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BAKALAŘSKÁ PRÁCE

Post-Brexit Situation in the UK

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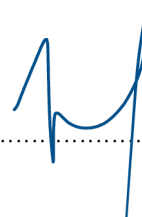
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V Olomouci dne 16.4. 2024

Podpis

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized 'M' followed by a vertical line and a small flourish.

Poděkování

Tímhle bych chtěla poděkovat vedoucímu práce Mgr. Jiřímu Flajšarovi, Ph.D., především za poskytnutí příležitosti napsat bakalářskou práci na téma, které považuji za zajímavé a aktuální, a tímhle způsobem jsem se mohla o něm dozvědět více. Dále bych chtěla poděkovat za vedení a poskytnutí užitečných rad.

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Název práce:	Post-Brexit Situation in the UK
Název v angličtině:	Post-Brexit Situation in the UK
Zvolený typ práce:	výzkumná práce – přehled odborných poznatků
Anotace práce:	Bakalářská práce <i>Situace po Brexitu ve Spojeném království</i> analyzuje důsledky vystoupení Spojeného království z Evropské unie. Zkoumá data, která jsou k dnešnímu datu dostupná, s cílem vyhodnotit vliv Brexitu na britskou ekonomiku a migraci. Práce si dále klade za cíl zhodnotit dopad Brexitu na život občanů žijících ve Spojeném království a občanů Spojeného království žijících v EU po jeho vystoupení. Následně se práce zaměřuje na hodnocení změn vnějších a vnitřních vztahů po Brexitu. Práce má poskytnout informace o plánech a předpovědích o budoucí situaci ve Spojeném království.
Klíčová slova:	Brexit, Spojené království, Evropská unie, Evropské hospodářské společenství, Dohoda o vystoupení Spojeného království z EU, přechodné období, Protokol o Irsku a Severním Irsku po Brexitu, situace po Brexitu
Anotace v angličtině:	The bachelor's thesis <i>Post-Brexit Situation in the UK</i> is analysing the consequences of the UK's withdrawal from the EU. It examines data available up to present date with an aim of evaluation Brexit's effect on the UK's economy and migration. The thesis further aims to assess the impact of Brexit on the lives of citizens residing in the UK and the UK citizens living the EU after the withdrawal. Subsequently, the thesis aims to observe alternations in external and internal relations post-Brexit. Lastly, to provide information about plans and predictions for the future situation in the UK.
Klíčová slova v angličtině:	Brexit, United Kingdom, European Union, European Economic Community, Withdrawal Agreement, Free Trade Agreement, transition period, Northern Ireland Protocol, post-Brexit situation
Přílohy vázané v práci:	1 ilustrace
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Jazyk práce:	angličtina

Abstrakt

Tahle bakalářská práce se zabývá situací ve Spojeném království po jeho vystoupení z Evropské unie, známe jako Brexit. Hodnotí dopad Brexitu na ekonomii a migraci. Práce dále hodnotí změny v životech občanů žijících ve Spojeném království a britských občanů žijících v EU po vystoupení. Zkoumá dopad Brexitu na vztahy uvnitř Spojeného království, s EU a krajinami mimo Unie. Posledně, tahle práce poskytuje informace o plánech a předpovědích týkající se budoucí situace ve Spojeném království.

K výsledkům téhle analýzy patří zjištění, že Brexit navýšil touhu krajin Spojeného Království se v budoucnu potencionálně osamostatnit. Dále, zavedením nově stanovených omezení volného pohybu občanů kvůli brexitu zažívá Spojené království výrazné snížení výdělků spolu s nedostatkem zaměstnanců v různých sektorech, zejména v cestovním ruchu, zdravotnictví a školství. V souvislosti se zavedením hraničních kontrol, nových potřebných dokumentů a poplatků bylo taktéž výrazně ovlivněno obchodování, což opětovně vedlo ke snížení úrovně importu a exportu.

Klíčová slova: Brexit, Spojené království, Evropská unie, Evropské hospodářské společenství, Dohoda o vystoupení Spojeného království z Evropské unie, přechodné období, situace po Brexitu

Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to examine the situation in the United Kingdom after its withdrawal from the European Union, known as Brexit. It evaluates Brexit's impact on economy and migration. The thesis further examines changes in the lives of citizens residing in the UK and the UK citizens living in the EU after the withdrawal. Additionally, it explores shifts within internal and external relations post-Brexit. Finally, the thesis provides information about plans and predictions for the future situation in the UK.

The outcome of the analysis shows a higher incline towards the possibility of future independency of the countries within the UK. Due to newly posed limitations on free movement post-Brexit, the UK is experiencing a significant reduction in earnings together with staff shortages in various sectors, mainly tourism, healthcare, and education. In connection to that, trade has been significantly impacted by an introduction of border controls, paperwork requirements and any additional fees, resulting in the decrease of level of imports and exports.

Key words: Brexit, United Kingdom, European Union, European Economic Community, Withdrawal Agreement, Free Trade Agreement, transition period, Northern Ireland Protocol, post-Brexit situation

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1. Introduction

On June 23rd, 2016, the British made the decision to exit the European Union. This departure, commonly referred to as Brexit, officially came into force on January 31st, 2020. This thesis aims to examine the consequences of Brexit on economy and migration in the United Kingdom. It aims to assess the impact of Brexit on the lives of citizens residing in the UK and the UK citizens living in the EU. Furthermore, the aim is to observe alternations in relations within the UK and in external relations after Brexit.

The thesis is structured into three main chapters. The first chapter introduces the historical context of the UK's sceptical stance toward the EU for a better understanding of reasons and events leading to Brexit. It examines the dynamics of the relationship towards the EU throughout the UK's membership in both the EEC and the EU. The second chapter which includes five subchapters further explains the process of the withdrawal from the EU by providing insights into the factors behind the growing demand for Brexit and the voting trends observed in the 2016 referendum. It introduces key figures in Brexit negotiations and defines transition period. Chapter three includes five subchapters analysing the consequences of Brexit on the situation in the UK in diverse areas. For instance, the first subchapter observes changes in relations within the Kingdom by exploring the attitudes of Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland towards Brexit. It explores the voting tendencies in the 2016 referendum and examines the question of possible independency of these nations. The second and the third subchapter break down Brexit's impacts on tourism, UK relations and trade negotiations with the EU and non-EU countries. Continuing by evaluating its effect on the life of the UK citizens by analysing the changes in free movement, education, housing, and healthcare. Predictions and plans for the future of the United Kingdom are suggested throughout the thesis.

This thesis presents a comprehensive examination of Brexit's impact on the situation in the UK, using primary sources, news articles, research and evidence briefings, information from official governmental and European Commission online sites, statistics, and other data available up to present date – April 2024.

2. The history before Brexit

The British might have experienced a sense of distance from the rest of the Europe both geographically and historically. Being the first industrialized country of the 19th century, Britain secured its dominant position in Europe with both strong military and economy. However, due to the Industrial Revolution, England's population rose during the next two centuries by 25.1 per cent leaving the nation progressively more dependent on imports from other countries (O'Rourke, 2019, chapter 2).

The Beginnings of the 20th century brought new industrial superpowers – the US and the USSR. The demand for protection, stability, integration, and trade between the European countries as an aftermath of the WW2 was immense. Europe turning into a continent of political fragmentation represented an economic threat. 'The six' – France, German, Italy, and the Benelux countries were the creators of the EEC by signing the Treaty of Rome in 1957 (O'Rourke, 2019, chapter 1, 3). A British prime minister, Anthony Eden, missed this event saying that "Europe (is) too small an area for British engagement" (Stephens, 2021, chapter 3). Nevertheless, this need of post-war cooperation in Europe to ensure convenient trade and reduce trade barriers by creating a European customs union would leave the British with a choice of two unappealing options – to either exclude itself and face inequity against continental markets or losing the freedom of setting its own tariffs on goods arriving from the Commonwealth (O'Rourke, 2019, chapter 3). The choice the British made by removing themselves from the customs union cost them a place amongst the leaders (O'Rourke, 2019, chapter 4).

