**THE LONG-TERM POLITICAL AND SOCIAL PROCESSES THAT INFLUENCED THE REFERENDUM IN BRITAIN**

**Markéta Minářová**

Charles University, Prague

Markéta Minářová: marketaminarova1@gmail.com

Received:

DOI:

Category:

**Abstract**

The aim of this article is to apply long-perceived socio-political processes to the field of education in the United Kingdom related to Brexit and the events that gradually led to it. The article therefore focuses on attitudes towards migration, questions about fears about the future, and British citizens' concerns about demographic developments. Along with these topics, the issue of public awareness and its impact on voters' attitudes is also addressed. The article traces political events in Britain since Thatcherism, when major reforms including the reform of universities and academia took place, with Tony Blair continuing the model a few years later. The article outlines the current impact of Brexit on the university education system. Using qualitative research, the article seeks to map and apply the political and social processes and justify on what grounds, the British electorate chose to leave the long-standing Union.

**Keywords**

Brexit, European Union, Margaret Thatcher, migration, future, demographics, awareness, universities

**Introduction**

In June 2016, the UK voted to leave the European Union. Although there were furious campaigns long before the referendum itself, either fiercely supporting leaving the Union or agitating to remain, the result was a Brexit that changed all the previously known and established orders. This article looks at the gradual path that Britain took to reach this decision. By the word path here, we mean the political and social processes that for many decades were so-called fuelled by discontent, often lack of information, and a desire to show that the former mighty empire could manage to be a separate entity that did not need the other member states.

The paper will therefore focus first on the UK economy since the 1970s, when Margaret Thatcher took over as Prime Minister, focusing on the invisible hand of the market and the fundamental reforms that were to lead Britain out of the debt trap and into the forefront of Europe. These often very tough reforms did indeed lead the country to a strong mandate in Europe, but often at the expense of the people. But after 1989, it gave Britain an irreplaceable place among world leaders, giving the British not only cause for optimism but also a reminder that they used to be an empire, only with its own civilisational specificities and uniqueness. It was this view and the inclination to "back to control" that brought about the opinion patterns that accompanied the slogan during the campaign to support leaving the European Union - Vote Leave. There are countless such patterns of opinion, but this article focuses on views on migration, demographic trends and fear of the future. The article also looks at the issue of information, which is by no means objectively conceivable, yet opinion played a crucial role in the outcome of the referendum.

All of these socio-political processes are applied by this article to the British education system, and more specifically to universities and colleges, as it is in this institution that the social and, more importantly, political impacts of Brexit have been and can be observed at these four levels. The article presents a study of the long-standing political and social processes and decision-making with implications for British colleges and universities, whose quality and relevance have been the guarantee of good education for centuries.

1. **Thatcherism as the first steps towards a future referendum**

The term Thatcherism represents the period, ideology and political practice that shaped the UK between 1970–1990, when Margaret Thatcher was at the helm. The history of Thatcherism is linked to the history of the modern liberal project, whose core of thought consisted of economic scientists, and analysts, historians and philosophers. The most important figure in this core was the Austrian political philosopher Friedrich von Hayek, who co-founded the so-called Montpelier Society in 1947. The aim of this society was to seek solutions to the shortcomings of social capitalism, an increasingly declining social order, and to find a way out of the expanding development of unfreedom on a global scale. Over the years, their ideas have been reflected in the economic sphere, where they have been combined with the free market ideas of neoclassical economics, whose roots go back to the 19th century to theorists such as Alfred Marshall, Leon Walras and others. The fusion of these philosophical and theoretical currents gave rise to neoliberalism, which incorporated the laissez-faire of the father of modern economics, Adam Smith. This principle of the invisible hand of the market can be interpreted as follows: assuming that every consumer is free to choose what he spends his money on, the producer is free to choose what he produces. The market will thus settle on the distribution of products and on prices that are beneficial to society as a whole. (Power and Weinfurther, 2015, pp. 19–21)

