

Comparing uk and romania's culture



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This case of study will provide a deep understanding about the people, culture, lifestyle and weather differences between Romania and UK. The aim of this study is to bring a useful material for our Romanian client, EDMUNDO, in order to deliver precious information to all the Romanian students who wish to come to UK to enhance their studies in different areas of subject and to develop skills for their career.

In the first part of the study, we will use Geert Hofstede's cultural dimension theory to pull out the main cultural differences between Romania and UK. Hofstede's cultural dimension theory is a very efficient tool to distinguish the main characteristics of national or regional cultural bearings, which can affect the behavior of a certain group or organization.

During the second part, we will focus on the macro environment factors such as political, economical, social and technological, forasmuch these can have crucial affect on Romanian students lifestyle in the UK.

Finally, in the last part we have provided some useful recommendations for the students' knowledge prior to their coming in the UK for their studies.

We believe that students from all over the world need guidance in their career, so it is vital for us to help and provide effective and useful information for the organizations like, EDMUNDO, which mediates in offering great opportunities to those students.

Terms of Reference

Who are we?

We are Educational Cross-Culture Consultant Team part of British Council in United Kingdom. We have nineteen years of experience in educational cross-culture, helping different Educational Institutions and Centres from over 80 countries to accumulate vital information about studying and living in UK.

Who is our client?

Our client is an educational centre from Romania, EDMUNDO, whose main activity is to provide information, advice, support and financial solution for Romanian students, who wishes to study in higher educational institutions in west European countries.

What our client asked us to do?

Because our client haven't had so far any kind of relation with UK, now they are really interested in discovering the UK's educational institutions system, lifestyle, people and the environment, in order to provide helpful information for their students who intend to apply especially for UK's higher educational institutions. So we are going to provide them all the useful information that a potential student should have to know about United Kingdom, prior to their coming in here.

Overview of current situation

With this globalization, everybody is likely to work with different nationalities or study and live in different countries. Therefore it is important to understand and recognize people from different cultures who have different ways of looking at things, such as dressing and expressing their personality and feeling. Romania and United Kingdom are two different countries, with

different history, different people, but nevertheless, the difference is what really makes the world to be so diversified, and to find similarities between people of different culture, religion and nationality is a great way to stay connected with the rest of the world. But after all “ diversity exists both within and among the cultures” (Nancy 1997, p. 17).

Analysis of the current situation

Hofstede’s Intercultural dimensions

For the beginning, we are going to distinguish the major cultural differences between Romania and United Kingdom by using Hofstede’s four intercultural dimensions (four – because there haven’t been done relevant studies on Long term orientation for Romania) and then we are going to illustrate if British Culture have Power Distance; if they are individualistic society; if they embrace risks; if they are gender oriented society. Hofstede (2001, p. 24) said that “ the comparison of cultures presupposes that there is something to be compared – that each culture is not so unique that any parallel with another culture is meaningless”.

Figure nr.

Source: Hofstede, [2008] The SD Model of professor Geert Hofstede,
Available [www. geert-hofstede. com](http://www.geert-hofstede.com), [2009, 26 Nov]

Power distance index:

The extent to which the less powerful members of the society accept/expect that power is distributed unequally is much higher in Romania (90) than in UK (35). Why there is such a big difference?

UK

Romania

Superior ranked people/authority treats with respect their subordinates

Superior ranked people/authority tends to openly demonstrate their rank.

Tutor/teacher often tends to socialize with the student.

The relationship between tutor/teacher and student is distant and impersonal.

Society is more equal.

Within a society, class division is accepted.

Mistakes made by the subordinates are often accepted by the managers due to their responsibility to manage.

When the things are going wrong, the blame is expected to be taken by the subordinates.

Individualism:

Romanians tend to be more collectivist individuals (30), whereas British people more individualistic (89).

UK

Romania

“ I” is more important for a person’s identity

“ We” is more important for a person’s identity.

Individualism is encouraged

The sacrifice of individual need for the sake of the group needs.

Individuals make decisions, regardless others opinions

Rules and decisions are made within the group members.