These expressions of a strong Eurosceptic view towards the supranational nature of the EEC and later the EU were commonly articulated. Many resonated with Theresa May's words when she expressed that "European Union permits unprecedentedly deep cooperation, which brings benefits. But it also means that when countries are in the minority they must sometimes accept decisions they do not want,..." (O'Rourke, 2019, chapter 1).

Despite the pride, the British had to acknowledge the world was evolving in disadvantageous ways. The UK was confronted with economic challenges due to higher expenditures on armed forces, the NHS, and public-sector pay. Moreover, commonly striking workers in major productions and the financial threat of advanced competitors such as Germany, and France were now the ones dominating aerospace, engineering, and car production (Stephens, 2021, chapter 3).

The UK first applied to the EEC in 1963 and waited ten years for their admission. Tensions between the newly accepted member and the Six were heightened after two years of the UK's

joining (Pruitt, 2017). Hugh Gaitskell, a prominent Eurosceptic, expressed his view on the UK joining the EEC as “the end of Britain as an independent European state, the end of a thousand years of history” (Helm, 2016). The tensions concluded in the 1975 referendum asking the voters to choose whether the UK should remain in the EEC or not. The choice of remaining may have seemed more rational for many given the fact that Britain has been suffering from stagnating economy, high unemployment and inflation, low productivity, and industrial unrest at the time the referendum was held. The result of 67.2 per cent approval of the EEC membership to 32.8 per cent brought a new wave of political discussions and the increase of Euroscepticism within the political parties and the public (Higazy, 2019). For instance, in the 1980s, numerous Conservative Party MPs were influenced by the opinion on the matter of the country’s sovereignty within the EU by the PM, Margaret Thatcher. As she expressed during her Bruges speech of 1988:

“To try to suppress nationhood and concentrate power at the centre of a European conglomerate would be highly damaging and would jeopardise the objectives we seek to achieve” (Helm, 2016).

Euroscepticism further gained momentum by signing of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 by a new strongly pro-European PM, John Major. The EEC which possessed a shorter name the European Community became the main component of the newly created EU. It consisted of 2 other pillars for foreign and security policy, and justice, and home affairs (O’Rourke, 2019, chapter 8). The creation of the EU was meant to bring the European nations closer politically and economically by having a united foreign policy, common citizenship, rights, and currency – the euro (Pruitt, 2017). Eurosceptics were filled by hope of defeating the treaty and oppose Major’s government since the Danes rejected signing the Maastricht Treaty at first (O’Rourke, 2019, chapter 8). The intra-party division of Eurosceptics and Europhiles, who favoured the EU membership, were evident more than ever. Even though not all Eurosceptics were fully against the Union (‘soft Eurosceptics’), countless were not afraid to openly voice their disapproval of the EU (‘hard Eurosceptics’). The opposing views of the membership were strengthened by the emerge of the 2008 European Debt Crisis which particularly hit the southern member states of the EU (Greece, Spain, and Portugal). The unemployment rate increased together with the sovereign debt resulting in inability of reviving economic growth (Clarke, et al., 2017, p.2). Thatcher, had predicted this downfall of Euro and it gave her an opportunity to reappear and publicly state her continuous disapproval of the UK’s economic help for other European nations in need (Higazy, 2019).

3. The withdrawal process

A new conservative PM, David Cameron, elected in 2010, was an example of the ‘soft Eurosceptic’. Despite his efforts to avoid the subject of the EU, in the 2013 Bloomberg speech he promised to negotiate Britain’s EU membership under a condition of re-election of the Conservative Party in the next term. The popularity among British voters for the Eurosceptic party – the UK Independence Party (UKIP) at that time was steadily growing. It urged Cameron to announce to his party “I will go to Brussels, I will not take ‘no’ for an answer and – when it comes to free movement – I will get what Britain needs” (O’Rourke, 2019, chapter 8). Cameron was committed to bring the ‘in-out referendum’ which took place on the 23rd of June 2016 (Pruitt, 2017). The Bloomberg speech was a marker of the beginning of a seven-year period of negotiations between the UK and the EU, resulting in departure after a four-decade long relationship.

The withdrawal procedure had seven steps according to the Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Energy. The *Figure 1* summarizes the process well:

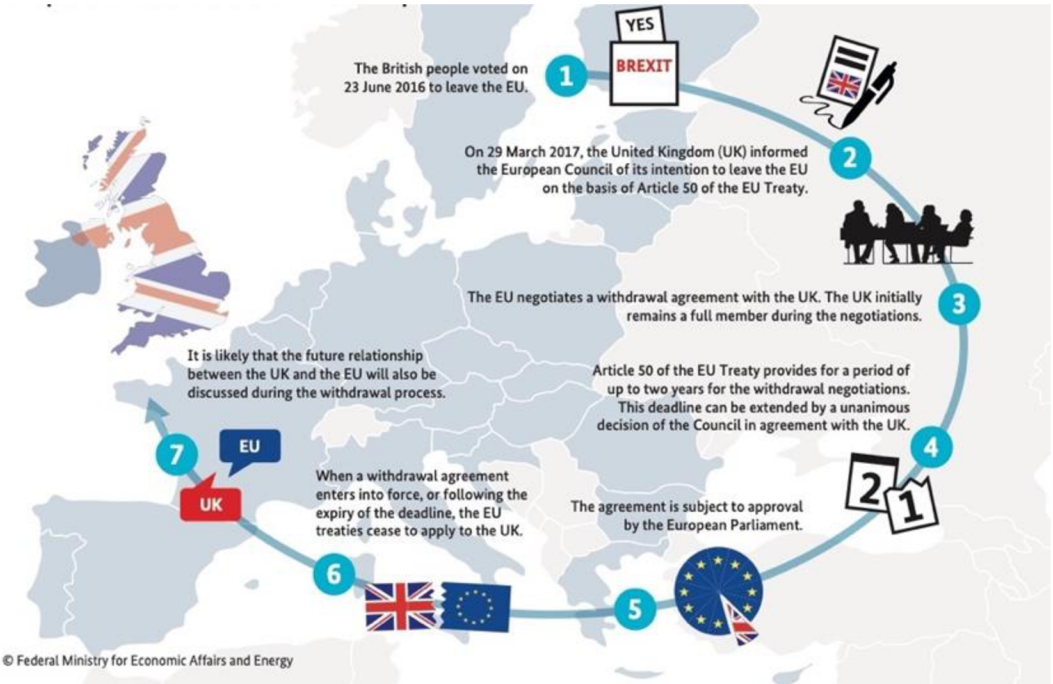


Figure 1 - European Union: how does the withdrawal procedure work

However, to better understand the withdrawal procedure, it is crucial to give further details on Brexit’s background and include key dates and figures who played a significant role in this complex process.

3.1. Growing pressure for a referendum

What followed after the date was set for the 2016 referendum was a rivalry of two opposite sides – those who wanted to remain and those who fought to withdraw from the EU. According to O'Rourke's explanation the 'Leave' side had two campaigns: *Vote Leave* and *Leave. EU*. As previously mentioned, the Conservative Party had numerous 'hard Eurosceptic' MPs who collaborated with MPs from the Labour Party and the DUP from Northern Ireland. The second campaign 'Leave. EU' was led by the leader of the UKIP, Nigel Farage, and one of the largest UKIP's donors, Arron Banks (2019, chapter 8). Those who organised and lead the 'leave' campaigns were the people who took action in the opposition of the Maastricht Treaty and Lisbon Treaty or were involved in the campaign for the 1975 Referendum (Clarke, et al., 2017, p.16). On the other side, there was 'Labour In for Britain' set up by the Labour Party and 'Britain Stronger in Europe' (2017, p.146).

To understand what was done to persuade people to vote 'leave' and ultimately withdraw from the EU, it is necessary to analyse the strategies the campaigns used and the state in which the UK's society was at the time. According to Clarke, Goodwin, and Whiteley, 87 per cent thought that the country would vote to remain in the EU and only 5 per cent predicted Brexit, hoping that the less harmful choice was to stay in (2017, p.3). Given the results of 2015's survey of the most urgent issues the Britain faced, immigration was at the top with 63 per cent. Another issue was health care and economy, making up 39 and 33 per cent, respectively (2017, p.11). Concerns about high rate of immigration was reflected in various surveys. Supposedly, up to 93 per cent of people who planned to vote 'leave' shared their worries about immigration. This percentage consisted predominantly of two major social groups – pensioners and the working class whose vote was significantly present in the 2016 referendum as well (2017, p.12).

