

Perceptions of good governance in Romania through statistical indicators

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Abstract

Good governance represents one of the current and critical issues of the central and local government. Over the last 15 years, concerns for the definition and characterization in statistical terms of the concept of good governance, both in terms of quantity but especially quality, have increased.

After a brief introduction of the concept of good governance and of the key statistical indicators used at global and European level to characterize it, we performed an analysis of one of the most common sets of indicators in this respect, namely good governance indicators within the system of indicators of sustainable development of EUROSTAT.

Thus, we presented good governance indicators for Romania, highlighting our country's position towards the European Union and the other member states, as well as trends recorded over the years.

Keywords: *good governance, concept, public administration, statistical indicators, qualitative indicators, quantitative indicators, tendencies.*

1. Introduction

Good governance is a concept widely accepted today in this formulation, which in the last 15 years has been the subject of numerous studies, researches, debates, both nationally and globally. Concerns were aimed at the most clearer, accurate, comprehensive defining of this concept and at identifying the quantitative and qualitative statistical indicators that characterize it and highlight the recorded level and progress from different perspectives.

Although there have been approaches of the relationship between governance and economic development since the 80's, emphasizing this issue in the most relevant manner, especially in terms of quality, represents today a current topic, widely discussed and approached [1].

Over time, it turned out that a good governance doesn't just mean economic development; this concept is more complex, directly targeting many more fields than the economic one.

Moreover, good governance represents now one of the major current issues of local and public central administration, as it is basically the key to the smooth functioning of society and the governmental bodies are directly involved in this process, at least in terms of public governance.

In the following we shall define in terms as succinct as possible the concept of good governance and what are the global and European guidelines in terms of statistical characterization of this concept.

2. Defining good governance and its statistical approaches

As mentioned above, the concept of good governance is a particularly complex one, which does not only point to the obvious relationship between governance and economic development, but also to the relationship between governance and the environment, and between government and society.

Discussing in terms of public administration, of government, good governance refers to public governance. Otherwise, in this paper we will approach good governance issues from this perspective.

Specifically, there is no actual dedicated definition of good governance, it can be defined by its characteristic traits. Based on these features, various systems of indicators were outlined for assessing good governance, indicators that consider approaching issues from all involved and concerned sectors: civil society, political society, government, bureaucracy, economic society, judiciary system, etc.

Statistically, several systems of indicators were outlined on a global level, aiming towards good governance from different perspectives.[2] In the following, we will briefly present a few statistical approaches of good governance in terms of punctual indicators and not of synthetic, aggregate indicators.

Therefore, we can discuss about the system of indicators of the United Nations, presented in the Human Development Report 2003, Millennium Development Goals, in which, referring to a good governance, in the context of sustainable development, the focus is on:

- participation;
- transparency;

- consensus;
- efficiency and effectiveness;
- equitability and inclusiveness;
- responsibility;
- capacity of response;
- rule of law.

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) also uses a system of statistical indicators that includes the indicators of good governance, covering the following aspects:

- public incomes and expenditures;
- innovation in public system;
- e-government;
- combating corruption in public system;
- public finances;
- regional management;
- legislation;
- management of the risk.

The European system of indicators of good governance, included by EUROSTAT in the set of sustainable development indicators, refers to the following categories [3]:

- effectiveness and policy coherence;
- openness and participation;
- economic instruments.

Specifically, there is a total of six indicators that are concordant with the principles of Sustainable Development Strategy of the European Union (EU SDS), a strategy that aims to promote coherence between actions undertaken locally, regionally, nationally and globally, to enhance their contribution to the sustainable development.

By detail, the set of indicators of good governance of EUROSTAT are as follows:

- effectiveness and policy coherence:
 - New infringement cases;
 - Transposition deficit;
 - Level of citizens' confidence in EU institutions.

- openness and participation:
 - Voter turnout in national and EU parliamentary elections;
 - E-government usage by individuals.
- economic instruments:
 - Shares of environmental and labour taxes in total tax revenues from taxes and social contributions.

The EUROSTAT indicators, which will be further detailed and presented, provide an assessment and monitoring of changes in good governance, both at EU level and at level of each Member State.

3. Trends in the development of statistical indicators for assessing good governance in Romania

As previously mentioned, the activity of the Government, of all local and public central administration authorities, can be statistically assessed through a set of indicators that fall within the principles and objectives of the Sustainable Development Strategy of the European Union [4], in Theme 10, "Good Governance".

These were designed to characterize coherent and effective public policies, the opening of citizens towards the authorities and their participation in government, as well as the economic instruments used by authorities for proper management of environmental and taxation issues.

There are three indicators in the set of indicators that refer to the coherence and efficiency of public policies, namely *New infringement cases*, *Transposition deficit* and *Level of citizens' confidence in EU institutions*.

The first indicator, *New infringement cases*, illustrates new cases of infringement brought before the European Court of Justice, in the event that a State has not reached the established deadline for implementing of EU laws.

For Romania, in the period 2007 - 2012 there was a single penalty registered in this respect, in 2009, counting us among the countries with the fewest penalties.