Among the main proponents of this neoliberal thinking was Margaret Thatcher, who was elected to head the cabinet in May 1979 to rebuild the British economy, on the grounds that since 1945 the UK had been following the path of socialism based on the economist John M. Keynes, who believed that the capitalist economy should be directly controlled by the state. (Power and Weinfurther, 2015, p. 21) Keynesianism was introduced after the bad experience of the Great Depression and dominated the economy of not only the UK but also the United States in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. However, the concept was no longer sustainable for both Britain and the United States as it brought inflation over time. And it was for this reason that these countries turned to neoclassical economics in the 1980s and 1990s – which was reflected in the policies of Thatcher, Reagan, Bush the Elder and later Tony Blair, who had a huge influence on the issue of contemporary science and the principle of the education system.

The theoretical strand of economic thought, especially from the late 1970s and 1980s, which gained a strong foothold in the 1980s, was mainly promoted as a complementary strand in the Chicago School of monetarism, which strongly rejected Keynesianism and turned to neoclassical economics. This school influenced fields such as public choice theory, law and economics, which revolutionized the study of political science and law. If we talk about the main figures putting this way of economic thinking into practice, two names come up again: Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan.

The basic idea of the theoretical stream of economic thought was to create a suitable business environment for firms that would enable them to cope with the negative phenomena of the time as a remnant of the applications of Keynesianism. Thus, it was a revival of the economic thought of liberalism, in a rather harsh application of social policy, every citizen was to be taught once again that the decisive burden for his fate rests on himself. Supply-side economics was also to open the way, for example, to the restructuring of British industry in this new environment. This was the decline of unprofitable industries from the industrial revolution. If the toughness of the approach had not come from Thatcher, the British people, used to former Labour governments, would have resisted the reforms, gone on strike, etc.

The markets in question would have been captured by the former developing countries and the UK would have been in serious trouble. Declining industries had to be replaced by something, and the market – the invisible hand – would show the way. This strategy temporarily succeeded, with multinational capital itself developing new industries with high added value, such as biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, electronics, etc.

In order to entice foreign capital into this operation, the market needed to create a suitable business climate. And this is the goal of supply-side economics. So the government's measures focused mainly on the following areas: 1) tax cuts, especially for companies; 2) simple legislation; 3) protection of private property, these were to some extent restrictive practices against trade unions. All of this was interwoven with the results of the implementation of a parallel effort to curb inflation. As a result, the path seemed promising during the Thatcher government, even though it was socially very harsh, e.g. low unemployment benefits.

In the 21st century, the UK has begun to grapple with new large-scale fierce competition – from China, India and the United States, for whom it has become a European satellite over the years. Because of the penetration of China and India into new technology areas, Britain became increasingly indebted and part of the general problem posed by the European Union.

By the 1970s, cracks began to appear in the modern standards of the education system that had been established in 1944 and which had worked reasonably well until the 1970s. The decline of the existing education system went hand in hand with the aforementioned economic system. Therefore, the search for an acceptable reform began, but it did not have any response until 1979. The issue of education thus became the subject of an election campaign, with the Conservative Party and especially Margaret Thatcher pushing strongly for radical reform of the education system. In this area, the party focused on empowerment and parental choice. All cabinets since Prime Minister Thatcher's have paid enormous attention to education policy. It has even been subjected to an economic analysis, the first time in British history. This economic analysis, like the welfare system or industry, was considered in the context of supply and demand and the essential variable was to arrive at the most efficient outcome. According to the Prime Minister's government, the decline of the British education system was linked to the decline of the economy. And this spiral was to be arrested through strengthening parental choice. The Cabinet was convinced that strengthening parental rights would bring about two innovations in particular that would improve the whole education system: 1) parental choice was to bring about freedom of choice for families and reduce the influence of the state school bureaucracy; 2) reform was to bring about the introduction of rules of competition in an area where no market benchmark had previously existed. (Fajmon, 2010, p. 276)

These innovations were a real breakthrough in the British education system as it was the first time that parents became, through their children, clients. This reform is at the heart of what the whole article is about because this reform breathed life into the contemporary Anglo-Saxon education system, for which commerce has become the hallmark.