Immigration was a very strong argument of the UKIP's campaign. Even though, 2015 marked the peak of the European refugee crisis during which predominantly immigrants from Syria were fleeing a war, O'Rourke highlights the difference between the free movement of EU citizens among the member states and the admission of non-Europeans to the UK. As the UK was not a member of the Eurozone nor the Schengen area, migrants simply could not cross the borders as easily as it was thought by many (2017, chapter 9). But this gave the campaign a much-needed context to persuade the public that immigrants are responsible for driving down wages for low-skilled British workers (Clarke, et al., 2017, p.12).

On the other hand, the campaign ‘Remain’ warned the voters of the economic hardships the UK and its citizens would face if they decided to leave the EU. This was called the ‘Project Fear’. Cameron expressed it numerous times; for instance, on the 20th of February 2016:

“Leaving Europe would threaten our economic and our national security. Those who want to leave Europe cannot tell you if British business would be able to access Europe’s free trade single market or if working people’s jobs are safe, or how much prices would rise. All they are offering is risk at a time of uncertainty – a leap in the dark... The choice is in your hands”

(Clarke, et al., 2017, p.30).

In addition, a multitude of politicians, experts, and companies started expressing their concerns to the public. From warning about higher interest rates, rising gas or petrol bills, house prices to losing billions of pounds worth of investments funds and crashing of the sterling ‘by as much as 20 per cent against other major currencies’ (Clarke, et al., 2017, p.35-36).

3.2. 2016 referendum

The referendum occurred on the 23rd of June 2016. Voters from all around the UK were asked to hold their position on a simple question “Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?” (Clarke, et al., 2017, p.1). With the 72.2 per cent turnout, 51.9 per cent were in favour of leaving the EU to 48.1 per cent against it. The majority of voters in Northern Ireland and Scotland voted ‘Remain’, while a vote ‘Leave’ was dominant in Wales and England (BBC News, 2020).

In the book *Brexit: Why Britain Voted to Leave the European Union* (2017), by using information from ECMS Pre-Referendum Survey of 2016, the authors Clarke, Goodwin and Whiteley provide an analysis of voters according to their socio-demographic characteristics (age, ethnicity, gender, and social grade). According to the *Figure 7.3 Leave Voting by Socio-Demographic Characteristics* in the book (2017, p.155), the voters in favour of ‘leave’ equally consisted of both men and women, mainly white (53%) in the age range 66+ (66%) and evenly (57%) in the age range of 65-56 and 55-46. When it comes to considering social grades, the percentage differs. On one hand, upper and upper-middle class (‘A/B’ social grade) voted 35 per cent in favour of leaving to 64 per cent voted by working or lower classes (‘D/E’ social grade).

Continuing, based on the *Figure 7.4 Perceived Benefits and Costs of Leaving the EU* (2017, p. 156), the only benefit the voters thought Brexit would have, was decreased immigration (51% to 3%). In contrast, the survey revealed perceived drawbacks, such as experiencing increased

challenges with personal finances and the economy. Eighteen point nine per cent thought leaving EU would be very risky as opposed to 12.3 per cent on the other side of the spectrum, voting 'not risky' as seen in the *Figure 7.7 Perceived Risks of Leaving the EU* (2017, p. 159). Considering the results shown in the *Figure 7.5 Perceived Benefits and Costs of Continued EU Membership* (2017, p. 157), the majority (47%) thought if the UK was to stay in the EU, more terrorism would occur. Over half of the voters believed the continuing EU membership would interfere with their sovereignty and more commonly disagreed (41% to 31%) that it would bring any benefits to British Culture. The *Figure 7.6 Emotional Reactions to UK Membership of the EU* (2017, p.158) also shows the results of overall approach and attitude towards Brexit. Rather negative feelings were observed: negative (50%) or uneasy (44%), on the other hand, positive (32%) and hopeful (26%).

3.3. Key figures in Brexit negotiations

A clause in the Treaty on European Union, *Article 50*, enables the Member State to make a choice of withdrawing from the European Union. However, the European Council should first be notified by the Member State of its choice to leave, so that the Council can arrange negotiations of the withdrawal and future relationship with the EU. After the State Member officially notifies the Council, it is given two years to complete its withdrawal. This period can be prolonged in case of a unanimous agreement of the remaining Member States and the European Council (O'Rourke, 2019, chapter 10).

The negotiations commenced in the middle of 2017. The main issues to be resolved included the rights of the EU citizens living in Britain, Britain's financial obligations to the EU, and the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Only a partial agreement was made at the end of the year. One of the reasons was the UK's hope of keeping the Irish border open for frictionless trade, despite leaving the customs union and the Single Market. As O'Rourke explains, the disinterest from the May's Government of resolving the issue regarding the re-introduction of hard border further worsened relations with Ireland (2019, chapter 11).

In 2018, the second phase of negotiations began with the deadline of the 31st of December 2020. During this transition, the UK was still a member of the EU, however, disabled of making decisions concerning the EU. The citizens still had the same conditions for traveling, living, and working; the same rule applied to trade. Meanwhile, the terms of withdrawal were being further negotiated (O'Rourke, 2019, chapter 11).

The issue regarding the Irish border was still ongoing. The plan of preventing the border with custom controls between the Northern Ireland and the Republic after Brexit was called

Irish backstop. It was proved to be unworkable, since as mentioned, the UK did not want to remain in the Single Market and the EU Customs Union, as well not wanting to have a hard border on the island of Ireland. Therefore, it would be ‘a breach in the Single Market and customs union’. For the British to secure any deal leaving EU, Northern Ireland was requested by the Union to remain in the EU Customs Union and the Single Market (O’Rourke, chapter 11). May fought to get her deal accepted by the Parliament, nonetheless, it failed all three attempts. As of result, the PM resigned in June 2019 to be replaced by her foreign secretary, Boris Johnson (Castle, et al., 2019).

After Johnson became a PM, the Withdrawal agreement was revised anew. In contrast of May’s proposals of achieving frictionless trade with the EU, Johnson proposed tariff-free and quota-free trade of the UK with the EU. Opposingly to May’s proposals, this meant border checks and adherence to other rules and measures. Border checks would also be a part of trading of the Northern Ireland with the EU with the difference in a number of rules applying to Northern Ireland’s trade (Menon, 2019, p.5).

3.4. Brexit day

Johnson’s initial promise to deliver Brexit by the end of October 2019 was not fulfilled. However, by the last month of the year, Johnson secured his place after an election with a large advantage. The Withdrawal Agreement (WA) was signed with a final date, 31st of January 2020, bringing the British their long-awaited Brexit day (Stephens, 2021, chapter 12). This date was a marker of entering an 11-month-long transition period ending on the 31st of December 2020 (European Commission, 2019).

3.5. Transition period

The transition period began on the first of February 2020 during which the UK had time to negotiate their relationship with the EU. Although, during the transition, the UK did not have a decision-making role in the EU’s issues, the EU laws still applied since the kingdom remained a member of the Single Market and the EU Customs Union. This gave citizens and (their) businesses time to adjust. This meant free circulation of goods and cross-border transactions during or before the end of the transition. The WA covering the transition period also includes other areas needed to be discussed throughout these eleven months. A few of them include citizens’ rights, separation issues (respecting customs and market), financial settlement (the obligations between the UK-EU), and the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland (European Commission, 2019).

4. The consequences of Brexit

As suggested in the previous chapter, the leading argument for the necessity of Brexit expressed by the Leavers was the high rate of immigration. In opposition, Remainers warned the public of possible economic hardships Brexit could pose on the UK's economy and citizens' lives. A multitude of assumptions regarding the consequences of the withdrawal were extensively articulated to public. This chapter will therefore analyse the effect of Brexit on everyday life of the UK citizens, economy, migration, external relations and the shifts in internal relations within the UK post-Brexit.