The second indicator, *Transposition deficit* illustrates the percentage of Directives that have not been notified to the European Commission, from the total of the Single Market Directives that had to be notified within a certain period (Table 1).

Transposition deficit is an indicator that illustrates the coherence of EU policies with those of Member States.

In most cases, Romania was below the level of the European Union and more importantly, below 1%, set as target in 2007 by the European Council.

Table no.1

The evolution of indicator “Transposition deficit” in Romania and European Union between 2007 and 2012

- % -

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
EU (27 countries)	1.2	1.0	0.7	0.9	1.2	0.6
Romania	0.8	0.4	0.3	0.5	1.2	0.4

Data source: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/sdi/indicators/good-governance>

Regarding the third indicator, *Level of citizens' confidence in EU institutions*, this represents a contextual indicator, designed to characterize, along with the other two indicators presented above, the coherence and effectiveness of the public policies. The benchmark of this indicator is achieved within the Eurobarometer research that has been bi-annually carried out since 1973, to monitor public opinion in EU member states.

Table no.2

The evolution of indicator “Level of citizens' confidence in EU institutions in Romania and European Union, between 2004 and 2013

%

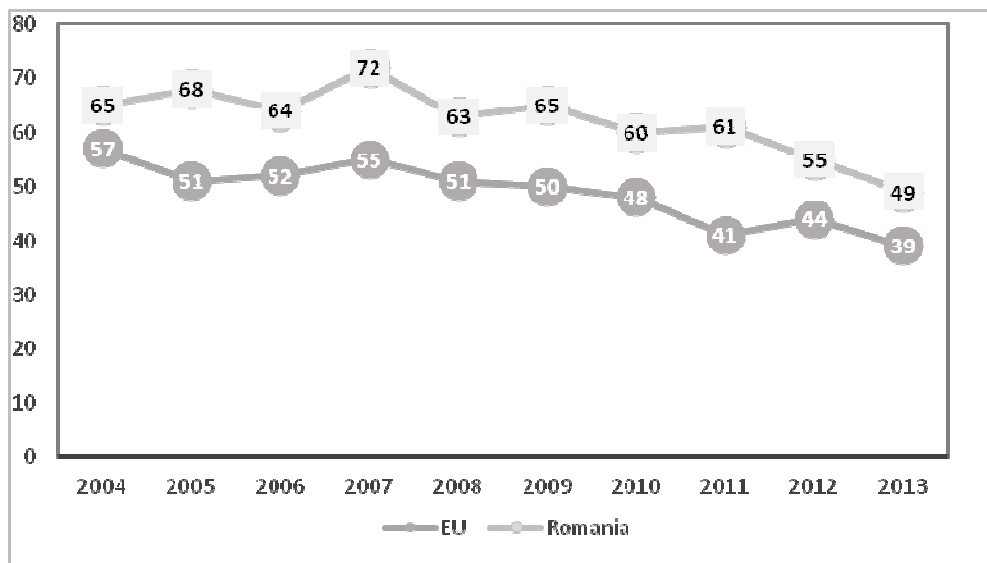
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
EU (changing composition)	57	51	52	55	51	50	48	41	44	39
Romania	65	68	64	72	63	65	60	61	55	49

Data source: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/sdi/indicators/good-governance>

The data reveals two important aspects: on one hand, the trend of decreasing of the citizens' confidence in EU institutions, both at EU level and at Romania's level, and on the other hand, the higher level of confidence in Romania compared to the European level.

Figure no.1

The evolution of indicator "Level of citizens' confidence in EU institutions in Romania and European Union, between 2004 and 2013 (%)



Data source: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/sdi/indicators/good-governance>

The citizens of Denmark (60%) and Hungary (58%) possess the highest confidence in EU institutions, while the citizens of Great Britain have the lowest confidence (20%).

In the set of indicators that refer to the openness and participation of citizens in the decision-making process, there are two indicators, namely the *Voter turnout in national and EU parliamentary elections* and *E-government usage by individuals*.

The *Voter turnout* indicator refers to the presence of citizens who have the right to vote in national, parliamentary, presidential and European parliament elections.

Table no.3

The evolution of indicator “Voter turnout in national and EU parliamentary elections” in Romania and European Union, between 1992 and 2012