This unprecedented step, where parents can choose any school for their children regardless of their place of residence, was launched in 1980. It was also enacted to allow gifted children to attend private schools, a move that partially removed the barrier of high tuition fees. The expansion of scholarships also brought about one controversial issue, and that was the beginning of the distribution of state funds to finance schools according to the number of pupils. The government argued that this money always went with the pupil enrolled, which was the preference of parents, and this system logically strengthened competition and discipline in education policy. (Fajmon, 2010, p. 277)

It is true that the reforms introduced, especially in the third term of the Prime Minister, brought a number of progressive and innovative ideas that removed the rigid rules, and university education finally gained the possibility of professional practice and even educational initiatives were established where students could undertake internships and work experience programmes.

On the other hand, the role of management was strongly strengthened, which reduced the powers of teachers and teachers' unions and strengthened the powers of the Ministry of Education and school management. The year 1988 became a revolutionary year for British education with the then Education Secretary Kenneth Baker's Education Reform Act, which completely changed the primary, secondary and higher education system by introducing nationwide comparative testing, and the results of these tests were regularly published in British newspapers. (Fajmon, 2010, pp. 278–279) This method created immense public pressure on schools, which caused strong competitive pressure. Finally, the reform also brought significant changes for universities, especially in their funding. Higher education in the UK has traditionally been divided into public and university sectors, and the Cabinet Office wanted to create a strong and independent public sector, with polytechnics and colleges being much more focused on practical knowledge and skills than universities, due to the fact that their members are oriented towards working with industry and business. (McVicar, 1990, pp. 131–144)

The aim of Thatcherite educational policy was to apply market criteria to improve the quality of education and to expand the range of educational services. The intention of this government policy was to prevent economic decline in the first place, and radical school reforms that promoted practice and employable skills in the labour market were intended to contribute to this. Technically speaking, it was Thatcherism that enabled a number of a broader class of 'underprivileged' citizens to receive an education at prestigious universities and research institutions.

1. **The emergence of traditional opinion patterns**

This paper is based on the thesis that informed voter choice is an ideal example of how democracy works that we cannot practically encounter in real sociological research. For this particular research, however, the paper focuses on how traditional opinion patterns of the British population behave and how they evolve.

To analyse opinion patterns it is important to work with the fact that people have a plurality of opinions. England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are the nations that make up the bulk of the United Kingdom. Despite all possible analysis and statistics, the undeniable fact remains that England is the backbone of the UK economy, industry, trade and politics. The finances that are redistributed in the Palace of Westminster to other parts of the island are usually not as generous as to England, (Finance, Budget and National Planning, 2020) resulting in frequent strife in the country. Beyond the financial side of things, however, it is important to remember that the four national groups have different social mindsets, which brings us to the attitude towards Brexit itself.

* 1. **Attitudes towards migration**

Human migration has deep roots in Europe. But let us leave aside the centuries-long migration of peoples or the expulsion of Jews and Muslims from Spain in the 15th century, and focus on a much more modern era – the 20th and 21st centuries. This is because it was this century that brought about the formation of the patterns of opinion that we see in the UK today. The 20th century saw 3 major waves of migration. The first was the migration during and after the First World War, the second major migration dates from the Second World War to 1973 and is followed by a third migration from 1973 onwards. (Castles and Miller, 1998) The migration wave in the 21st century peaked in 2015 when over one million people arrived in Europe, many of them in the UK. (Papademetriou, 2015)

Although people in these waves have migrated and are migrating for a variety of reasons, these 'moves' have been very influential in shaping the first opinion pattern, which involves coming to terms with a new culture, customs that do not quite correspond with the traditional values of British society. This "migration" opinion pattern can be further divided into two groups – the first group, which is in favour of these migration flows (both past and present) and sees them as a positive sense of globalisation, and then the second group, the majority group, for whom such large-scale interventions in the functioning of the state and society are unacceptable.