4.1. Internal relations

The desire to maintain the EU membership expressed by a majority in Scotland and Northern Ireland is evident with voting percentages of 56 per cent and 62 per cent in this order. In *Brexit Causes and Consequences*, Adam, characterizes the UK's withdrawal as *Engxit* instead of *Brexit*, possibly implying England's centric interests. While migration served as the primary justification for Brexit in various campaigns, its impact was relatively minimal in Wales, Northern Ireland, and Scotland, in contrast to the significant effect it had on England (2017, p.209). As the author further articulates, "dissolving the ties with the EU could involuntarily turn out to be the first step in dissolving the ties that keep the United Kingdom together. ... (it) could hasten Scotland and Northern Ireland leaving the United Kingdom, too" (Adam, 2017, p.214).

To understand the polarity in voting tendencies between the Remainers (Scotland and Northern Ireland) and the Leavers (England and Wales), it is essential to break down the historical context and the consequence of Brexit for making assumptions about the future state the kingdom.

4.1.1. Northern Ireland

One of the main reasons for heightened tensions within the UK during the negotiations was the possible re-introduction of a hard border for customs and regulatory checks between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, who is an EU Member State (Kenny & Sheldon, 2021, p.85). In *Britain Alone: The Path from Suez to Brexit*, Stephens explains this significance of a free border in words: "...an open border represented the citizens of the island of Ireland with a choice of identity. Shutting down that option would invite the return of politics of grievance and, quite possibly, violence" (2021, chapter 12). This history of brutality and unrest

referenced by Stephens traces back to the beginning of the conflicts between Catholics and Protestants several centuries ago. The continuation of disagreements prevailed prominent throughout the 20th century after the Irish partition and creation of a physical border in 1923. Further violence outbreaks led to numerous casualties from 1969 until the signing of The Good Friday Agreement in 1998. Due to this agreement and the trading agreements with the EU (customs union and the Single Market), the border became practically invisible. For the reason that Brexit could potentially trigger border renewal, many were worried for a potential repetition of the Troubles from decades ago (O'Rourke, 2019, chapter 6). A part of the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement called the Northern Ireland Protocol, ensures no such borders would come into force post Brexit. It enabled Northern Ireland to trade goods from and to the EU (thus, including the Republic of Ireland) without physical checks, protecting the Good Friday Agreement (Curtis, 2024).

On the contrary of long-lasting conflicts between the Irelands, in the report on *Brexit and Beyond* it is claimed that the support of Irish unification has been increasing in recent years following Brexit. Moreover, at the time of writing the report (2021), the probable proposal of a unification referendum by the Irish Government was indicated to take place in 2026 or 2027. This possible future unification of the Ireland island would enable Northern Ireland to regain an EU membership (Hayward 2021, p.93 & Tannam, 2021, p.152).

As of now (2024), various news articles confirm the ongoing favouritism towards the Irish unity showing results of a border poll: 64 per cent support in the Republic of Ireland, contrasted with 30 per cent in Northern Ireland. However, according to Gannon, not many negotiations about the actual future image of united Ireland have been happening. While the economy of united Ireland might have a great potential to thrive, this integration could possibly foreshadow a conflict of two nations proudly protecting their distinctive symbols not willing to adjust them with the ones of their former rival. (Gannon, 2024).

Pogatchnik made a commentary on a survey about public attitudes towards unification and possible future withdrawal from the UK post Brexit, expressing the Northern Ireland citizens' preference of Ireland unity in 20 years' time instead of one with Great Britain. According to the article, the comparison of the same survey conducted in 2020 and 2022, the trend of supporting the unity and erasing the border has been on a rise (Pogatchnik, 2023).

4.1.2. Scotland

As the second country in which the Remainers dominated the 'Yes' vote in the 2016 referendum, Scotland has been seeking independence from the UK most actively. In comparison

to Northern Ireland and Wales, Scotland's endeavour to achieve full autonomy from the UK has already been defeated once in the 2014 referendum with a dissatisfactory result for the independents: 45 per cent in favour to 55 per cent against it. Nonetheless, the withdrawal from the EU and a subsequent loss of trading privileges of the Single Market and customs union is the most probable driving force of independency support (McEwen, 2021, p.87-88).

An online website of Scottish Government, *gov.scot*, published an updated report of Brexit impact on Scotland highlighting several fundamental points. Scotland's previous dependency on free trade with the EU has been one of the major issues after Brexit, causing certain trade collaborations, such as export of 20 000 tones of seed potatoes a year, to collapse. Or the newly posed border checks and regulations have added a surplus of approximately £500-600 per a load of shellfish, extensively affecting Scotland's seafood sector. Furthermore, by being excluded from the EU, Scottish communities are deprived of 61 per cent of EU structural funding besides the annual loss of £3 billion in public revenues resulting in slowing down the development of the weakest regions. This progress could further be undermined by lower earnings in tourism, resulting form reported staff shortages that escalated to 45 per cent in 2022. Consequently, the situation has led to shorter opening hours which further contributes to the decline in revenues (The Scottish Government, 2023).

An online statistics website, *Statista.com*, has gathered figures of public poll on a question of Scottish independence throughout 2018 to 2023, showing a non-linear growth – 43 per cent in favour of independency, 57 per cent against (January 2018) versus 47 per cent for and 53 per cent against (January 2023). However, the highest support was shown in 2020 – 53 per cent in favour, 47 per cent against. This narrow difference in opinion polls might root in uncertainty of the independency project. While an ideal option for the Scottish would be a combination of a close partnership with the UK after re-joining the EU, Brexit has put the UK onto a list of third countries which would result in making a visible border between independent Scotland and the rest of the UK. Similarly to recent situation of Northern Ireland, trade and free movement of independent Scotland would be under the EU regulations (McEwen, 2021, p.88). Regardless of the possible difficulties, the Scottish Government believes that Scotland's re-admission to the EU would result in reciprocal benefits. *Gov.scot* further provides an argument that a regained EU membership could support interests of the Scottish people (The Scottish Government, 2023).

According to BBC Scotland News, a leader of the Scottish National Party (SNP), Nicola Sturgeon, called Brexit 'democratically unacceptable' and has worked towards a second referendum and the Scottish independence throughout her appointment as a PM. In the middle

of 2022, a date of this referendum was introduced on the 19th of October 2023. However, it was rejected by the Supreme Court, defining that the UK Government's approval would be required in case of any future referendums. Despite Sturgeon's resignation after an unsuccessful referendum attempt, the hope of independent Scotland prevails within the SNP, as BBC states (Cochrane, 2023).

4.1.3. Wales

Even though, Wales was amongst the Leavers in the 2016 referendum with a 52.5 per cent approval of the UK's withdrawal, this support might have come as a surprise for many. One of the reasons for this confusion could be the fact that EU has helped Wales with structural funding, rural development, and support of Welsh farmers (EBSCO Information Services, 2022, chapter Brexit and Wales: Overview, p.2). Moreover, a sum of £2 billion for advancing transport connectivity, competitiveness of the regions, and stronger businesses were given to Wales by the EU to improve its position in a span of 6 years till 2020 (WCPP, 2021, p.5). Also announced by the Welsh Centre for Public Policy and further reported in *Brexit and Wales: Overview*, roughly £153 per person was annually received by Northern Ireland, Scotland, and England from EU while people in Wales were each granted £628 (EBSCO Information Services, 2022, chapter Brexit and Wales: Overview, p.2). However, Brexit has led to a suspension of these EU benefits, resulting in a sudden financial gap, supposedly promised to be taken care of by the UK Government. Though, as expressed by the Welsh Minister for Economy, there have been ongoing delays in fulfilling this commitment (EBSCO Information Services, 2022, chapter Counterpoint: Brexit Will have Negative Consequences for Wales, p.1).