%

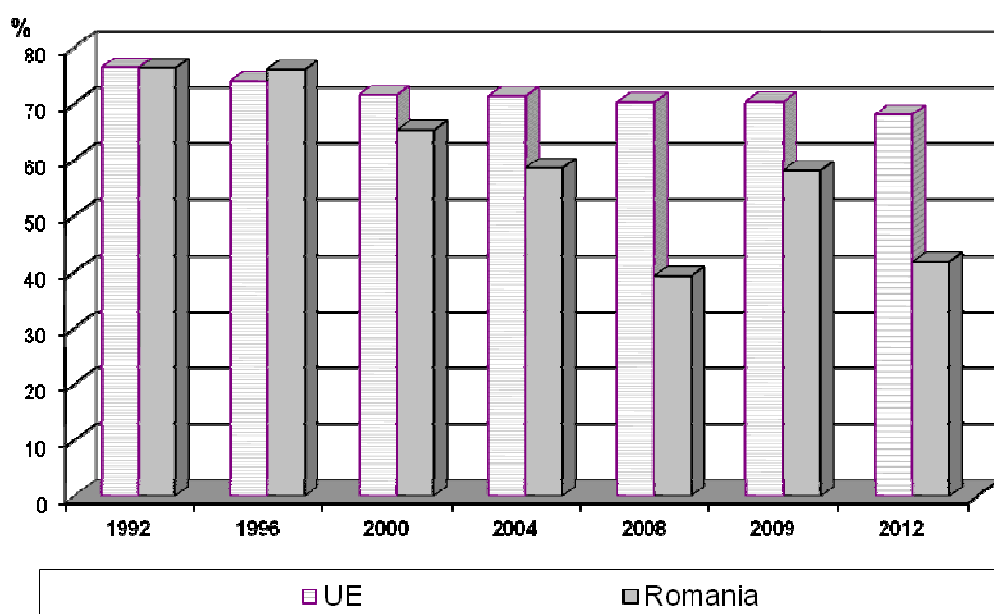
	1992	1996	2000	2004	2008	2009	2012
EU (28 countries)	76.4	74.0	71.5	71.3	70.2	70.3	68.0
Romania	76.3	76.0	65.3	58.5	39.2	58.0	41.8

Data source: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/sdi/indicators/good-governance>

The data presents a negative trend of the citizens' presence to vote, both at EU level and in the case of Romania, which raises questions related to good governance and the reasons why, especially in Romania, voter turnout is drastically and alertly reduced, ranking us among the countries with the lowest turnout, along with Lithuania (35.9% in the last election) and Switzerland (41.8%).

Figure no.2

The evolution of indicator “Voter turnout in national and EU parliamentary elections” in Romania and European Union, between 1992 and 2012 (%)



Data source: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/sdi/indicators/good-governance>

Throughout the analysed period (figure no. 2), the lowest turnout for Romania was recorded in 2008 (39.2%).

Regarding the other indicator *E-government usage by individuals*, which characterizes the use of Internet by citizens in interacting with public authorities, the situation in the European Union and Romania for the period 2006 - 2010 is presented in table 4:

Table no.4

The evolution of indicator “E-government usage by individuals” in Romania and European Union, between 2006 and 2010

- % -

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
EU (28 countries)	:	29	28	29	31
Romania	3	5	9	6	7

Data source: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/sdi/indicators/good-governance>

: not available

Data presented in table 4 highlight not only the extremely low percentage of individuals aged between 16 and 74 who use the Internet to interact with public authorities in Romania, compared to the level registered in the European Union, but also the inappropriate evolution.

Unfortunately, Romania is ranked last in this regard, within the EU member states.

From the point of view of economic instruments used by authorities to ensure economic stability, good governance is assessed through the Shares of environmental and labour taxes in total tax revenues from taxes and social contributions (Table no. 5).

Environmental taxes, according to EUROSTAT [5] methodology, have a physical unit as taxation base, which has a negative impact on the environment and comprise the energy fees (which represent 75% of the total), the transport fees (15%) and the pollution and resources fees (about 4%).

Labour taxes are personal income taxes, social contributions of employees and employers, of people who live from work, whether employed or not.

Table no.5

The evolution of indicator “Shares of environmental and labour taxes in total tax revenues from taxes and social contributions” in Romania and European Union, between 2006 and 2010

- % -

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
EU (28 countries)	6.00	6.32	6.34	6.35	6.31	:
Romania	6.33	6.97	7.50	6.77	6.83	7.14

Data source: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/sdi/indicators/good-governance>

: not available

The share of environmental and labour taxes and the total revenue from environmental taxes and social contributions in Romania is very close to the average level of the European Union. The highest share is recorded in Bulgaria (10.21% in 2013) and the lowest rate in France (4.47%).

4. Conclusions

Although the number of EUROSTAT indicators used to characterize good governance from the sustainable development's point of view is small, their relevance to this topic is very high. Basically, the most significant indicators that refer directly to good governance and its impact on citizens were chosen.

Through these indicators analysed in this paper, a series of different positive and negative aspects on good governance in Romania have resulted

Thus, in terms of new infringement cases brought before the European Court of Justice and of the Single Market Directives that have not been notified on time within the European Commission, things went in a good direction for Romania, both as evolution and as comparison to other countries.

Voter turnout, however, registered a steady decline, today Romania finds itself among the countries with the lowest turnout, which demonstrates that Romanians distrust in political parties and public authorities. Romanians' mistrust is also signalled in

regarding the EU institutions. Even if, in comparison to other EU countries, Romanians have a higher level of trust in the EU institutions, it has declined in the last years.

Neither in terms of Internet usage by citizens in relations with public authorities, Romania does not have a good situation and although there was recorded a very slight increase in time, we are still last, compared to other Member States.

In conclusion, although our country has made some progress in terms of good governance, the impact on citizens and their perception are far from the possibility to really discuss about good governance in Romania, at least today.

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