

# Impact of Interest Groups in United Kingdom, as State Member of European Union

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## Abstract

Within the research of the impact of groups of the interest in decision making and policy drafting in member states of European Union was researched in specific manner the United Kingdom one of the main countries, with the most influence in the politics of the European Union, group-interest complex, impact and their acting in the country as well as at the European Union as a state member. In the study we presented also the political system of the United Kingdom with its specifics in which the groups of interest through potential channels influence on its policy drafting analysing and comparing the relation, importance and features that exist between different types and the impact of these groups in political decision making implying interaction with a major number of institutional and political actors. Where it has been possible in particular we are defined for political groups but also on the economical ones through which it influences the drafting of politics and which try to influence the decision making process at all stages, in the manner that different issues that have to do with their interests to enter in agenda as priorities of internal and external politics and to become part of the governing programme of this country. In continuation was explained the reason of selecting United Kingdom as member of European Union and its analysing stands in historical facts and at the importance that this country had on the past and that also today has in the united Europe and that is considered the promoter of processes and developments in the United Kingdom.

*Keywords: United Kingdom, political system, groups of interest, influencing, European Union*

## 1. Introduction

United Kingdom thanks to its geographical position, good connectivity with world, the first appearance of industrial revolution and relatively good base with underground wealth, was the greatest world power and played important role especially in developing of western ideas for Parliamentary Democracy. Economic losses during both world wars as well as denial of her empire reduced her leading role in world affairs. After the Second World War the United Kingdom was depending on American financial help. Therefore the return to the previous role of world leading became impossible also for economic reasons but also political ones. Even though major parties of the country did not follow similar strategies to achieve goals however can be talked about post-war consensus in British politics.

The interest of the post-war conservative governments was initially oriented to the welfare of the state, but also in protecting national traditions and institutions, individual liberty and the limitation of state intervention in the economy (Stephan, 1996). In the seventies, during the government of the Labour Party, the standard of living of the population was significantly improved, but was not achieved notable improvement of

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economic power of the country in international comparison therefore United Kingdom on those years was considered as the ill state of Europe. With coming to power of the Conservative Party led by Margaret Thatcher the economic and social post-war consensus marked end of it. She opposed the power of syndicates and drastically limited their field of action through expanding legislation. The defeat of miners' strike on 1984 represents also the symbolic end of the political power of syndicates and action of their groups of interest. The politics of Thatcher (Beckett, 2006) was transformed into synonymous of a policy which engaged for a form of trade economy preferably free by the state impact but also sceptical towards European integration. Successive election success of Thatcher were not by any means the result of popularity of her social politics but of some other factors as triumph on the War of Falkland (Brown, 1987) leading power, finance and tax politics but especially the weakness of the Labour Party which even in opposition was still influenced by the old ideal of the state welfare. Researcher Grey was harsh in his critics towards politics of Thatcher and her conservatory party. He (Grey, 1994) emphasizes that the British society and institutions were deformed and turned into total servants of conservatory party. The majority of British population was not ready to accept the negative social flow of Thatcher politics. On 1997 the Labour Party successfully exploited this disposal in electoral campaign winning the elections (Heffernan, 2001). The labours' proclaimed the policy which was associated with goals of social justice and the reconciliation of the opposing sides in society. The goal of proclaimed policy was creating of conditions which would make possible for the society, first of all affected individuals, families, social groups, municipalities or interest groups to be able to help themselves.

