in a country that officially wants to leave the European Union. Yes, this demonstrates that the pro-EU British have become very active, but the situation remains uncertain. It would have been nice for Theresa May to have an arrangement with Brussels until the European elections from May 25<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup>. But now it's clear she didn't manage to obtain one. Respectively, the English have to participate in the European Parliamentary elections which look rather bad for them in all polls in spite of all expectations.

■ *Immediately after Brexit, analyses were published to prove the role played by the British media in the process of “tilting the balance” at the referendum. In particular, it is about the tabloids that have argued openly for the country's exit from the EU. Have those media somehow made their mea culpa?*

■ No, no, and I don't think they posed that question. Especially I don't think it has been an issue of the boulevard press that enjoys a great popularity among ordinary people despite being quite xenophobic. “The Daily Mail” and the “The Daily Express”, for example, have millions of readers which means sales and advertising... And the

economic interests do not stop here. “The News of the World”, for example, is part of Murdoch's media empire, which also owns “The Fox News” in the USA. In 2011, this media group was at the center of a scandal, triggered by journalists spying on people, illegally intercepting them, etc. Such condemning practices in the EU are in total contradiction with Murdoch's “devious capitalism” that doesn't like EU regulations, when the media have to behave, etc. So if it is to read between the lines, I don't rule out that the militancy of the media is, in fact, the personal struggle of the patrons. I recall, in the given context, the front page of one of those tabloids when, in a political affair with the EU, a British court had found in favour of the EU. They published, on the front page, the photographs and names of the judges, titling “The enemies of the people”. A rather Stalinist approach.

### **Mechanisms had been triggered much earlier and elsewhere...**

■ *How visible was the change of Great Britain when you were there?*

■ I don't think it has changed so much during my mandate. In addition, the diplomatic environment is specific, while the cities are more developed and more cosmopolitan. And it's easier to be intellectual and liberal in the cities. You can also have a capital where the mayor is a Muslim descendant from a family of Pakistani emigrants. The Brexit mechanisms, however, I think had been triggered much earlier and elsewhere. For example, those who worked - or whose parents and grandparents worked - in the mining or steel industry. In the 1980s, they were decimated by former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, the people - who have since lived in a social allowances



regime – having been deprived not only of their well-being but also of their dignity. So it's hard to blame them...

These mechanisms have been triggered also by the British political class, which is far removed from reality. By that largely bipartite system, which no longer reflects the diversity of British society on various levels and which, in a way, is built on and by a political aristocracy. For, if we looked at the politicians' CVs, even superficially, we would see that they went to the same private schools, married each other, developed friendships and ... power. So, Brexit is, above all, the crisis of the British political system - a crisis that will not be without consequences and we will convince ourselves at the very first election.

**■ Despite this confusing state of the country, people around the world, including from the Republic of Moldova, still want to settle down in the UK. I personally know young people or entire families who have rushed to leave until 29 March 2019, in order "to manage until the borders are closed"...**

■ Statistically speaking, even the British authorities confirm that the number of those who choose Britain has fallen - especially those coming from the EU. Because our citizens also go there with Romanian passports ... Why are they going? How they are not scared? Probably because the UK will survive anyway. Yes, the situation is uncertain, especially for business people, for big companies, because it is risky to invest and it is risky to plan. The business wants to see where the country will take to and on the basis of which rules the market is going to operate. At the individual level, however, the UK can still be a solution.

**■ Could the future European Parliament be more lenient with London and agree**

**to renegotiate the Agreement, which has already been rejected several times by the British lawmakers?**

■ First of all, I think there will be the same Agreement, nothing is going to be renegotiated. The people in Brussels spent so much time with the British that they are really bored with it. The ball is now in the British politicians' court. It's up to them to come up with proposals and solutions now. The European Union was quite lenient.

