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ROMANIAN STUDYING ABROAD: PATTERNS, TRENDS, OUTCOMES

A b s t r a c t

Tens of thousands of young people from Romania chose to leave, subsequent to the Revolution of '89, to study abroad, after completing the baccalaureate exam at the end of the state or private post-secondary education.

Compared to the communist period in which the Romanian state focally controlled student mobility, the 1990s, accession to the European Union and the Bologna Process opened tertiary education to the West. France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland or the United States of America were the main attractions in the first years of opening higher education, thus, the Western education represented a benchmark for recent graduates of a pre-university system created at the end of the greatest world conflict in history according to the model patented by the Soviets, an education system in which many did not find themselves, even if they graduated with flying colors. Why do young Romanians go to study in the West? How did the UK, especially England, end up at the top of the preferences of new students, and what changed in the preferences of Romanian citizens after Brexit?

The methodology we used to document information about Romanian students in the United Kingdom, before and after Brexit, involved gathering and analyzing materials from the UNESCO database, analyzing questionnaires from the Romanian Students Abroad League, the branch in the United Kingdom, research supported by oral history, deepening the literature, then critically examining all the data and finally preparing the actual work, taking into account the initial objectives. The hypothesis we start from is that the number of Romanian students in the UK decreased significantly after the entry into force of the post-Brexit treaty. Romania is the country that aspires to be a member of OECD in which the fewest people aged 25 to 64 have achieved higher education. Less than 20 % of these adults have completed tertiary education, a percentage that places Romania in last place among OECD member or candidate states, more than double the distance from the UK. Romanian students who have opted for the United Kingdom, where many of the prestigious educational institutions are located, are currently a leading category in these statistics, although it seemed difficult to overcome this number at the beginning of the third millennium. The gap that the United Kingdom had compared to the USA, where were over 2000 Romanian students in 1999 or France, almost 2000 of the young people who came to study in

the hexagon from Romania, compared to only 385 young people who chose to apply for undergraduate, master's or doctoral studies in the same year in the United Kingdom. The local academic sphere has transformed enormously in recent decades, however, at the same time, the number of Romanians deciding to study in Albion has increased year by year, from 320 young people in 1998 to over 12.000 students in 2021.