## **2. Political system of United Kingdom**

United Kingdom, as constitutional monarchy as a head of the state has the Monarch. The politics traditionally is influenced by two-party system (Birch, 1993). Compare to other countries of the European Union it is about much modified election system. Parties in United Kingdom differently from the major part of state members of European Union are not product of the era at the beginning of democratization. The feature lies more on the fact that the parties were accepted as necessary condition for functioning of the parliamentary system of governing, was not perceived as integral and political expression of the society which should be reflected accurately but in a first place were perceived as instruments of governing and the power which make possible sustainable governing and that should bring the appropriate political leaders. Parties in United Kingdom have a judicial position of private voluntarily union and precisely for this reason it is their matter what internal structures will they choose. Principle of party governing has been stabilized since the time when the participation principle had still many limitations and when the participation in elections was still not understood as a right but as a privilege linked with certain conditions. For this reason parties went through a long period of some decades before being placed in front of the mobilisation and political integration of electorate duty through programs, organisations and ideology. The two-party system was established at the end of XVII century with the appearance of Vigs and Tories. Liberal Party was established at 1859 as a successor organisation of Vigs,

was the second party by its size until the twenties and has big impact in the politics of the United Kingdom. Labour Party was established from syndicates, as their political arm under the name "Labour Representation Committee". During the process of programme and organizational renewal the party started to strengthen the internal democracy mobilizing individual members and ceasing by state interference in economy as well as by the policy against European integration.

For the two-party system of the United Kingdom we can say that is a result of democratic majority rule (Mathioy, 1967). This system underestimates two first parties as well as also underestimates other parties and eliminates the small parties. Traditionally the Conservatory Party and Labour Party develop descent rivalry between each other. The two-system of the United Kingdom (McKenzie, 1963) provides stable governing without coalitions and parliamentary crises. Has a strong opposition which is respected and functions creating anti-parallel government. This fictitious government opposes the current government in its decisions and offers alternative solutions. The opposition party does not invest in bringing down the government, but in benefit for electorate at the next elections. The UK system of government for centuries was considered at home and abroad as a guidance system (Mathiot, 1967).

The parliamentary system of government of the United Kingdom is based on strong democratic tradition, which has been copied in many countries around the world and is a legacy of the British Empire (Silk, 1989). In United Kingdom for the first time was presented the parliamentary system of government and state rules of representative democracy based on parliamentary. Key features of the parliamentary system of United Kingdom are: the rule of the majority, the two-party system, bicameral parliament, opposition action and strong position of the Prime Minister.

The UK parliament has bicameral structure or two-chambers. It consists by two chambers by the House of Communes and the House of Lords. House of Lords numbers totally 702 members and most of them are elected by the principle of heritage (Shell, 2007). This parliament represents the misbalanced two-room model because the effective power is concentrated in the House of Communes, while the House of Lords have more formal and ceremony character. The House of Communes presents the representative election chamber as main pillar of the parliamentary system. Has extensive legislative competencies (Porritt & Annie, 1903) chooses and supervises the work of the government, adopts decisions with which determines financial and monetary politics and performs other parliamentary functions as the political control on the Government and taking into interpellation the Prime Minister.

Queen of the United Kingdom has formal authorities in relation to the parliament. She formally convokes and with the proposal of the government takes the decision on dissolving the parliament, gives consent and makes formal signature of laws and appoints the Prime Minister. Report of government with the Monarch is based to their mutual close cooperation, since these two institutions have executive power (Ashley, 1998). The Parliament appoints the Prime Minister which for his work should notify the Queen. The

Queen for all internal and international matters should consult with the Prime Minister, also when she presents at Parliament is obliged to defend government stands. The authorisations of the Queen in the field of internal and international politics are very limited and have formal character.

