UNDERSTANDING THE EUROSCEPTICISM IN EU: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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Teza de licență elaborată prezintă studii și cercetări privind fenomenul Euroscepticismului în Uniune Europeană. Pentru realizarea cercetării propuse au fost setate anumite obiective cum ar fi: analizarea istoriografiei Euroscepticismului în Uniunea Europeană, examinarea abordărilor teoretice ale conceptului Euroscepticismului, determinarea atitudinilor față de UE, în special percepții ale opiniei publice, descoperirea motivelor, realităților și consecințelor, identificarea expresiilor Eurosceptice în țările candidate, evaluarea impactului Euroscepticismului asupra procesului de integrare europeană al Republicii Moldova.

The bachelor thesis ,,Understanding the Euroscepticism in EU. Implications for The Republic of Moldova,” has emerged as one of the most important and current areas of scientific research topics. This is demonstrated considering its relevance, as Euroscepticism affects the EU’s political and governance trajectory and, as a result, modifies the international relations landscape. The purpose of the research was developed based on the theme’s relevance and degree of investigation, and it involves analyzing the causes, evolution and impact of Euroscepticism in EU member states by examining its implications in EU institutions, in decision-making process, public opinion and support of citizens for EU integration, political parties and European elections and also, and its involvement in the Republic of Moldova.

Thus, in chapter I, the historiography and theoretical aspects of the Euroscepticism phenomenon are examined. A noticeable contribution to the increasing understanding the research problem have the scholars such as Paul Taggart, Danilo Di Mauro, Vincenzo Memoli, also the scholars of Moldova State University, like Natalia Stercul, Grigore Vasilescu, Cristina Morari, who explore different dimensions of EU-Moldova relationship including aspects Euroscepticism phenomenon and how it impacts the public perception towards the European integration. The research increase the understanding of the phenomenon, providing a comprehensive analysis of theoretical approaches, therefore we observe that ’’Euroscepticism was created to define the opposition of political parties… every sentiment, act, declaration, and proposal opposing European integration’’ [4, p.103]. A crucial contribution has the Szczerbiak and Taggart’s classification, thus we can identify the ’’Hard’’ Euroscepticism which refers to the phenomenon where political parties believe that their nations should withdraw from membership in the EU and are in a strong opposition to the whole EU project and European integration process. The ’’Soft’’ Euroscepticism represents

"where there is not a principled objection to European integration or EU membership but where concerns on one (or a number) of policy areas leads to the expression of qualified opposition to the EU" [12, p.6]. The chapter I also provide significant analysis of Eurosceptic parties of the European Parliament, thus it was demonstrated that the Euroscepticism in the 2009-2019 decade increased with 7%. Thus, we observe a change of perspective of EU citizens who favor more the views of Eurosceptic parties, opposing the further integration and enlargements, EU policies.

The chapter II is based on the detailed study of the causes, realities and consequences of the phenomenon, thus identifying the reasons such as the utilitarian approach, which links economic effects, interests, and motivations with general support for European integration,, including also the economic crisis and stagnation which influence the level of satisfaction of EU citizens; the cultural approach which argues that attitudes towards European integration depend on feelings of national identity and perceptions of cultural threats from the outside; and political approach which suggests that support for European integration is associated with attitudes of political dissatisfaction and institutional distrust [1, p.1-26]. The chapter also identify how is manifested Euroscepticism in different EU member states, therefore according to public opinion a low Eurosceptic sentiment is present in: Romania, Malta, Luxembourg, Spain, Cyprus, or Lithuania, and strong support for Eurosceptic parties in: Hungary, Italy, Poland, France, Netherlands, Sweden, Belgium, or Slovakia. The Euroscepticism phenomenon affects the EU governance, legislative processes, member state perspectives on EU benefits and membership. Also it is made a comprehensive comparison of Euroscepticism manifestation in candidate member states. We identified therefore that the Albanian respondents reported the largest percentage of supporters in the reports. Albania is followed by Montenegro, which recorded increasing tendencies in encouraging the EU membership, 79.3% of Montenegrins were in favor, thus there are present low level of Eurosceptic visions. Among the Baltic states, we can list Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia, which registered medium level of trust in EU integration process, 52% and respectively 50% for North Macedonia. The most increased level of Euroscepticism in the Baltic region is present in Serbia with just 34% of citizens who believe in European path. Albania Montenegro has relatively a low level of Euroscepticism and continue to make efforts to fulfill all EU requirements for accession as soon as possible, as well as Georgia and Ukraine, which actively encourage the membership. In contrast, we can observed the case of Turkey, where Turkish views on the EU are multifaceted, and the position of governance is clearly Eurosceptic, which affect public opinion.

The research observed the complex implications of Euroscepticism in European integration process of the Republic of Moldova, thus identifying factors such as Russian influence through propaganda, historical ties, and manipulation via gas supply; influence on minority groups preferring the Russian language, intensified by pro-Russian media content; complex political events, economic conditions, all of them influencing the public opinion towards the European integration benefits [4,

p.12-27]. According to the Public opinion Barometer Moldova, we can determine the complex attitudes of citizens towards the EU integration process. The results show that there exits a slightly increasing tendency of Euroscepticism. In 2019, 25.1% were against the Moldova's accession to EU. In 2020 we notice 19.9% citizens sceptic to EU, but this decrease doesn't mean an increase in pro-European vision, but a more uncertain position of Moldova's citizens, therefore 18.1% didn't decide which orientation they have. In 2021, once with the conditions of the elections we notice the highest level of pro-European vision, being encouraged by 65.1%. However, in 2022 and 2023 we identify a higher support for Euroscepticism, with 30.2% and accordingly 32.8%. The results show that 34.9% perceive the Moldova's future membership in the EU as a disadvantage for Moldova. It is worth to note the fact that 28.7% believe that the Moldova's accession to EU will never happen, and 15.5% consider that the membership will happen in 20-25 years, emphasizing therefore the Eurosceptic attitudes in the Republic of Moldova. According to a survey on February 2024provided by IMAS, 56% of citizens would vote for EU membership and 28% against it [9].

In conclusion we can affirm that the research identified the impact of Euroscepticism and observed a growing trend of Euroscepticism throughout the continent due to widespread dissatisfaction with the political framework. Negative sentiments toward the EU have risen by about 7% since observing European elections since 2009. The results demonstrate varying levels of Eurosceptic influence in candidate states, with the lowest expression found in Albania, Montenegro, Ukraine, and Georgia. The study demonstrated an increasing tendency of Euroscepticism expressed by citizens of the Republic of Moldova.

In order to overcome this phenomenon in the Republic of Moldova we can recommend to enhance the political stability and governance, to foster the economic development, to address the regional disparities and social inequality, to counter disinformation and to strengthen EU-Moldova cooperation.

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Recomandat
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