When the European Commission agreed to the UK's proposals in February 2016, it accepted the UK's demands regarding restrictions on the free movement of people, sovereignty, the competitiveness of the European Union, the protection of the interests of non-eurozone countries and even a reduction in welfare benefits for EU migrants. For the British people, the negotiated reforms were still not enough. But the majority of the public did not approve the new deal. The wave of disaffection extended precisely to the key area of migration. When asked whether the new reforms would reduce the number of migrants from the European Union coming to the UK, 76 % of voters called for migration to be reduced further, 54 % thought the proposals put forward would make no significant difference and 31 % thought the reforms would lead to a reduction. (Clarke et all, 2017, p. 26)

In terms of the idea of a 'backstop', there was also widespread scepticism about reducing immigration to the UK. According to one Survation survey, only 26 % of respondents felt that a 'brake' would reduce immigration, while almost 60 % felt that it would make no difference. A similar response was given to a question about the reduction in cost of living allowances for children in home countries, with 59 % of respondents saying it would not reduce immigration. In short, most voters did not believe that the reforms negotiated in the European Union would have the desired impact. (Clarke et all, 2017, p. 26)

* 1. **Concerns about demographic developments**

Related to this is a second influence on traditional patterns of opinion, namely demographics, i.e. changes in population growth. In mid-2017, the UK population was estimated to be 66 million. The UK population is projected to continue to grow, reaching almost 73 million by 2041. This population growth is the result of births exceeding deaths (by 148,000 in 2017; Overview of the UK population, 2018) and immigration exceeding emigration (by 282,000 in 2017; Overview of the UK population,2018). There are 56 million people living in England, 3.1 million in Wales, 5.5 million in Scotland and almost 1.9 million in Northern Ireland (Population estimates for the UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland: mid-2019). UK residents are also familiar with these statistics. So in terms of demographics, it is understandable why they disagree most with migration in England. It is increasing migration, along with the growth of the immigrant population that has played an important role in the arguments of the Vote Leave campaign.

* 1. **Fear of the future**

Ulrich Beck's theory of the risk society states that the risk society refers to the means by which modern society organises itself in response to risk. It is "a systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernisation itself". (Beck, 1992, p. 21) According to Giddens, in order to talk about the existence of a risk society, two conditions must be met: firstly, it is only possible where there is no real scarcity, so we are talking about countries where people have no problem getting food and thus do not struggle to survive. Secondly, there must be rapid development and growth of productive forces in the place in question. (Giddens, 2001, pp. 623–624)

Beck's theory was often criticized for not bringing any innovative ideas. (Ormrod, 2013, pp. 727–744) However, this criticism, perhaps justified, can serve to explain one of the three traditional patterns of opinion in this article. Looking at British contemporary history and the present, can we say that the British population was starving and had nothing to eat? Let's leave aside rationing in the 1940s and 1950s, although even that is not a case of starvation in the true sense of the word. The UK is one of the richest and most developed countries on the planet, with a long, unbroken democratic continuity, which makes it just the sort of risk factor where that risk society might emerge.

The population of the UK has become increasingly concerned about its future in recent years, in the context of migration and the consequent rise in natural increase. These two themes have been raised at every turn. And they were highlighted during the Brexit referendum campaigns. It is since 2016 that the issue of fear of the future has been most frequently mentioned. A future that the Vote Leave campaign said was going to be scarce in the context of the rules of the European Union unless the UK left that institution and created its own future. (YouTube, 2020) It was the feeling that leaving the European Union would give the UK the opportunity to decide its own destiny that played a crucial role in this referendum. For the impression that we hold our future firmly in our hands is precisely the chimera of a risk society.