The government of United Kingdom represents the main pillar of parliamentary system and is closely related to the Queen and the House of Communes with which is mutually limited in performing of functions and for its work carries double responsibility towards the Parliament and the Queen. United Kingdom government based to the customs and mandatory tradition should consist exclusively by parliamentarians in international comparison has an unusual formal gap of power (Beloff & Peele, 1980). It is typical model of majority ruling. Members of the House of Communes are selected directly based to the principle of majority, the whole country is divided in 659 election units and the winner is declared by the votes of the candidate that is first on the list. In this way the party which was declared as winner in more than half of the election units. This system encourages major parties and suffocates the ambitions of small parties. In parliamentary practice such system is named two-party system or bipartismbecause provides political domination of two political parties. This system of democratic majority rule creates strong and homogenous opposition. Here affects the election system which transforms a few votes in absolute majority of mandates, the lack of federal anti-government, lack of constitutional court, the control of the Lower Chamber based to the parliamentary regulations of the work from the cabinet as well as the limitation of the possibility of veto of the Grand Chamber. Unlike the composition of the government based to the principle of power division known in other countries members of European Union, the UK system of governing is characterized also by numerous power limitations. On the day of elections for the members of the House of Communes voters declare also for the person that will be the Prime Minister and on this occasion the leader of the winning party automatically becomes Prime Minister (MackIntosh, 1992). The Prime Minister and its cabinet formally are being appointed by the Queen. The government and the cabinet traditionally are selected by the members of the party of the Prime Minister. The executive power is performed by the Prime Minister and its cabinet. They give oath in confidential council of her Majesty and become ministers of the Crown. Due to the fact of application of the parliamentary two-party model are not known the governments of the coalition. Opposition parties usually do not take part in composition of the government. The Prime Minister presents the main political figure (Kavanagh, 2000). He at the same time is also the president of the party in power, directs executive, internal and external politics and in coordination with the Monarch takes important constitutional and political decisions. In the competency of the Prime Minister along with the proposal of ministers is also their dismissal and removal.

One of the main principles of the political system of the United Kingdom is also the sovereignty of the parliament. Here is varies the United Kingdom by the most of democracies which function based to the principle of sovereignty of people. Based to classical formulation the parliament has a right to adopt and abolish every law and outside of the parliament there is no organ or person that has legal right to change or

ignore the decisions of the Parliament (Allan, 2015). As for the report between the government and the Parliament, this report is expressed in the right of the Parliament (House of Communes) to form and perform total control of the Parliament and the work of the government.

Although there is no written constitution the United Kingdom identifies as constitutional monarchy. The Constitution of the United Kingdom (Bradley & Ewing, 2003) complies with constitutional norms and includes “the operation of complicated overall state machinery”. Parliamentary democracy is based on the simple fact that the United Kingdom has not made up yet the step from the sovereignty of the parliament in sovereignty of the people. On the one side cause of not existing of a written constitution (Morrison, 1966) he is the only protector of orienting of general welfare and exclusive keeper of British democracy and the individual rights. On the other side major fraction of the Lower Chamber applies implementing selected and specific policy initiatives, foreseen by the government for which there is no obstacle action, no constitutional right guaranteed by law, neither the individual nor for the political institutions outside the Parliament.

### 3. Groups of interest in United Kingdom

Important factors in political life of the United Kingdom present also the groups of interest respectively groups for pressure. Their existence and performing is visible as on the local level also on the global one. They are oriented to promote interests of the special groups in wide public sphere respectively in political ones. Many groups for pressure favour or help certain parties during political races or in election campaigns. The activity of those groups is oriented towards establishing centres and especially in Parliament, government, state administration and on the parties.

In most recent time groups' favour or help certain parties and are more and more oriented in direction of the government that is reliable indicator of the true location of the power. Usually these groups act in government committees through representatives (syndicate is represented in around 60 such committees) giving opinion in researches ad hoc which government organizes or through preliminary consultations in case of certain proposals of the government. Impact at the party is accomplished mainly in giving the financial support or with participation in compiling the party programme. Unlike from the impact that is being made in parliament, government or the party and which in most of the cases is called the old lobby exists also the impact in public opinion which is known as new lobby (Baumgartner & Leech, 1998).