Besides the loss of EU funding, the evidence briefing paper posted by the Wales Centre for Public Policy additionally points out the challenges that new migration policies pose on workforce recruitment and working-age population. Wales has been seeking support from the EU workers especially in healthcare, nonetheless, the new Health and Care Worker Visa reduced the range of occupations available to apply for after Brexit (WCPP, 2021, p.6-7). To emphasise the significant impact these recruitments have had on the whole UK post-Brexit, a news article posted by The Guardian reports a loss of almost 4300 doctors as of November 2022. As mentioned in the article, Brexit has caused additional financial, and paperwork demands to recruit new EU workers which is according to the Nuffield Trust one of the most common consequences of the medical staff reduction and obstacle in hiring. In addition to that, the Nursing and Midwifery Council provided The Guardian with an estimation of drastic 58

thousand reduction of nurses post-Brexit due to new migration and language skill obligations (Campbell, 2022).

A possible explanation for the Welsh Brexit vote is the inclination towards more independency. To understand and support this claim, the report *Brexit and Wales: Overview* is appealing to the 2017 opinion piece on *nation.cymru* which highlights the ‘insignificance of Wales’ in the UK when taking into account its small-scale population and occupation of seats in Parliament, supposedly having little to no power in prominently influencing the general elections (EBSCO Information Services, 2022, chapter Brexit and Wales: Overview, p.2). According to a news article from BBC News, foreign affairs, defence, taxation, benefits, and economic policy are the areas of power governed by Westminster. For the Welsh government to be self-reliant in decision-making, the nation would primarily put most probably the poorest in a greater jeopardy. While the independence might support the interests of the Welsh far more than Westminster does, the economic stability and performance could be at a risk. Another option would put all UK nations into an equal position by creating a federal state. Nonetheless, little to no support of this alternative has been shown from the public, as the article states (Lewis & Browne, 2024).

4.2. External relations and international trade

The negotiations on free trade with Australia began in the middle of 2020 in hopes of strengthening the partnership and securing a better position in Asia-Pacific after Brexit (Murray, 2021, p.159-160). Concluding an agreement on tariff-free trade for British exports offering advantageous opportunities for both Australian and UK businesses and lowered prices for their customers, secured the UK’s first post-Brexit trade deal by the end of 2021. Additionally, working and travelling conditions for UK citizens aged 18 to 35 are ought to be eased by this agreement (Webb, 2023, p.5). The tariff-free trade does not, however, include all exports and imports from these countries. Both Australia and the UK plan on expanding the products progressively in near future (Webb, 2023, p.27). Even though, the high-number reductions in tariffs on goods imported from Australia of almost £43 million are oftentimes highlighted, the overall advantage is less prominent as the UK already does not pay tariffs on 89 per cent Australian imports (Webb, 2023, p.5-6, 23). Due to Free Trade Agreement (FTA), the UK anticipates an eventual £116 million decline of tariffs posed on the UK exports. Certain sectors, for instance, motor vehicles, machinery, and electronic equipment are predicted to benefit the most from the FTA with an overall increase of 44 per cent. Agriculture, forestry, and fishing, on the other hand, face 0.7 per cent decline (Webb, 2023, p.21, 23).

A decrease or a reduction of tariffs on certain products as a result of FTA left many UK farmers worried of being in an economic disadvantage against Australian farmers whose conditions for production are less demanding. The current 2.3 per cent to 8.3 per cent disproportionate import tariffs on imported goods leaves UK farmers off with the unfavourable deal compared to Australian farmers. However, these high tariffs put on some products are expected to cease in the following decade (Webb, 2023, p.53-54).

In a similar matter, a greater competition from Australian side is also influencing Northern Ireland's producers. Since there is a difference in trading arrangements compared to the rest of the UK, Australian imports to Great Britain are more likely to be favoured due to their FTA in comparison to the ones from Northern Ireland. The difference in Northern Ireland's trade roots in The Northern Ireland Protocol which ensures the alliance of this country with the EU Single Market and the EU customs after Brexit (Webb, 2023, p.100-101).

Another advantageous partnership for the UK is one with Japan who through its now well-known companies such as Nissan, Toyota, Hitachi, or Toshiba, gained certain economic benefits. Not taking into account only trade, the UK-Japan relations are also meaningful in development cooperation in various areas such as life sciences, nuclear power, high-speed trains, and software (Gilson, 2021, p.157-158). These relations further lead the UK to join the CPTPP which will come to force in the second half of 2024, including agreements with countries like Brunei, Chile, Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, Vietnam or already mentioned Japan and Australia. Throughout 2022 and 2023, countries belonging to Gulf Cooperation Council were working on updating and improving their already-existing agreements with the UK. These include Israel, Switzerland, and South Korea. Further possible trade negotiations involve the Republic of the Maldives and the Republic of Türkiye. Lastly, as Webb states in his research briefing *Progress on UK free trade agreement negotiations*, the UK has not yet concluded negotiations with all eleven members of the CPTPP due to specific disagreements with some countries, for instance, Canada, Mexico, India, and the US (2023). Further claimed by Webb, Biden's primary focus on domestic affairs may be the reason the UK has had couple rounds of unsuccessful negotiations throughout the last four years over making an FTA with the US (2023, p.7). Nonetheless, the US Government's redirecting of priorities seems to indicate weaker relations between the UK and the US post-Brexit. As mentioned in *Brexit and Beyond*, the US no longer has an 'interpreter of sorts between Washington and Brussels' after the UK's withdrawal (Laible, 2021, p.153).

4.3. Relations between the UK and the EU

While it could have been widely assumed that Brexit would primarily disadvantage the UK rather than the EU, from the point of the Union, the departure of the UK signified a loss of a major economy, a member with extensive global diplomatic reach, a centre of democratic institutions, intelligence, military, trading connections, a global financial centre, and prestigious universities (Adam, 2020, p.262, 272).

At the very moment that Brexit was celebrated as a major event in the UK's political and national history, it also provoked the UK's largest demonstration in 2019 calling for another referendum to reverse this decision (Adam, 2020, p.296-7). A second referendum was not held, however, its results, according to Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, would have been notably different today with only 34 per cent support of Brexit vote. Nearly 80 per cent of respondents expressed their wish for the UK to establish a closer future relationship with the EU whether through re-joining the EU, joining the Single Market, or deepen trade and security partnership. In general, more than over a half of participants supported the re-joining to the EU compared to 36 per cent who were against it (Spisak & Tsoukalis, 2023).

Several treaties were ratified to secure an ongoing cooperation between the EU and the UK, covering diverse areas including trade through the Trade and Co-operation Agreement (TCA) and citizens' rights through the WA which incorporates the Windsor Framework on Northern Ireland (Davies & Kassim, 2023). The following subchapter further explains how Brexit has influenced the EU-UK partnership and what changes it has brought for the UK citizens.

4.3.1. Trade and cooperation between the UK and the EU

Since the EU membership was accompanied by various advantages, for instance, avoiding border checks and having tariff-free trade between the EU Member States, the announcement of the UK's departure from the Single Market and the customs union has likely brought a wave of uncertainty for countless of manufacturers and businesses. Despite profiting from advantages of the membership, the rules that applied to all member states including the UK might seemed to present a restriction of freedom and loss of sovereignty for the British (Winters, 2021, p.147). After the withdrawal, the UK and the EU signed TCA which also includes the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) crucial for various areas of the EU-UK cooperation involving trade of goods and services, investment, fisheries and more (European Commission). Regarding fisheries, Britain's important business shared a 50 per cent deal with the EU during their membership. Compared to the original deal, the UK's current estimated increase of 25 per cent would mean

keeping roughly $\frac{3}{4}$ of the fish caught in the UK waters. In a threat of tariffs and extra paperwork on both sides, another increase in fish value from the UK's side is not assumed (Stewart, 2021, p.26).

