



AUDI. VIDE. LOQUI.

CIS-Europe Monitoring Organization
Международная мониторинговая организация CIS-EMO

info@cis-emo.net

United Kingdom European Union membership referendum: the main issues

Alexey Semenov, CIS-EMO Political Analyst

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to raise the issue of the problems identified during the United Kingdom European Union membership referendum, also known as Brexit.

Firstly, Brexit raised the problem of protecting the system from instability. Theoretically, the decision may change at the revote, because the “Leave” and “Remain” figures were very close, and polls have fixed it.

This problem did not exist, for example, at the referendum on Montenegro's independence in 2006, because there was a 55% pro-independence vote threshold imposed. Thus, the gap in votes had to be more than 10% that the final decision was considered legal. From a methodological point of view, imposing the threshold was probably correct and logical step. However, in the case of the United Kingdom the gap between the “Leaves” and “Remains” was at the level of statistical error. That allows the Remain voters call the final results unfair.

Secondly, voters are used to the fact that their decisions are valid for a limited period of time. And regularly, once in several years, they are able to correct their vote as they will. But the validity of referendum seem to be indefinite, hence people cannot correct their last minute votes.

Thirdly, if you want to effectively split the society - you should ask the UK how? In fact, Brexit did not display the will of the British society, but showed the serious social disengagements in it. It is known that young people predominantly voted “remain”, whereas the older favored “leave”. Scotland and Northern Ireland chose to “remain”, whereas England voted “leave”. Big cities voted “remain”, whereas small towns and countryside voted “leave”. Brexit inevitably led to the increase in social tensions and separatist sentiment.

We're confident that voting in the referendum was held and counted fairly, but we cannot say that the referendum result could be considered fair. One of the basic principles of liberal democracy was violated, which is the “protection against the tyranny of the majority”. The UK has virtually crushed its own foundation. One half of the population has actually imposed the solution on the other half, and there is no mechanism for the treaty.

According to the YouGov poll, conducted ten days before the referendum (13-14 June 2016), 28% of respondents gave a positive answer on the question “*It is likely that the EU referendum will be rigged*”. This figure was even higher among those who were ready to vote for “leave” - 46%. Overall, less than half of the respondents replied that the referendum results would not be rigged. In my opinion, it evidently shows a crisis of confidence in the democratic institutions in Great Britain.