Complex interest-groups in United Kingdom are distinguished by their implicit in USA or by the similar systems with it. The causes are multiple here we can emphasize two basic ones. First the organisation of power in USA (Theen & Wilson, 2001) is more different and more convenient for acting of groups of interest than the one in United Kingdom. Designed more widely with institutional and practiced principle of dividing the power and of major equality of channels for articulation of interests, groups of interests in USA allow more access and opportunities than their sisters in United Kingdom. Secondly the

diffuse character respectively not stable and in most of the part periodic activation of parties offers more possibility and space to American groups of interest for their intensive political activities, permanent and influencing. For this reason was developed and almost was institutionalized whole system of lobbying and lobbies which supply congressman and other political powerful deputies with different profits with aim of obtaining their support for interest of lobbying clients.

Forms and aims of activities of the groups of interest in United Kingdom can be from the most various. They can give support and to agitate in elections for aspirants or certain political candidates or to help financially parties and certain candidates in election campaigns as well as in other cases. They also take part in giving proposals and even decide on some issues for which they are interested as well as to supply with information and professional help certain political deputies (Richardson, 2000). Different groups can also influence in obstruction and promoting of efficiency in accomplishing of some political affiliations. Small benefit or insufficiencies can have decisions or activities of political elite if their decisions are not implemented in basic organisations of life and work in one society. A good portion of these basic organisations represent the group of interests. Different groups of interest can be also initiators to undertake certain activities and for that reason forming of special groups of interest which will work for accomplishing of these ideas. For an individual to achieve accomplishing of some his ideas needs a broader group and a collective effort and also groups in certain manner are form of participation of citizens in politics.

An open and democratic society is rich with what some authors call potential interest groups. Potential groups are groups which are formed on the occasion of the presentation of an issue which requires solution. They may be support groups, or groups to resist a political decision or an act.

With increasing activity and impact of politics in social flow was increased also the impact of groups of interest. Need for competent government also with influence, requested major attention of the government towards groups of interest, as instances of high professionalism and source of knowledge for some aspects of economic development and the general social development. Today it cannot be imagined that one ministry of education or health ministry that can carry out its functions without having closer consultation and support in institutions respectively in respective scientific and professional organisations. For this reason it is not appropriate that a country developed as United Kingdom before more than three decades had formed a relevant advisory authority in which were engaged different experts from different fields and of different groups of interest to take part in preparations for adopting and implementation of certain decisions. This phenomenon and practice of political advisory organs is not available for all and is not attractive for all. It inclines and results in neo-corporate model of setting in which the interests have role and direct impact in decision making and the implementation. Such model implies significant amount not only of cooperation but also of trade between the representatives of different spheres and activities. Some politicians as Margaret Thatcher were attracted by such political model. In their opinion this model

narrowed the framework and scope as well as the impact of political establishment. It seems that such model did not respond to the powerful and personalized leading as existed at the time of Margaret Thatcher. It is not random that in large extent she extinguished such advisory organs. But by extinguishing of these organs she did not succeed to completely remove them from the governing system. They survived her ruling and took the momentum and the reason for their important helping role in operating of new political garnish.

It is important and interesting to mention also some innovation in the structure and acting of groups of interest in United Kingdom. In recent times the enormous interest groups in UK are being diminished underway and is giving birth to whole new galaxy of small and movable groups. Maybe this trend has inspiration and example the American system of groups of interest. Many small and major groups request and practice direct contacts without mediation of their previous organisations, mammoths and placement form top with certain links of state organising. These groups are led by the party interests and request their promoting in the higher layers of politics. It seems that these care-groups are supported by citizens in greater extent than before. An important novelty in the structure and operation of groups of interest in the United Kingdom is the return of a major orientation of their activities to the wider global organizations, respectively to regional organizations, in particular towards the European Union. Along with this is developed also one new lobbying mechanism which will be adopted for greater possibilities of impact in decision making in European Union. It remains to be seen what effect will have this in internal lobby reports and of these “exported”. In United Kingdom we see a whole constellation of ramification of groups of interest but special place occupies so-called big triad (big three): Congress of Syndicates (*Trades Union Congress*), Confederation of British Industry (*Confederation of British Industry*) and Farmer Organisation (Grant, 1989). Based to its power is differs *Trades Union Congress* (TUC), as powerful organisation. This organisation is closely connected with Labour Party. Its members are automatically also the members of Labour Party. In this syndicate is participator the National Syndicate of teachers as well as some other organisations. Besides the syndicates of employees exist also associations of employers. Is distinguished the Confederation of British industry which is close with Conservatory Party. This association numbers above 12.000 companies as members. From Organisation of Farmers it is worth to mention National Union of Farmers.