* 1. **Awareness**

Awareness or familiarity can be defined as the amount of information that an individual or group possesses and can freely disseminate. In the past, information, whether true or misleading, has been spread among people, and people have pieced together a "mosaic" from the pieces. However, we can still speak of this kind of 'mosaicking' in the present day, because information is still spread today, only on a much larger scale and from many sides. There are mass media, social networks and globalisation. There is, in short, a glut of information of all kinds nowadays. On the one hand, familiarity with all possible data is advantageous and allows people to see an issue from multiple angles, on the other hand, how many people find out and verify one and the same information from all possible sources.

However, it is precisely the over-information and the possibility of obtaining a huge amount of verified, misleading or even false information that is the trend of our time, which makes it possible to speak of a fourth traditional opinion pattern.

* 1. **Traditional patterns of opinion in the United Kingdom**

So what patterns of opinion have developed over the decades in the UK? If we add up the four influences listed above, we get England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Indeed, these are traditional patterns of opinion that have been gradually influenced by migration, demography, fear of the future and information. So it is these four opinion structures that have played the most important role in the Brexit era. And when we evaluate these four structures according to the above influences on opinion patterns, we come to the conclusion that England is where most migrants live, where the population reproduction is increasing the most, where most of the population is coming into conflict with modernisation, and where most of the meetings, personal campaigns have been held, (Clarke et all, 2017) not to mention the plethora of print media. It was England (other than London) and Wales that most called for leaving the European Union and it was England's vote that decided Brexit. The referendum result was close. 51.9 % (17,410,742 voters) voted to leave and 48.1 % (16,141,241 voters) voted to remain in the European Union. In England alone, 15 188 406 voters voted to leave the European Union. (BBC News, 2009)

* 1. **Informed decision by voters**

Now that we have seen what traditional opinion patterns entail, we can move on to an analysis of informed choice through the referendum and try to assess whether something like informed voter choice is even possible. Informed voter decision is an ideal example of how democracy works, which we cannot practically encounter in real research. In terms of the amount of information, voters had access to many sources of information, both online and offline. Online sources consist of media websites, government bodies, academia, and social media and think tanks. Offline sources consist of print media, television, and political events Although we can assume that the average voter will not examine all of these sources to inform themselves, we can say that these sources together produced a sufficient amount of information, even if it was not always relevant information. In the Electoral Commission's research on the sufficiency of information prior to the referendum, 34 % of respondents said they 'knew a lot' and 50 % of voters said they had a fair amount of information (The Electoral Commission, 2016, p. 44).

1. **Impact of Brexit on educational institutions**

All of the above attitudes of British society, post-Brexit, have spilled over into different sectors of the state. Be it the economy, fishing, national borders, tourism etc. All of these pitfalls and unresolved issues are still being discussed and although there is no end in sight to the solutions to these pressing issues, they are being talked about and somehow addressed in the political arena. This article, however, wants to highlight one sector that has been largely neglected in the current post-Brexit chaos – educational institutions and science. Education in Britain has always had its own specificities, but the biggest difference to the rest of Europe has been the university system, which has reinforced the dichotomy in each individual structure of its own organisation. After the referendum and especially after the UK's departure from the European Union, this dichotomy has become even more pronounced, especially for European students. However, let us start from the beginning and imagine the system as such, so that the significance of the impact of Brexit becomes clearer.

All social institutions are supposed to be based on the status quo they represent. This is not some strict consensus that does not allow different concepts to be interpreted in different ways or from a broad perspective. This article examines the long-term socio-political implications that have brought Britain to the 23 June 2016 referendum on leaving the European Union. First, then, let us consider the approaches that the following institutions should take in an ideal world: First and foremost, the institution of society – it is a group of individuals characterised by shared traits and interests and which creates its own culture and institutions. The institutions of society are characterised by togetherness and a high standard of living. The second institution is politics, which denotes the process and method of decision-making of a given group of people with pluralistic views and interests. The political institution is supposed to represent, above all, fair democratic competition. Already in ancient Greece, deliberative democracy took place on the agora, and this was the core of democracy. One of the hallmarks of ancient democracy was the direct decision of the people on key issues. The common interest was then what the people said it was. If a person was to be chosen for public office, it was done by lot. In antiquity, the offices to which people are elected in today's democracies were filled by lot.