Masculinity:

The masculinity index shows that between UK and Romania there no big difference (66 vs. 42). But still in UK males tend to be dominant in society and power structure.

UK

Romania

Men and women should have different roles within a society

Men and women should have equal rights and positions in society.

Conflicts are solved by aggressive means

Conflicts are solved by negotiation.

Achievement, money and career are the most important for a men's life

Family, relationship and quality of life are the most important in life for a man.

Uncertainty avoidance index:

For UAI dimension, Romania (90) has higher index than UK (35). It means that in UK, the society is less concerned about uncertainty and ambiguity and tends to tolerate experimentation and variety.

UK

Romania

Because of immigration, the population is varied.

Populations in Romania is not to multicultural.

Decision means risk

Risks are usually avoided in decision making process

Usually innovations and experiments are tolerated and even encouraged

Concepts and innovative ideas are difficult to be embraced.

Power distance - the score reveals that inequalities, rank and status between people are predominantly low for British people. There are different ways of legislation to protect ethnic minorities on macro level, and on micro level, the relationships between the tutors and students are casual and involves little ceremony.

Individualism - Nancy J. A (1997, p. 25) noted that " British people are individualistic; they use personal characteristics and achievements to define themselves, and they value individual welfare over that of the group". On macro level, the predominant form of social structure in UK in the nuclear

family. On micro level, in different environment, individuals tend to be more concerned of themselves rather than the group.

Uncertainty avoidance - By uncertainty avoidance we understand that British people embraces changes and taking risks. On macro level, there are frequently revisions and changes in laws and governments structures. On micro level, any new ideas and even disagreements between students and tutor can be considered useful.

Masculinity - British society is considered for equality between sexes, yet still exists in some part of society a certain amount of gender bias, where males are "addicted to old boy network" (Guirdham, pp. 558-28).

PEST ANALISYS

Macro environment factors can be considered as having as much importance as the culture, due to its impact on daily basis activity for students.

PEST analysis is the best tool to reveal these macro environments factors for a certain country. It's of real use to know about the political, economical, socio-cultural, technological, as these can be different from the country the student is coming from.

Political

UK is a constitutional monarchy country. They have an established monarch, which currently is Queen Elizabeth II with limited powers and impartial political views. The Government or the Executive runs the country, with the responsibility for developing and implementing laws and policies. The head

of the Government, the Prime Minister Gordon Brown, appoints ministers, the Cabinet and the people who work in a government department.

There is a diplomatic relation between Romania and UK since 20th February 1880, two years after Romania gained its Independence, and since 2003 there has been established a Strategic Partnership.

Education is a higher concern for British government. It is in responsibility of “ Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families” and “ Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills”; the administration and funding of state educational institutions are in the responsibility of Local Authorities. Some of the top universities like University of Oxford, University of Cambridge, Imperial College of London are in UK and they are ranked among top 10 universities in the world.

The government encourages all teenagers to attend all levels of education, by providing loans, infrastructure, technical, physical and emotional support. These encouragements are applied for both home and foreign students.

Students from Romania have the same rights as home students. First of all, there is no need of student visa or a limited period of time to stay and live in the UK and secondly, the tuition fees are the same as for home students.

As far as the work permit policy there are some restrictions for EU and international students. They are allowed to work 20 hours per week during their term period, and a full time schedule during holidays or when the course meets certain full time work requirements. For Romanian and Bulgarian students there has to be issued a work permit card called “ Yellow

Card” which gives them the equal rights to work as the other students. This “Yellow card” is issued by the Home Office within six weeks.

The National Insurance Number, without which the EU/International students cannot work, is provided by HM Revenue and Customs department and it’s useful to get certain benefits in case of need, and to get a state pension.

Unlike British students, Romanian students have to book an appointment at one of the Job Centre Plus in order to obtain the NIN.

As an employment policy, British government has a flexible and open approach to attract highly skilled workers. In every British company there has to be a number of foreign or different cultural background employees, in concordance with country’s racial issue rules. So it is encouraged the employment of foreign graduate students, which is a great opportunity for any graduate to experience what they have learnt during their studies in a great country like UK.