Once powerful trade syndicates of employees of the United Kingdom, with the coming to power of the Conservative Party, they began to weaken. But this did not only contribute to power and Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government, for there were also other reasons. It should be noted that the power of syndicates in the new time has decreased in all developed countries. This has to do with the decrease of the number and the impact of working class. This proves also the fact that during 1985 the syndicates included above half of the employees of the United Kingdom while in the beginning of this century less than 26 percent of the working population. This must be added a slightest interest for syndicate and of the small part of the employees that remained still there. This is not anymore a prestigious and powerful organization what was only few

decades ago. Maybe also the politics of new labours' contributed to the interruption of the connection between the Labour Party and the syndicates. Syndicate organizations still have the half of the votes in the Labour party conference but the electoral body is not so important and with influence as it was before. Also the financing the syndicates of Labour Party decreased significantly. Leaders of labours' more and more are getting distanced and request independence from syndicates. Fall of the role of syndicates contributed also the restrictive legislation of the Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

Besides small and big groups it is worth to mention also the groups that are formed in some sectors of the society, but big number of small groups does not minimize the impact that has the Big Three syndicate. It is not difficult to know the causes. Firstly is their numeric power which comes to the expression in the most important political event, during elections; afterwards these organizations have in their ranks also personalities with major influence in politics also in other spheres. From the other side should be having in consideration that these major organizations from inside are very heterogeneous and it is difficult to build on them a unique politics. This minimizes also their impact on the political elite as well as in politics in general. Even though they present important part and factor in democratic society the groups of interest have their limitations. By limitations usually is emphasized that they can act openly in transparent way but also not being noticed, secretly. Already is understood that secret action and negotiations of groups of the interest with state institutions is difficult to be controlled. This is often the manner for what cannot be accomplished publically to be accomplished secretly. However it should be kept on mind that all groups of interests are not the same neither interests that they represent. Groups that are materially good and that politically are stronger based to the rules are better organized and infiltrate very easily to the centre of political power rather than weak groups as groups of poor's, elderlies, children's, consumers or certain groups of minorities. This can be transverse road of protecting the certain inequality of society. Also it is not guaranteed that leaders of groups of the interest every time will present the interests of the groups respectively interest of the majority of the group (Andreas & De Bièvre, 2007). For this testifies many examples by the practice of small groups and also of major groups of interest. As conclusion it is worth to mention that certain deficiencies do not achieve visibly to damage the overview for the groups of interest as of one factor and important, dynamic and democratic part of society.

#### **4. United Kingdom as state member of European Union**

European Union was created as framework and coordination tool of economic activities between several states of Western Europe. Her first members practically the establishers were France, Western Germany, Italy, Belgium, Netherland and Luxemburg. United Kingdom joined the negotiations in which was created European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) but did not participated actively in its activities. For this attitude of United Kingdom there are several reasons. Firstly a major number of British people do not feel as Europeans. Secondly the United Kingdom still did not wake up from the dreams for its imperial size and power. She wants wider trans-European framework for