**The rise of populists is mobilizing the other camp**

**■ But has the EU also been sufficiently predictive? To anticipate, to communicate, to ..?**

■ At the stage of Brexit and referendum campaign, David Cameron insisted that the European Union be involved as little as possible in that process. And the question was asked as clearly as possible: leave or remain? And it did not matter that there were commitments, economic relations, not even human lives that were going to be affected. I think no one has even thought about it. Now, however, they are in a situation that they want to eat the cake and, at the same time, keep it intact. That is not possible.

**■ To what extent does Brexit affect the Republic of Moldova?**

■ Everything is quite relative. Our citizens are there as Romanian citizens - so it is rather Romania's problem. The trade volumes are not very large. So for us, Brexit is more of a symbolic issue.

**■ You were saying earlier that frustrations and trends such as those in the UK until Brexit were seen also in other EU countries. How did**

**Brexit influence Europe? Isn't this an argument for the European project challengers who, however, see themselves in the future European Parliament?**

■ Indeed, the polls are showing a rise of populism across Europe. But Eurosceptics were also in the current Parliament, and their rise is mobilizing the other camp - which, hopefully, will maintain a balance in the EU. I would say that all this Brexit mess is rather a lesson for the member states. The European societies have got convinced that this is an absolutely aberrant way - that it's easy to talk, but a lot harder to do it. In addition there is the economic component, where both the EU and the UK are going to lose. Only the British risk losing their country, because it is still unclear what the Scottish people are going to do or how things are going to evolve with Northern Ireland. The European Union is established on the principles of democracy and no one is going to send tanks to London. But this tortured departure is an unusual situation for which solutions have not been found yet.

**■ How much is the European continent risking to be run by an extreme right government over the next 20-30 years?**

■ Nothing can be ruled out, unfortunately. Politicians who have known the horrors of the Second World War left 10-15 years ago, while the populist leaders who take authoritarian decisions have become more and more, and people's memory is short. So we may not have to wait for 20-30 years. But hopefully we're wrong.

**■ Thanks for the interview and, yes, let's hope so.**

**Sorina Ștefăruță**



## Expert opinion



**A**lthough it was expected to bring more clarity in the relationship with Brussels, Britain's separation from the European Union - because of the ill-suited turn of the process - is generating lots of questions and increased uncertainty. And though countries such as the Republic of Moldova, which don't have a secular tradition of diplomatic and bilateral relations with London, would have no reasons to worry, the experts say that Brexit cannot completely bypass us, therefore it will have an impact on our country. It is above all about the political, institutional and legal changes following Brexit that will condition the entry into force of a new framework of political and economic cooperation between the Republic of Moldova and the United Kingdom. About certain aspects of this process, read in the [text below](#), signed by Mihai Mogâldea, associate expert of the Institute for European Policies and Reforms (IPRE). The analysis was developed in the context of the EU Debates Cafe "Post-Brexit migration and free movement of people: what to expect after the Sibiu Summit?" organized in Chisinau by IPRE in cooperation with the Hanns Seidel Foundation in the Republic of Moldova and offered for publication to the Newsletter.

The UK Government's decision to leave the European Union will have repercussions for both parties as well as for the countries

## Mihai Mogâldea: „Brexit's stake for the Republic of Moldova: why should we carefully watch Britain's exit process from the European Union“?

outside the EU. Applying a new economic, commercial and migration regime to the UK market, different from the one existing in the European Union, will influence the dynamics of bilateral relations between the United Kingdom and third countries in the proximity of the EU. The reference here is implicitly made to the Eastern Partnership countries implementing the Association Agreement with the European Union, which includes the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), the provisions of which will no longer apply to trade with the United Kingdom once the Brexit is completed and the period of transition is over. The Republic of Moldova is not an exception to this. That is the reason why the country initiated last year the procedures for negotiating and signing a new bilateral political partnership and trade agreement with the United Kingdom.

The withdrawal agreement of the UK from the EU, agreed by the British Government and the European Council on November 25, 2018, provides for a transitional period from 30 March 2019 (currently postponed) until 31 December 2020, a period of time in which the EU legislation will continue to apply throughout the United Kingdom. This period of time coincides with the finalization of the EU Budget for 2014-2020 and will provide the necessary framework for negotiating bilateral agreements between the UK and

non-EU countries, of which the Republic of Moldova is part.