Economical

By GDP (growth domestic product), United Kingdom’s economy is the fifth largest economy in the world, and the sixth largest by PPP (purchasing power parity), estimated to be \$2. 279 trillion. In Europe, UK is the second largest economy after Germany,

The inflation in UK is low, unlike other EU countries. In October 2009, the CPI annual inflation was 1. 5%, the Governments target for 2009. The unemployment rate rose by 0. 1% in the last year, reaching 7. 8% (2. 46 million) of the population workforce.

When it comes to higher educational institutions, to pay the tuition fees is one of the biggest issues faced by the students. There are a lot of encouragements for both home and EU students, especially in terms of financial support. The British government encourages and supports all the teenagers to continue their studies in order to obtain higher degrees like Bachelor, Masters and PhD.

Yearly, they are offering huge funds to sustain students to follow their career and to develop themselves. Nearly 50% of the college students are receiving economic help from sources different from their families. In forms of scholarships, grants and loans, everybody can achieve a higher education degree even if their budget does to allow doing so.

For undergraduate full time courses, British students are granted with financial support up to £2906 for tuition fees, without paying it back, and up to £4950 for living expenses. For Master degree or PhD, they can apply for a Career Development Loan with special interest rates. Unlike British students, Romanian students benefit of the British Government student loan, but they have to repay it back either in 10 years with an interest which is equal inflation rate, or when they will earn wages more than £1250/month or £288/week. If they will earn less than the thresholds that applies for them, than they will never have to pay it back.

Yearly British universities inject huge amounts of resources into research, development, learning facilities, accommodation in order to offer for the students the best environment for their studies.

Students are treated different from the rest of the people in the UK. They are granted discounts at the most of the shopping stores, transportation, party clubs, fitness clubs and cinemas.

Social

British people are kind and hospitable people. That's the reason why in UK there are concentrated so many different cultures. UK is a great country to live and study in because the population is formed of different nationalities and cultural backgrounds. In 2008 census, in the UK the population was 61.4 million people. The ethnic groups are formed of 92% white race, 2% black, 1.8% Indian, 1.3% Pakistan, 0.4% Chinese and 0.4 Other Asians.

The language is British English, in origin a West Germanic language descended from Old English with some borrowing from French, Latin and Old Norse. Nowadays, English is the international business language, and in many countries it's the most taught second language. Beside this, due to the big number of ethnic communities, there are spoken many other languages like Hindi (Indian), Urdu (Pakistan), Chinese, Polish, etc.

For Romanian students it's a great environment to live and study in, because of this mixed culture they will accustom in a short period of time. Some of them will join their compatriots and some others will mix among their new international friends. It's a great place to make new friends, learn new cultures and languages, taste new dishes and so many other interesting activities to part. Most of the universities offer for their students the possibility to join sport teams and practice their favourite sports at one of the

partner sports centres. UK is well known for their diversity in sports: football, cricket, tennis, golf, rugby and horsemanship.

During their study there are organized different social activities among students, mostly for socializing: making new friends, trips to different places and countries, traditional evening parties, disco parties, and they are given possibility to create groups and communities like Indian community, Pakistan community.

Christianity is the main religion in United Kingdom. After the 2001 census, 71.6% of the interrogated population said they are Christian, 15.1% they have no religion, 2.8% Islam, 1.0% Hinduism, 0.5% Judaism and 0.3% Buddhism. Romanians are most Christian Orthodox, but definitely there will be no problems regarding the religion in the UK.

Wherever you go, you will be able to find churches, chapels, cathedrals, chapels of ease, mosque, temples and synagogues. There are significant numbers of schools and universities which had been founded as faith schools and bear Christian names like St. Mary, St. John. So religion has strong connection with education in the UK.

The health insurance for the both home and EU students is free during their study period. They just have to complete the HC1 form and send it to UK Health Department along with the required documentation. A lot of medical expenses can be claimed with the HC1 form.

