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Interview Robert Uzună, President of the British Romanian Chamber of Commerce – Dimineți cu Soare, Radio România Actualități – Saturday, March 14

Our guest for this edition is the President of the **British Romanian Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Robert Uzună**. As I said earlier, we chased him for a long time and, finally, the third invitation was lucky. We have him live with us and we greet him and thank him.

Good morning, Mr. Uzună.

Good morning, Mr. Soare, good morning to you and to the listeners of **Radio România Actualități**.

I have taken two headlines that I would like you to confirm, comment on, or deny: Trade relations between Romania and the United Kingdom have increased by 6.4% compared to the previous year, and Romania exports more to the UK than it imports.

Yes, indeed, you pointed out the good news very well. In an international context that at the moment does not necessarily provide many reasons for optimism, I would say that if we look at the evolution of trade and investments between Romania and the United Kingdom, things look better than the stories we usually discuss.

From the perspective of trade exchanges, Romania indeed exports more to the UK than it imports. We are recording a significant trade surplus, almost more than twice the value of British exports to Romania.

Even though things look like this and the figures are encouraging, with a total of £7.2 billion, Romania is still only the 32nd trading partner of the United Kingdom, which represents about 0.5% of the UK's total trade.

This shows that there is still significant potential for developing the economic relationship.

On the other hand, we also have good news: British investments in Romania remain relevant, with a total stock of £752 million at the end of 2024, according to the most recent data.

I would also add one more point: Romanian investments in the UK are also increasing, reaching £300 million, which by the end of 2024 represented a 22% increase compared to 2023.

Even though the figures are dry and somewhat difficult to remember, the overall status can be summarized as follows: the economic relationship is dynamic, bidirectional, and there is room for new investments and trade partnerships despite the effects of Brexit.

Mr. Robert Uzună, forgive my curiosity, but what exactly do we export to them that they like so much?



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Yes, that is the question we receive most often, precisely because of this reality I mentioned earlier, which is rather unusual in a relationship with a Western European economic power.

First of all, Romania's number one export product is the automotive sector, amounting to £1.2 billion.

Surprisingly, beverages and tobacco come immediately after that. A simple explanation might be that Romania hosts some very large companies in these industries, especially in tobacco, where we have manufacturing plants and therefore function as an export platform.

Our exports continue with industrial machinery, worth almost £400 million, as well as electrical equipment and commercial vehicles, which are closely related to the automotive sector.

In terms of services, things are a bit unbalanced. As the UK is well known for the large share of services in its GDP, we see that services grow faster than trade in goods.

For the British, exports are more balanced between goods and services, but services are growing almost twice as fast as goods.

The conclusion here is that the dynamics of services indicate a structural shift in the relationship between our countries, with growing opportunities in areas such as professional services, information technology, and consulting.

Speaking about the UK's industrial strategy, Mr. Robert Uzună, I understand it includes nine key sectors. My question is: could this strategy of Great Britain somehow include Romania as a player and help us move up from the 34th position where we currently stand?

There are two important things to highlight here for Romania, the United Kingdom, and Europe as a whole.

In the current complicated geopolitical context, we tend to become pessimistic. In reality, these are moments when we should build long-term plans and multiple scenarios, even if they do not always start from optimistic assumptions.

The industrial strategy adopted by the UK in 2025 could also be a model for Romania.

They defined nine priority sectors, which say a lot about the direction the country wants to follow in the coming years: advanced manufacturing – from manufacturing and the automotive industry to aerospace technology, agriculture and agritech, combined with industries they define as critical, such as minerals, steel – just remember that in the 80s they closed steel factories - chemicals, composites, and ports. The strategy continues with the creative industries, followed by biopharmaceuticals and medical technology, clean energy,



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digital and information technology, professional and business services, financial services, defense, where there is already very close cooperation with Romania.

From this strategy, the UK has already identified four areas where they see strong potential for trade relations with Romania: clean energy, digital and IT, foundational industries and industrial raw materials, and defense.

This industrial strategy could indeed serve as a model for us. I saw a week or two a documentary around China's development strategy and its reshape, and it also comprised of 5-6 pillars. They were slightly different, but there are countries of other dimensions, it doesn't mean that the models can't be inspiring. Mr. Uzună, you have been leading the British Romanian Chamber of Commerce for about a year now, and you recently attended a business forum in Manchester. What was it about?

The beauty of this strategy, and the fact that the digital and IT sector is a priority both for the UK and Romania, allows us to build initiatives in exactly this direction. Together with the Romanian Embassy in London and the Romanian Consulate General in Manchester, we organized an economic mission and business forum focused on IT on February 4th this year. Our goal was to obtain guidance on accessing the UK market and developing operations there, and also to demonstrate that there is business life outside London. With the support of local partners, industrial associations, and chambers of commerce, we sought access to this market. We observed a coordinated effort by both governmental and non-governmental entities, which is absolutely commendable. From our side, the Romanian companies that participated promoted Romania as a competitive investment destination in the technology sector, while also showing that European and national funding opportunities exist, including through the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR). Interestingly, the delegation's visit to Manchester also included a meeting with the management of Manchester City Football Club, where they presented their integrated sports business model, which has been extremely successful economically and could also represent a model of good practice for Romania. We always talk about athletic performance, behind sports performance, there is always an impressive economic machine.

I agree with you – another model considered successful in the past 10 years is the one of Paris-Saint Germain, which won the Champions League after 13 years of huge investment. You know very well, I know you are also passionate about football. At one point, when they brought Messi and spent a lot for 2 years everyone said it was a sporting failure. In fact, it was a success from all points of view, including financial, not only as an image and so on. It was at Manchester City. Very nice. It's great you were there before this week's match with Real Madrid, but finally, Mr. Uzună, what is it like doing business with the British after Brexit? Was it easier before?



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That is probably the 1,000-point question. Despite some small difficulties related to digital registrations, visits, or visas in certain cases, which fortunately affect EU citizens much less, things are beginning to recover after an initial slowdown. Successive British governments have tried to implement strategies to overcome the slowdown caused by Brexit. What participants at the Manchester Business Forum and our members working with British partners have emphasized is that the UK can be used as a launch platform for the entire Anglo-Saxon business world. From North America (Canada and the United States) to Australia and New Zealand, there are major opportunities. In other words, the UK can serve as a global business platform for companies that want to expand into these English-speaking markets. The key is to be realistic, understand the market, and be willing to compete with the best.

This makes me remember what you were saying at one point, regardless of geopolitical premises and so on. The most important thing is to be realistic, to know the market and to really want to play and see the best. Thank you for being on the show. I hope we made it a pleasant Saturday. We finally found each other, and I hope we will find each other again.

Thank you very much, dear, once again congratulations on the show and thank you and the listeners.

Mr. Robert Uzună, President of the British Romanian Chamber of Commerce, was with us today. Thank you for joining us.