### **Commercial relations between Chisinau and London**

The most important sphere in which Brexit's consequences will be visible is the trade relations between the Republic of Moldova and the United Kingdom. At this point, the European Union is the main market for exporting goods and products of the Republic of Moldova. In 2018, exports to the EU reached 68.8%, of which about 4.2% ended up in the UK market.

It is worth mentioning that trade between the Republic of Moldova and the United Kingdom decreased by more than 42% after the June 2016 referendum. If in 2017 it amounted to 136 149 thousand US dollars, in 2018, the total value amounted to only 78 816 thousand US dollars. Although commodity exports to EU countries increased by 16.6% in 2018 compared to 2017, the UK market was less demanded by Moldovan products. Even under these conditions, the United Kingdom ranks fifth among Moldova's main trading partners in the EU after Romania, Italy, Germany and Poland. Due to the uncertainty surrounding the vote on the withdrawal agreement between the UK and the EU, the attractiveness of the British market for Moldovan exporters is lower.

In the absence of a bilateral trade partnership agreement between the Republic of Moldova and the United Kingdom during the transition period (2019 - 2020) it is expected that the trade between the two parties will decrease and the interaction of the UK business environment and the Republic of Moldova will not register any major progress. In this dimension, Brexit has generated uncertainties for EU and Moldovan producers regarding medium and long-term cooperation with UK trading partners.

### **Economic migration to the UK**

The exit of the UK from the EU will entail new regulations for granting legal employment to EU citizens settled in that state. Taking into account that the number of Moldovan migrants with Romanian passport established in the United Kingdom is estimated to tens of thousands, it remains to be seen to what extent Brexit will affect the migration dynamics to the UK or the reorientation of Moldovan migrants to the EU labour market.

The new regulations aim at introducing migrant status into a registration scheme (EU Settlement Scheme), based on which the profile of the migrant is checked and the decision on granting or not pre-residence status is made for people residing for less than 5 years in the United Kingdom (Pre-settled Status) or for those who have been residents for more than five years in the United Kingdom (Settled Status). Registration for obtaining one of the status types will take place during the transition period, time in which the EU labour market legislation will remain in force.

The new conditions set by the UK government will directly affect EU

migrants who do not have a job, but also the migrants who worked illegally without a work contract in the pre-Brexit period. Respectively, Moldovan migrants with a Romanian passport will be obliged to comply with the new legislative requirements, rules that will decrease the attractiveness of the UK as a host country for migrants coming from Moldova.

At the same time, the volume of remittances coming from the United Kingdom (amounting to about 70 million US dollars in 2018) could decrease in the coming years due to the lower flow of Moldovan migrants willing to settle down in this country.

### **Instead of conclusions**

The uncertain situation regarding the UK's exit from the EU leaves many questions as to the implications of Brexit for the Republic of Moldova. It is certain that the political, institutional and legal changes that arise from Brexit will condition the entry into force of a new political and economic cooperation framework between the Republic of Moldova and the United Kingdom.

Trade between the two parties may have a progressive and regressive dynamic in the medium and long term, depending on the adaptability of Moldovan entrepreneurs to the conditions set by London.

When it comes to the issue of emigration to the United Kingdom, Moldovan citizens will have to familiarise themselves in detail with the requirements of the new UK residence regime for the post-2020 period. That is why in order to provide the information and technical support for this group of people, the intervention of the Moldovan and British authorities is a must.

## *Point of view*

### **Brexit: accident or lawfulness?**

***A***s mentioned in the introduction to the current edition of the Newsletter, in the almost four years since the referendum which even those who initiated it did not believe it possible, Brexit has been also into the attention of politicians and economists, sociologists and journalists. Brexit's influence on the world - including on micro-worlds like Moldova – has been discussed this spring in Chisinau.