Fair competition, and therefore democracy, is expressed through free elections. Therefore, one of the theoretical premises of this article is the premise, according to Professor Krejčí, that the beginning of elections in the newly established democracies after 1989 is related to three processes independent of the idea of elections. Firstly, that the origins of today's elections are to be found in the breakdown of democracy; secondly, the ideological legacy of ancient democracy acting on the development of elections in today's sense; thirdly, the pressure of foreign experience. And it is the type of English, or British, parliament that is supposed to be the model of a democratic representative legislature based on elections. (Krejčí, 2006, p. 137) The third institution is represented by schools whose main output is education. It is important to highlight this output at the present time, as in the current regime of commerce and promotion, it may seem that the main motive of schools is to get the largest number of students regardless of quality, as not only in the Czech Republic but also in the United Kingdom schools receive funding based on the number of students and not on high standards and achievements. Finally, the last institution, which is the crux of this article, is science. Science, as the elementary knowledge of new facts, representing empirical and rational cognition, based on various qualitative and quantitative methods and experiments. Science as a system of clear and inviolable values, based on knowledge, education, experimental approaches and should be completely independent of the politics of all the above institutions. This is where the clash between idea and reality comes in, because we have reached the point where all the institutions mentioned have been commercialised to the point where they completely dominate each other.

1. **The introduction of tuition fees in British universities**

There is one other significant problem with the UK, and that is the fact that UK private universities charge very high tuition fees (approximately £9,250 per year), up to twice as much for international students. (University College London, 2021). Post-Brexit, tuition fees in Britain have become such an unthinkable sum for European students that it's more like a phone number that you think will tell you the amount when you call it. And even if you are paying for such an expensive school, it doesn't mean you can avoid applying for grants. It certainly doesn't, because apart from the fact that you're paying tuition just so you can be registered under the umbrella of a university that will sponsor your research, there's a lot of pressure in the UK to apply for all sorts of grants and other national and international scholarships, because just like peerages, the UK has made academia a competitive discipline designed to gain as much prestige as possible.

A few years ago, tuition fees were introduced in English universities. This was under Tony Blair's government. It was about setting new standards for British higher education, and these standards were aimed at raising as much money as possible. When these standards were introduced, it was a sum of around £3000 a year for British students. (Alley and Smith, 2004). It must be added that the government provided discounted loans to all students. These loans also applied to international students whose tuition fees were significantly higher. Which was also the intention of Blair's cabinet, as students from all over the world have a huge interest in so-called prestigious universities such as Cambridge, Oxford and UCL and if they are admitted to these schools, they will quietly go into debt for many years just to have a degree from these institutions. Because of the devolved national administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, there are different tuition fee arrangements in each country. This is why, for example, there is no tuition fee at Scottish universities. (BBC News, 2009)

Money has thus become the measure of the whole academic and educational sphere. This is not a price of academic quality, the important factor is that university professors get the highest possible grants and also the highest number of international postgraduate students who pay the highest tuition fees. As a result, one big problem emerged in Britain, and that was that most students began to complain that professors were working on their research and had virtually no time for their students. This is because teaching undergraduate students is usually considered a difficult side-line that adds nothing to professors' and departments' evaluations, no matter how high the tuition is.

Margaret Thatcher's cabinet brought one revolutionary invention to British society that is spreading globally – that invention is double payment for the same services. This means that taxpayers are already paying for healthcare, the right to use roads, education and other services with their taxes. And if people want something, they have to pay for it again with their own money. It's amazing how you can work with the system when you find a crack in it. (Čulík, 2009). Interestingly, however, the attempt to introduce tuition fees was abandoned even under Margaret Thatcher. This was because her cabinet was taken in by the great wave of opposition that the idea generated. So it was ultimately the Labour government that introduced this controversial move, in 1998.