Although the FTA helps maintain the EU-UK trade tariff- and quota-free, the loss of benefits from the EU regulations following the exit from the Single Market and customs union has introduced new requirements for businesses in a form of border checks and paperwork. This resulted in additional costs for exporting and importing goods and services (Kassim, 2021, p.149). Despite ensuring a tariff-free trade between these countries through the FTA, trade barriers are reportedly at its highest, according to *Statistics on UK-EU trade* by Ward and Webb (2023, p.4). The report further points out that changes in trade flows in recent years were not solely a consequence of Brexit but were conjointly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine, making it challenging to isolate the effects of Brexit alone. For example, that pandemic accounted for a decline of 13 per cent in exports and 20 per cent in imports to the EU (2023, p.4, 14). Though, the value of exports between 2021-2022 is stated to have rose by 24 per cent, the UK's nine per cent inflation of that time is not taken into account. Nonetheless, in the duration of 2021-2023, an average on monthly export to the EU did not surpass the pre-pandemic £14.2 billion figure (Ward & Webb, 2023, p.12, 14). The situation slightly differs with imports from the EU which were able to move upward by 1.4 per cent in a span of three years compared to 2019 and its value continuously escalating to a 36 per cent growth between 2021-2022. However, as it was in case of exports, even these numbers are not calculated in compliance with 2022 inflation rate (Ward & Webb, 2023, p.12,14). The authors also provide statistics of changes in rate of exports and imports throughout years 1999 and 2022, showing a decline of 42 per cent in exports in 2022 which is 8 per cent less than in 2006. This relatively steady long-term reduction in rate of imports could be observed up to 2019 (50%). Then, a minor reduction of four per cent in 2021, however, from that point onwards it rose by two per cent in 2022 (2023, p.14). Another data analysis of post-withdrawal trade rate adaptation suggests that Brexit has had a little impact on services trade surpassing other major countries including France, the US or Japan with a 14 per cent increase throughout 2019-2023. Contrastingly, the levels of exports and imports of goods in 2023 experienced a 13.2 per cent and a 7.4 per cent downturn compared to 2019 (Fry, 2024).

Additionally, it is important to point out that the relations and trade of Northern Ireland with the EU differs compared to the rest of the UK. Even though, the UK excluded itself from the Single Market, only Northern Ireland is allowed to continuously benefit from EU free movement of goods due to the Northern Ireland Protocol. This close connection of Northern

Ireland with the EU is visible in rates of exports to the EU accounting for 64 per cent and imports from the EU which were 68 per cent as of 2022 (Ward & Webb, 2023, p.27-28). As of 2024, a new addition concerning the trade with the EU in a form of creating ‘lanes’ was made to the protocol. This novelty possesses the name – the Windsor Framework. A ‘red lane’ brings full controls and checks on goods originated from Great Britain coming to NI and further moving to Ireland or the EU. And a ‘green lane’ of softer checks and controls meant for goods whose last destination is Northern Ireland (Curtis, 2024).

Along with the expiry of a few EU-UK agreements expected between 2025 and 2027, for instance, regarding fisheries, there is also a possibility that certain products might cease to be accessible to British consumers after the onset of 2025. This is due to an introduction of a new ‘UKCA’ mark which replaces the original ‘CE’ mark (previously used by the EU). The mark helps to recognize that the goods meet the necessary UK standards. However, it may possibly mean non-availability of some goods imported from countries which will not acquire the ‘UKCA’ mark. As outlined in the report from *UK in changing Europe*, another concern of this introduction comes with the authorisation of products with ‘UKCA’ marks as the time pressure already demands the UK to postpone the introduction deadline. These delays could possibly be alternated by recognition of both ‘UKCA’ and ‘CE’ marks (Grogan, et al., p.32).

Some proposed ideas for a closer future cooperation between the EU and the UK are the Sanitary and phytosanitary agreement (SPS), enabling the British exporters of live animals to ship livestock to the EU again, and the Single Trade Window. Introduced by the EU, the STW could help lessen the amount of paperwork. Even though, the information concerning the exports and imports from the UK STW would be available right to the EU STW, resulting in a quicker and beneficial trade, supposedly, the Northern Ireland Protocol might high likely generate an obstacle in implementing these plans (Grogan, et al., 2023, p.42-43).

4.3.2. Tourism

The UK citizens were able to move freely between the EU Member States and vice versa until the end of the transition period. Since then, the conditions of free movement apply only to either those protected by the WA or under two circumstances: a short-term visit (maximum of 90 days in any 180 days) or a case of a British citizen travelling to Ireland. Otherwise, visa requirements to travel, work or study are now necessary (Gower, et al., 2023, p.7-9, 12).

As Tapper indicates in a news article concerning the loss of free movement, there has been approximately an 83 per cent decrease in school and university visits as a consequence of Brexit. One possible explanation could be the fact that non-EU passport holders are required to

pay additional £95 visa for entering the UK (Tapper, 2023). Even though, there has been effort on the UK's side to negotiate easing the travel for such occasions, till today only France has agreed to cooperate on this matter (Gower, et al., 2023, p.7-9, 12, 14). Despite suggesting other exceptions to extend the visa over 90 days including research, study, and youth exchanges, no such proposals have yet been introduced from the UK's side. In other cases, the post-transition UK citizens are identified as third-country nationals thus must oblige the same entry requirements as other non-EU citizens. The difference in travelling post-Brexit thus lies within a passport requirement, possible delays at passport control and a potential need of proof of accommodation, finances, or a returning ticket (Gower, et al., 2023, p.7, 14). This requirement for passports is presumably one of the reasons for a major reduction of 183 000 visitors in Brittany Ferries (2022) and 63 322 less vehicles were carried through the Channel Tunnel (2023) both compared to 2019 (Tapper, 2023).

In the following years the EU is planning to introduce a new travel authorization for digitalising border crossing for non-EU citizens travelling to the majority of EU countries. It includes The EU Entry/Exit System (ESS) requiring scanning passport or other travel document when crossing the border and The European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) authorizing a traveller's application. As a result, some UK citizens may be discouraged from travelling to the EU as their applications will have to be made online a few days ahead. If a person has possessed a document supporting their residency in any Member State of the EU before the end of transition period, ETIAS authorization does not apply to them under the protection of the WA. Without this exception, however, a UK citizen aged 18 to 70 travelling to the EU must pay additional 7€ fee (Fella, 2024).

4.3.3. The impact on everyday life of the citizens

Probably one of the most anticipated consequences for the UK citizens after Brexit was the change of free movement. European Commission states that the rights of over one million UK nationals living in the EU and more than five million EU citizens who moved to the UK remain unchanged after Brexit under the WA under a condition that this migration had occurred till the end of the transition period. The WA also translates on family members, registered partners, and a person in durable relationship, who due to their rights granted under EU, is enabled to move freely. The protection of the WA naturally implies on children no matter the place and time of birth where its parent (an EU citizen or a UK national) resides. However, in case a child born after Brexit has a parent not protected by the WA, this parent has a sole custody over their child. As the European Commission clearly states, in order to gain residence rights a person must 1)

work or be self-employed, 2) with sufficient resources and sickness insurance, 3) is a family member of another person who meets these conditions and 4) has acquired the right of permanent residence (European Commission, 2021). Nonetheless, visa requirements will be needed if an individual (a UK national/ an EU resident) does not meet these criteria, yet wishes to travel, study or work in the UK or in an EU Member State. Chapter 4.5. *Migration* further examines Brexit's influence on free movement, studying, and working abroad.

Changes in public funds, medicine and equipment, research collaboration and access to shared health data were all in a risk for the NHS after Brexit. According to the report on *Brexit and Beyond*, shortages of medicines, vaccines and equipment has rose in the UK since 2016. The products, pharmaceuticals, and vaccines used within the NHS were the subject to EU standards during the UK's membership, the current issue may present slowed-down medicine and vaccine approvals, lower regulatory flexibility, and more problematic trade implying higher prices to pay by ordinary citizens (Antova, et al., 2021, p.29). Supporting this claim, a professor of European public health, Martin McKee, expresses that remaining workforce is oftentimes exposed to a greater pressure by staff shortages. The UK's dependency on workforce from abroad worsened after Brexit, mentioning that a 28 per cent reduction in nurse staff has not recovered since (McKee, 2023).

The EU membership allowed collaboration between a great number of universities in higher education and research. The EU-UK partnership has helped the UK to fund projects modernising higher education facilities, support research and tuition loans for British students abroad. Even though, Brexit might have been expected to pose a problem for foreign students studying in the UK, as stated in report on *Brexit and Beyond* from 2021, cooperation with individual European universities and research agencies was said to be still active due to TCA (Marginson, 2021, p.30-31). The TCA should allow the UK to collaborate and participate in the EU programmes for research and innovation, however, according to a newer report from UKICE from 2023, the EU has not yet concluded an agreement. The UK held a major position in research and innovation of the Horizon programme, putting its universities amongst the most anticipated destinations for researchers. Nevertheless, in case the EU does not agree to the UK's association in the research programmes, substitutional research funding from the UK government will most likely not meet the expected amount. Furthermore, as predicted in report from UK in *Changing Europe*, this lack of funding might significantly decrease the appeal for foreign researchers and collaborations (2023, p.41-42).