### **The trends that are shaping a new world**

The Foreign Policy Association organized on April 10<sup>th</sup> a roundtable called "Brexit - how did we get here and where are we going to?" The special guest of the event was Tim Judah, correspondent for the Balkans of The Economist publication in the UK and researcher within the "Future of Europe" project at the Institute for Humanitarian Sciences in Vienna. In the discussion, the Brexit phenomenon was analysed from the perspective of both the causes that triggered Britain's exit from the EU and the effects that have shaped the transformation of political class and the political environment in the UK and the EU.

"Brexit is something unique, but not the trends behind him," said Tim Judah, suggesting that in order to understand the phenomenon of national populism, the key that Roger Eatwell and Matthew Goodwin call **the four "D"** is needed:

**Distrust:** Given that the liberal-democratic elites in power share ideas different from those of ordinary citizens, a strong sense

of mistrust has appeared. While liberal democracies advocate, for instance, to defend the rights of sexual minorities, to protect the environment or to support immigration, citizens believe they are forgotten. And as long as they don't trust the people of Westminster, how can they believe the people in Brussels?! The working class feels marginalized by an elite which is not interested in it.

**Destruction:** It is the hatred towards the Muslim immigrants (and not only). This feeling was conditioned by the fact that the newcomers in the country enjoyed immediate rights and benefits that the ordinary citizens have (perhaps) acquired during a lifetime period. If in 2000 only 7% of Britons saw immigration as a problem, by 2016 their rate had risen to 48%.

**Deprivation:** It is manifested by the diminishing respect for the mining or metallurgical workers – a respect due to the risks of the work they are doing. Now, however, there is no difference between miners and those who make sandwiches or work in an Amazon office. This “globalization” leads to the fact that the first feel isolated from the rest of the world. Surveys show that the effect of inequality was the key that generated Brexit and had a double effect on those without or of less qualification.

**De-alignment:** According to polls, over 40% of Britons could now support new

parties with radical ideas - an impossible figure several decades ago. Evidence for that is the growing UK Independence Party... If the new generations understand the need to protect the environment or LGBT rights, the old ones advocate for social conservatism. The key lies in education.

These tendencies are felt throughout the world, not just in the UK. They differ from one country to the other and are shaping a new and very uncertain world. However, the conclusion of the participants in the roundtable was that a new plebiscite on the Brexit issue is not at all the best solution because it would question democracy in general, while the value of citizens' voting would be minimized.

### ***The big problem is that the country remains divided***

“Migration and free movement of people in the post-Brexit era: what can we expect from the European Council summit in Sibiu?” - is an issue which was debated by the Institute for European Policies and Reforms jointly with the Hanns Seidel Foundation.

The event was inaugurated by Mihai Mogildea, an IPRE associate expert, who spoke about the situation of Moldovan citizens living in the UK. Then Professor Lee McGowan from the School of History,

Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics of the Queen's University of Belfast, spoke of the tense post-Brexit situation in the United Kingdom. “I think the impact will be enormous and one of the moments we often forget when talking about Brexit is that Britain is made up of four nations: England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The country was headed towards Brexit by the English Centre, and I believe that one of the most important consequences will soon be a possible division of the British kingdom. So Brexit is going to have a considerable impact. The final vote in June 2016 was very tight - 48% to 52%, and the difference was very small because the country was divided. But what has not happened until now is for the state to remain divided, because since the referendum, the opposing parties could not find consensus,” he said.

Among the invited guests was HE Lucy Joyce, British Ambassador to Chisinau, who focused on the relations between the EU and British officials. “The British Government has negotiated with the European Council an exit agreement and a political statement, and they have already been voted twice (at that time - n.a.) in the British Parliament. This degree of uncertainty is quite unusual for Parliament, but it is a regulated process that is part of our democracy,” said the Ambassador of the United Kingdom.

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**Foreign Policy Association (APE)** is a non-governmental organization committed to supporting the integration of the Republic of Moldova into the European Union and facilitating the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict in the context of the country Europeanization. APE was established in fall 2003 by a group of well-known experts, public personalities and former senior officials and diplomats, all of them reunited by their commitment to contribute with their expertise and experience to formulating and promoting by the Republic of Moldova of a coherent, credible and efficient foreign policy.



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