Most private universities in the UK have a certain prestige, glamour and reputation, or are at least accepted as such by the general public. Indeed, people have a need to judge themselves by external signs of power. They want a luxury house, a luxury car, so why not a luxury school. In a figurative sense, it is only the name of the educational institution. The trouble is that this is not just about the general public's access to education, but this is also how the European Commission, for example, approaches the awarding of European grants. Who is more likely to get a European grant, the University of Cambridge or Charles University? The University of Cambridge has more emeritus professors, more impact, more publications and some of its active professors are even winners of one of the Nobel Prizes. The atmosphere that has developed in wealthy societies has also become a contemporary problem in academia, i.e. science. This is, of course, another consequence of the prestige. By the way, the word prestige comes from the Latin word *praestigium*, which means deception.

And now we come to the imaginary fall of this Icarus. This system seemed so exclusive and prestigious that the current Boris Johnson government did not consider it important to protect this, to some extent, exclusivity from the effects of Brexit. How else can one explain that, in addition to the extremely high increase in tuition fees for students from the European Union, it has also abolished all scholarships that were once provided to members of the European Union. (Klíma, 2021)

However, what also ranks as one of the most pressing issues following the impact of Brexit on universities is the cancellation of study and research residency programs for students from the European Union in the first place. Following the UK's departure from the European Union, inter-university agreements have been abolished, as have the rules for the European Union's flagship programme – Erasmus – where, for now, existing agreements are still in place but no new ones are being concluded. (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2021)

In some schools, individual contracts are still expiring, but the Johnson government has not yet concluded any new agreements. Although the official website of the Czech Ministry of Education explains that, despite the necessary visas, it is not a problem to participate in research and study stays under inter-university agreements, in practice it is not so simple and from personal conversations and email correspondence with Professor P.S. in London, the implementation of the agreements is more than difficult. "It also appears that the scheme is problematic at the moment, because the British government has yet to put in place the Turing scheme, which is intended to form the equivalent funding to the EU's Erasmus scheme." (Author's email correspondence with P.S., 2021)

**Conclusion**

This article has discussed a political-social system that has been affected by various aspects over a long period of time. First of all, it is important to note that the United Kingdom is not made up of one country, but four, each of which has different weight and representation in Britain. This was also reflected in the referendum. Each of these countries perceives membership of the European Union differently, and this is based on how far they are from the Palace of Westminster. As is the case with other member states of the Union, Britain has faced and is facing controversy around the issue of migration. Indeed, it was the issue of migration that became one of the most pressing topics during the campaigns, as many Britons saw migration as one of the options that could make them lose their jobs. However, these views are only a proxy for an awareness problem that resonated throughout society, not just during the campaign but much earlier, as migrants from eastern EU countries regularly featured highly in the media in the UK. The truth is, however, that it was only with Prime Minister David Cameron's announcement of the referendum that society was flooded with figures and statistics.

Like the 'fear of migrants', fear of the future was very often invoked, built on the idea that if the UK does not become independent, there is virtually no future for it. Whatever the argument used by Brexit supporters or opponents, or the developments in the social process, information, whether or not it is true, accurate or distorted, always plays an important role. It is always the case that the recipient receives a message (even from multiple sources) but has to process, sort and evaluate it in detail and this is what the recipient of information has to do every day, because a message that was issued yesterday is already out of date and needs to be refreshed. The question is whether it is even possible to ask all voters (citizens) to do this, because it is common for the recipient to understand the message differently or to use a set of sources that are not as accurate as other sources, and thus we get into an information loop from which there is no easy way out.

One of the institutions that has fallen victim to this lock-in is the education system, which has been affected economically but mainly academically by Brexit. The loss of a number of quality students and researchers and the loss of financial support from the European Union are already bringing about the first declines in quality, and unless new agreements and a new European institutional umbrella are quickly established, the word *praestigium* is in danger of really coming to mean something.

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