Technological

United Kingdom is one of the most advanced countries in technology. Most of the people have access to different kind of technology like satellite cable system, high internet connection and telecommunication. All the universities are well equipped with technology. In every university there are available for students thousands of personal computers, high internet connection within the university area, projectors in every classrooms and social learning areas, special equipment for specialized courses like Media, Arts and Computer Science.

The infrastructure in UK is highly developed. The transportation system is one of the most sophisticated in the world. Across the UK there is a 46904 km of radial road network, with 3497 km of motorway network. The rail network covers 16116 km assuring connection with all the villages and cities across UK. Heathrow Airport is the UK's biggest international airport and has de most international passenger traffic of any airport worldwide. From Romanian there are direct flights with air companies like Wizzair, Blue Air, British Airways arriving in major airports like Stansted, Luton, Manchester, etc.

For the students coming from Romania, the transportation system in the UK will be different. They have to drive on the left side of the road. It can be really confusing for them because they are coming from right side driving country; for crossing the street they have to look first on your right side rather than the left, and if they're driving they have to be really careful. In case of visiting the downtown of major cities with a car, everybody has to

pay a certain amount of money. This measure is to prevent traffic jams and pollution in the same time.

British “ Double Decker” buses are famous in the world. If you are going to visit cities like London, Manchester, Leeds you will certainly have the pleasure to have a trip with these famous buses.

Students are granted discounts for all main of transportation: buses, trams and rails. In UK transportation is feasible. At every station there are schedules for buses, trams and trains.

Solutions and recommendations

Comparing Romania and UK by cultural background as well on PEST analysis point of views there can be highlighted some differences that have been discussed during the study case. Obviously, Romania is coming from forty years of communist regime, but still the majority of the population has managed to overcome the transition period. Especially for the youngsters, coming in the UK and living and studying here will not be a huge difference for them.

UK is known to be a very expensive country to live in. The currency used in UK is Pound Sterling. It's the most valuable monetary in the world. As well London it's the most expensive city in the UK. Here the rent, the food and transportation is a bit higher than the other cities.

For Romanian students coming here to study, our recommendation would be to apply for the student loan in order to reduce their costs of living; and a university accommodation at least for the first year. Than by knowing and

making new friends they can share together an apartment in the city where they are studying. Once they have a part time job, their income-expense account will be balanced.

In the UK the weather is different from many other countries. It can be a beautiful day but after just couple of hours it can be a showery rain. It rains frequently, the most of the days are foggy, and all the time people feel the humidity. Romanian students might find it disturbing till they'll accustom with it, because in Romania, summers are sunny and beautiful. They need to have rain coats and good umbrellas.

As well the transportation system is different from the one in Romania. In UK you drive on the right side, unlike Romania, on the left. Romanian students have to be aware of this, learn the traffic signs and be informed of all these before their arrival in the UK.

Because in the UK there are studying many students from all over the world, Romanian students have to be friendly, sociable and tolerant with the other communities. Romanians are very open-minded people, but in socializing with the foreign students, especially from middle orient and Asia they have to be aware of their behaviour in order not to offend or criticize them unconsciously.

UK is well known as being one the best beer producers in the world. British people enjoy having fun: they spend often their nights at pubs and disco clubs. Sometimes some of them might consume alcohol more than necessary. Romanian students have to be 100% devoted to their studies, and whenever they're going out with friends be aware of their limitations.

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If there are problems in their school or life, there is always a department to assist Romanian students, and if it's beyond their authority, they can easily address to one of the Romanian consulates and even Romanian Embassy in London.

Conclusion

We are sure that Romanian students will enjoy their life in UK. British lifestyle will suit them perfectly. They have the opportunity to apply for one of the best universities in the world and develop their skills which will help them in their future careers. After all, Romania is an European country as UK, so there are many similarities in culture, environment and people.

Our institute helped many other educational institutions from all over the world to assist the students and we can proudly speak that those students who came in the UK are perfectly accustomed with almost everything that they have encountered.

We are sure that our relation will be a positive one, and together we will try to create and develop a new opportunity for all the Romanian students who wish to study in the UK.