its effectiveness. Thirdly the United Kingdom wants to walk on two legs: one American and the other European. Thus she makes efforts to empower in greater extent to rely on the first leg. But she is aware that in one leg however powerful can be cannot stand for long time. It seems that long-term political strategy of United Kingdom will be taking the role and the place of mediator between United States of America and Europe. When European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) converted to European Economic Community (EEC) respectively European Common Market the United Kingdom was reserved towards it. According to the opinion of analysts the first union as well as the second union were successful and contributed in protecting and developing economy of the Western Europe. These successes intrigued the United Kingdom. She could suppose that would have economic profits but feared that entering in European district she would damage chances for her aspirations out-European and over-European. For this reason she tried to find exit in creating of a competitive organization of the European zone for free trade such as EFTA (Organization of European zone for free trade). This was suitable framework for use of some advantages in cooperation with European countries. But soon was understood that EFTA did not comply its requests and started intensive negotiations about the entry of United Kingdom in EEC. The French president of that time Charles De Gaulle was fervent opponent of UK's entry in the Community. After his death while Prime Minister was Edward Heath a convinced European on 1973 the United Kingdom had won the membership on EEC (Theen & Wilson, 2001). In the referendum of 1975 it was confirmed the desire of the people to continue membership in the European Union. The popular and very successful leader of Labour Party Tony Blair in great extent tried to include more his country in European Union. The UK reserves as well as oscillations for surely influenced and were obstacle that United Kingdom in this community to gain more privileged position.

The mood of the majority of United Kingdom population for European integrations was not and is still not in satisfactory level. The researches made time after time show a small support of citizens for European Union (Eurobarometer, 2015). According to them 41 percent of British people think that membership in European Union is welcome. This mood in United Kingdom is no different from the mood in France or Germany. Also the disagreements between of some EU members bring in question the constitutional regulation and the higher degree of integration. The major part of UK elite is not convenient in the orientation directed at the higher social protection and more and more controlling the top of European economy, for which try France and Germany ( for the issue of continuation or non-membership in European Union in United Kingdom planned to organize nationwide referendum).

## Conclusions

On the past the groups of interest and lobbying did not have backup, support and neither the proper evaluation. The groups of interest were considered as contaminating factors of the political space, while lobbying was considered as something not clean and amoral action, which did not facilitate but in contrary hinder the solution of the key problems of politics and society. Today these assumptions do not stand because every

sector in member states and especially in European Union is covered with at least one of his representatives. Afterwards major increase of the numbers of groups of interest and expansion of lobbying in Europe is explained not only by recognizing the increasingly large lobbying as an element of the normal democratic process, but also the fact that lobbying impacts on deepening integration within the European Union, it is the transfer of responsibilities increasingly larger countries member institutions of the European Union.

At the end of the last century the impact of groups of interest and lobbying in Europe have been in its beginning and involves a small group of people which associated only some friendly relationships. However intensification and accelerated European integration dynamics gave powerful push the forming of groups of interest and lobbying and today in United Kingdom as a member state of European Union also in other member states is present a valuable circle, wider, very competitive of groups of interest for lobbying. Today when financial impact in law adoptions and decisions in member states and especially in European Union estimates in several billions euros, the number of different groups of interest and their professional lobbyists is increasing every day more and more. It also includes independent consultants, a large number of civil society organizations, representatives of industry, various commercial associations, syndicates, lawyers companies and similar. With this large number of different groups which try through lobbying to influence in drafting of politics of member states and especially of European Union, the Brussels became important headquarter for acting lobby where gather lobbyists not only from all levels within member states, candidate states and potential candidates for membership but also from other continents as well.

In political life of United Kingdom different groups of interest for politics as well as the economics appear as important factors. Complex group-interest differs from systems that are similar with USA system. Characteristic for United Kingdom is that has disciplined parties as well as party discipline is precisely the factor that narrows possibilities of impacts of groups of interest and especially to deputies. Deputies are obliged to vote as the leader of the party decides. This is the reason that target of lobbying impact are parties leaders.

Activities of groups of interest should be appreciated as major potential to cure or at least to improve the concept of democracy. Groups of interest are valuable help of democratic processes in United Kingdom as member state in European Union. They should be accepted as such along with lobbying which should be controlled and regulated by appropriate respective legislation. The role of groups of interest in decision making and in politics drafting of member states as well as European Union itself is positioned, necessary and serves the social democratization in general.

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