Continuing, by not accept the proposed terms as a non-member of the EU regarding the Erasmus+ programme, the UK universities are expected to be left with no European Erasmus

students. On the contrary, the UK has decided to create own programme for sending students abroad – the Turing Scheme. Although, the UK introduced new policies to attract Europeans for studies and research, without the full overseas student loans, a significant reduction of students is predicted in foreseeable future (Marginson, 2021, p.30-31). Besides that, in a news article from the Guardian, O’Carroll and Adams point out that in the first academic year after Brexit (2021/2022), undergraduate and postgraduate courses had approximately 35 000 less EU students enrolling than in previous year. Additionally, between academic years 2020/2021 and 2021/2022, there was a 40 per cent declination of number of applications sent to UCAS. Students wanting to take the last chance of receiving help from the UK tuition loan system may be the explanation of the sudden drop in the number of applications for first academic year after Brexit since the fees rose by roughly £29 000 afterwards (O’Carroll, Adams, 2023). Reduction is also apparent in the number of European-nationality academic staff which decreased by 17.1 per cent in 2020/2021 and will most likely further decrease (Highman, et al., 2023).

Along with the rest, Brexit has visibly impacted the cost of living. A study conducted in May 2023 suggests a steep 25 per cent increase in food prices and non-alcoholic beverages since December 2019, removing additional £250 from the income of an average household (Bakker, et al., 2023). These higher prices are most likely the effect of numerous border controls on food imports from the EU now checking multiple certificates and other paperwork on certain food products such as meat, eggs, fish, and dairy. The UK’s dependency on export from the EU is evident (49% of EU’s pork, 22% of beef and 21% of sheep meat). However, this added paperwork might discourage smaller EU suppliers to export their products which then has a chance to add to the UK’s food shortage (Ziady, 2024).

The downfall of housing market was expected by the government to be between 18 to 20 per cent, as a consequence of Brexit and Covid-19 pandemic. Although, there has been 32 per cent price increase between the years 2016 (July) and 2022 (May), the estate agency and property consultancy, Knight Frank claims, Brexit has not been much of a negative factor in property demand since it rose by 14.4 per cent during this period. Knight Frank interprets this increase as the result of “affordability pressures, more tax adverse landscape and compounded by the political volatility followed by the 2017 general elections” (Harvey, 2022). Similarly, Inman states in the Guardian article, that although the prices for an average home have dropped by 1.4 per cent in 12-month period till December 2023, the average cost of private rental has risen by 6.2 per cent the same year. Higher affordability is further predicted in 2024 by lowering mortgage loan costs especially for first-time buyers and cutting down interest rates by 0.75 per cent (Inman, 2024).

4.4. Economy

The much equal prosperity of the UK's regions due to industry was unlike in any other European country at the beginning of the 20th century. Britain's dominant position in the following fifty years was, however, replaced by other major economies such as Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, and Belgium which sustained the continuation of their growth by cooperation. Britain's decision not to join the EEC in the 50s bore its consequences in slowing down prosperity and creating more prominent inequalities within its regions. The following three decades, Britain's situation had improved after joining the EEC and the Single Market. Polarizing with the situation from 100 years ago even with or without the effects of Brexit and leaving the Single Market, the UK now represents the most regionally unequal economy of Europe. As specified by the report on *Brexit and Beyond*, the EU does not hold much power over changing the regional equality as the national governments do. Thus supposedly, while Brexit did not exactly help the situation, it is also not responsible for much of a negative change as a result (Forth, 2021, p. 115-116).

The frequency of using a term 'levelling up' has been growing in the recent years especially after Brexit to suggests plans for improving the situation of regional inequality. The transition from deindustrialization to offering knowledge-intensive services from the 1980s has brought visible divisions between the south-east (London) and the midlands and northlands, resulting in inflation and income disproportion being one of the highest compared to other major economies. The prognosis that Brexit will pose the biggest threat on areas previously dependent on industry was already voiced in the 2021 report on *Brexit and Beyond*. Further highlighting, regional inequalities in these areas whose development is dependent on EU markets are most likely to worsen post-Brexit (Brewer, 2021, p.111 & Giovanni, 2021, p.113).

Since the global financial crisis of 2008, the UK's productivity has not increased significantly. The results of the 2016 referendum further heightened uncertainty for businesses regarding the newly awaited trade policies, leading up to a 2-5 per cent reduction in productivity in the following three years. Additionally, in comparison of income per capita in the EU membership versus in FTA with the EU, a further lowering of productivity is predicted by the report on *Brexit and Beyond*. One example of a productivity determiner are the new customs checks introduced on the UK borders from the end of the transition period. By setting these customs checks in motion, the costs of trading are increasing, but so is the subtraction from the UK's productivity, which foreign investments might consider less appealing (Riley, 2021, p.109-110).

Posted by the House of Commons Library, the latest findings from November 2023 to January 2024 show 75.0 per cent employment rate. The Covid-19 pandemic is responsible of its decrease throughout the years from 2020 till its recovery at the end of 2022 to pre-pandemic level of 75.2 per cent. Comparatively, the unemployment rate of November 2023 to December 2024 stands at 3.9 per cent compared to over 5 per cent pre-pandemic. Contrasting the unemployment rate of 2020 and 2024 has shown lower numbers, though, the opposite can be said about claimant count for unemployed benefits, which rose by over 355 000 in this 4-year-long period (Francis-Devine & Powell, 2024, p.11, 17, 21). Additionally, Partington reports a sharp increase of the economically inactive aged 16 to 64 to 21.7 per cent as of October 2022 which presents a peak. Another issue slowing down much-needed economic growth of the UK are job vacancies which also reached record high of 1.2 million as a result of both Covid-19 pandemic and Brexit (Partington, 2022). The reason for these shortages is most probably the aftermath of new migration policies and the necessity of work visas for the EU and non-EU workers migrating to the UK for work. The data from The UK labour market statistics on wage growth already adjusted on inflation (4.0%), display an increase by 1.6 per cent including bonuses and 2.0 per cent excluding bonuses (Francis-Devine & Powell, 2024, p.23). Regardless of this growth, Partington expresses that the ongoing insufficiency to keep up with the inflation rate, the annual growth of a regular worker's pay still falls by almost 3 per cent (Partington, 2022).

4.5. Migration

As mentioned in previous chapters, immigration has played a decisive role in Brexit. Politicians and Eurosceptics took advantage of the argument that EU migration cost the UK citizens many job opportunities. The report on *Brexit and Beyond* indicates that the number of EU-born residents living in the UK grew over 50 per cent in a span of the last 20 years. The Covid-19 pandemic in connection with Brexit seems to have contributed to emigration of over 500 000 EU-born working-age people from the UK (Portes, 2021, p.32-33). The data collected by The Migration Observatory suggests that the most effected sector by the reduction in number of EU workers is hospitality (-27%). Other sectors include administrative services (-18%) and retail and manufacturing which both recall a 7 per cent reduction (Cuibus, 2023). The UK citizens migrating to the EU countries seeking employment are now more likely to face difficulties compared to pre-Brexit when they were not considered third-country nationals (Portes, 2021, p.32-33). The process of accepting entry of non-UK citizens became more complicated after the end of transition period when the new border rules took effect. In the first

six months of 2023, more than a half of EU citizens wishing to cross the UK border were not granted the entry. In the span of 18 months after the transition period ended, only 5 per cent in total of all issued visas were granted to EU citizens. Fifty-eight per cent of those were work visas and the remaining 42 per cent make up for travel visas (Cuibus, 2023). Even though Brexit did not entirely stop the EU-UK migration, it suggests changes in job opportunities for migrants coming to work in the UK. Restrictions in their number is quite substantial due to a greater demand on qualification and fees posed on both employers and employees (Portes, 2021, p.32-33). The ability to speak English and a minimum salary of £26 000 a year are the demanded qualifications for migrant workers. Although, migration was thought to be only declining, a sudden growth has been shown mainly in 2022 as a consequence of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Even if this event is not taken into account, the rise of non-UK job seekers exceeded over a quarter of million in the same year, thus additional £11 800 being added to the minimum salary requirement has been suggested by a few MPs (Elliott, 2023).

5. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to evaluate the impact of Brexit on the UK considering the changes in the lives of citizens, economy, and migration. Furthermore, to examine any shifts in dynamics within the regions of the UK and the relations with the EU post-Brexit. Lastly, this thesis aimed to provide information on plans and predictions for the future situation of the UK.

The 2016 vote posed a question over the future of the UK as the Brexit referendum has polarized the nation and has pushed towards a stronger support of independency prominently in Scotland and Northern Ireland. It has put additional strain on trade, workforce recruitment from the EU together with resulting in the loss of EU fundings. The possibility of Scotland holding a second referendum due previous negotiations and efforts together with a stronger support of independency seems more likely in the foreseeable future. It is assumed that after its withdrawal from the UK, Scotland would potentially seek an EU membership and re-join the Single Market and the customs union. Similarly in Northern Ireland, there has been a growing preference of unity with Ireland over the one with Great Britain. This anticipation of the possible reunion could result in two ways. The Irelands would either peacefully and thoroughly negotiate the terms of unition in hopes of preventing the re-surfacing of *The Troubles* and Northern Ireland would regain its EU membership. Or Northern Ireland will remain a part of the UK, however, with the potential of rising tensions within the UK over possible future negotiation disagreements, for instance, concerning trade and triggering the Northern Ireland Protocol.

Several agreements and protocols ensure the continuation of the relationship with the EU after post-Brexit. Despite, the UK is now a ‘third country’ and the efforts to negotiate trade deals became more, several noteworthy partnerships, for instance, with Australia, Japan, or countries in Asia Pacific are helping the British to regain its position in trading.

Currently, trade barriers are at their peak regardless of the TCA ensuring tariff-free and quota-free trade. As a result of a newly posed border controls, additional paperwork, and certification requirements on food imports, a 25 per cent food and non-alcoholic beverages price growth has been reported 2019 to 2023 and the levels of exports and imports fell by 13.2 per cent and 7.4 per cent, respectively. Contrastingly, Brexit has had only a little impact on services trade – a 14 per cent increase in the same period.

Brexit has additionally challenged the previous possibility of free movement. Visa for studying, working, and travelling is now required unless a person is protected by the WA. Though, the UK plans on digitalising the border crossing in the near future, the necessity of

making an online application ahead and paying an additional fee will likely pose a greater threat to the UK's tourism.

These new visa limitations have further severely impacted education and workforce recruitment from the EU. A significant decrease of over 80 per cent in a number of school trips to and outside the UK has been recorded together with a 40 per cent decline of university applications sent by the EU students the first academic year post-Brexit. Following, a further growth of £29 000 in tuitions and the decision to withdraw from the Erasmus+ programme has deprived countless students of the opportunity to study abroad. In addition, 17 per cent of European-nationality academic staff has left the UK after the first year of the withdrawal and is predicted to further ascend.

Subsequently referencing to employment and workforce, most probably due to the newly introduced obligations for staff recruitment, the number of job vacancies and economically inactive aged 16 to 64 reached a peak. Hospitality, administrative services, and manufacturing experienced a noticeable reduction, however, with an estimated loss of 4300 doctors and 58 000 nurses, the greatest influence has been felt in employment of medical staff. Combined with the shortages of NHS workforce, Brexit has further influenced the insufficiency of medicine, vaccines, and equipment together with increasing prices of pharmaceuticals and slowing down medicine and vaccines approvals.

To conclude an overall impact of Brexit on the situation in the UK thus far, it is crucial to note that a deeper and more precise assessment of its effect will likely be attainable in the following years, in contrast to current timeframe, where it has been only around three years since Brexit took full effect.

Despite the persistent scepticism among many British people towards the EU, there has been a notable increase in support for re-establishing a closer relationship with the EU, and even consideration of re-joining the Union in future. One can not completely deny EU's positive influence of supporting the UK, for instance, by offering advantageous trade cooperation and protection. Most importantly, it helped fund weaker areas and oppose the UK's regional inequalities which in fact further deepened after to Brexit.

Regardless of the economic threats and a potential migration crisis articulated by both Leavers and Remainers during the 2016 referendum campaigns, Brexit has undeniably proven to be a profoundly complex matter. Not only it explores themes of national identity and diverse interests of the regions within the United Kingdom, it also marks the beginning of an ambiguous future for the isle of the UK.

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A List of Abbreviations

CPTPP – Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans Pacific Partnership

DUP – Democratic Unionist Party

EEC – European Economic Community

EU – European Union

FTA – Free Trade Agreement

MP – Member of Parliament

NHS – National Health Service

PM – Prime Minister

TCA – EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement

SPS – the Sanitary and phytosanitary agreement

STW – the Single Trade Window

UCAS – The Universities and College Admissions Service

UK – United Kingdom

UKIP – UK Independence Party

WA – Withdrawal Agreement

Resumé

Cílem téhle bakalářské práce bylo zjistit dopad Brexitu na situaci ve Spojeném království. Analýza dopadu Brexitu byla předvedena ve třech hlavních kapitolách, které se týkají oblastí jako je ekonomie a migrace. Dále se tahle práce zabývala vlivem Brexitu na každodenní život občanův žijících ve Spojeném království a Britů žijících v Evropský unii po Brexitu. Se záměrem zjištění, zda měl Brexit vliv na změny ve vztazích Spojeného království s Evropskou unií a krajinami mimo něj se zkoumaly i změny vztahů uvnitř krajiny. Kapitola týkající se následků Brexitu zmiňuje příklady plánů a předpovědí budoucí situace Spojeného království.

K výsledkům analýzy dopadů patří zjištění, že Brexit zvýšil touhu samostatnosti především ve Skotsku a Severním Irsku a to z důvodů, že pro tyto země ztráta členství v EU znamenala ztrátu dotací, které pomáhaly rozvíjet především slabší regiony závislé na pomoci Unie (pracovní možnosti a finanční dotace). Ve spojitosti s možným budoucím osamostatněním těchto zemí od Spojeného království se podle různých analyzovaných zdrojů uvádí snaha o znovuzískání členství v EU buď osamostatněním (Skotsko) nebo spojením se s druhou zemí (Severní Irsko).

Dále, zavedením nově stanovených omezení volného pohybu občanů kvůli Brexitu, zažívá Spojené království výrazné snížení výdělků spolu s nedostatkem zaměstnanců v různých sektorech, zejména v cestovním ruchu, zdravotnictví a školství. Analýza zdrojů poskytla důkazy o tom, že Brexit měl dramatický dopad například i na míru školních zájezdů do Spojeného království (83% pokles), zaslaných přihlášek na britské univerzity (40% pokles v prvním roku po vystoupení) a 17% pokles akademických pracovníků pocházejících z EU.

V souvislosti se snižováním akademických pracovníků dále přibývají i ztráty pracovní síly ve zdravotnictví, které představovaly odchod 4300 doktorů spolu s odhadovaným počtem 58 000 zdravotních sestřiček. Vliv na tyto ztráty mělo nejpravděpodobněji zavedení striktnějších podmínek pro zaměstnávání pracovníků přicházejících z Evropské unie.

Se zavedením hraničních kontrol, potřebných dokumentů a různých poplatků bylo taktěž výrazně ovlivněno obchodování, což opětovně vedlo ke snížení úrovně importu a exportu a výdělků. To se projevilo i v navýšení cen jídla a nealkoholických nápojů o 25 procent. Kontroly na hranicích spojené s Brexitem ovlivnily lidi žijící ve Spojeném království při cestování, studování v zahraničí ale i v samotné zemi. Po Brexitu se zvýšily ceny školních poplatků o téměř 30 000 britských liber, a naopak se snížily možnosti studování v zahraničí v důsledku vystoupení z programu Erasmus +.