

INFLUENCE, PERSUASION, INFLUENCE PEDDLING, LOBBY AND DECISION TRANSPARENCY IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

Alexandra-Violeta GHEORGHIU¹, Vasile ROMAN², Irina PETRUCA¹

¹Lecturer, PhD, "Apollonia" University of Iași, Romania

²Associate Professor, PhD, "Apollonia" University of Iași, Romania

Corresponding author: Alexandra-Violeta Gheorghiu; e-mail: violeta_gheorghiu@yahoo.com

Abstract

Citizens have long had a contentious history with public institutions that failed to meet expectations for basic requirements. It has been proven that the general public reacts according to institutional performance: those that perform well are likely to elicit confidence and trust, those that perform poorly or ineffectively are regarded with distrust and low confidence. Consequently, they are demanding more and more transparency and accountability from the public administration. Thus, new forms of participation appear as citizens, but also different economic and social entities, seek ways to be actively involved in the decision-making process of the public institutions which affect their existence. In order to have minimum certainty regarding the fact that the decisions of public, legislative or executive institutions, and also the functioning of the private sector, are made in a transparent framework, fair for any actor, it is necessary for the influence process to be regulated and transparent, ensuring the unrestricted access of any entity and eliminating the suspicion of corruption and influence peddling.

Keywords: *corruption, crisis, influence, public institution, transparency.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Democracy, regardless of criticism, is the most useful form of social organization. The essence of modern democracy, which relies on respect for human rights (equality before the law, the right to free speech), multipartyism (which includes the right to vote and to be elected), limitation and separation of powers (legislative, executive, judicial and, more recently, the power of the media) and the market economy, provide the legal, regulated and functional framework for the voice of the people to be heard.

The ever-changing democratic society, given both the technological process and the need to maintain the balance between public and private interest, determines the emergence of new entities which, in turn, require specific regulations

so as not to excessively interfere with influencing some decisions of public institutions.

The legislature, in fact a construction determined by the desire of the society, establishes the legal framework for maintaining a social balance. Nevertheless, it is influenced by the expectations of the voter, the wishes of the executive, but also by the arguments coming from these entities, and also from private economic entities, or non-governmental organizations that, whether we like it or not, become important actors in the regulation of the socio-economic life.

In order to have a minimum certainty regarding the fact that decisions of the public, legislative or executive institutions, and also the functioning of the private sector, are made in a transparent framework, fair for any actor, it is necessary for the influence process to be regulated and transparent, ensuring the unrestricted access of any entity and eliminating the suspicion of corruption and influence peddling.

2. DEFINITIONS AND SCOPE OF APPLICATION

Influence is defined as the ability to achieve goals by changing the perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, opinions, decisions, statements, and behaviours of others (REBER & BERGER, 2005).

Influence is an intentional act through which an individual tries to make another individual or group to think or perform an action that he alone would not have thought or accomplished. The meanings given to influence, in everyday discourse, are both negative and positive. In a negative sense, influence is perceived as

manipulation, intended to deceive, an influence based on a lack of scruples, and in a positive sense, the influence is given the quality to sanction and limit the inefficiency and ambiguity of rules, due to the prestige of the influencer.

Persuasion can be defined as an activity of influencing peoples' attitudes and behaviours in order to produce those changes that are consistent with the purposes or interests of the initiating agency (individuals, groups, political, social, cultural, commercial, etc., institution or organization) (RĂDULESCU, 2009).

Persuasion is essential to the other person's feeling that he has understood what is being said to him, that he has integrated the motivations for change, and that subsequent decisions belong entirely to him, without any outside interferences. The main idea is that all human activity ends with a material or spiritual product, and that the product represents a new attitude (as a motivational force) and, consequently, a new behaviour (as a specific activity) of the various types of target audience. The suggested determination is a consequence of the attitude-behaviour convergence.

The power of persuasion is multiplied by the use of inducements, as advantages or benefits that precipitate a particular action on the part of an individual. Trading in influence, is an act punishable by imprisonment from 2 to 7 years, according to the Romanian Criminal Code, and implies the claiming, receiving or accepting the promise of money or of other benefits, directly or indirectly, for oneself or for another, committed by a person who has influence or is believed to have influence over a civil servant and who promises to cause him to perform, not to perform, to hasten or delay the performance of an act which falls within his duties or to perform an act contrary to these duties (NEW UPDATED CRIMINAL CODE, 2020).

According to the legal doctrine, for the crime of influence peddling, the perpetrator voluntarily commits the action specific to its material element, knows from the beginning that the benefits he receives, claims or whose promise he accepts, is the value assessment of his influence, real or presumed, on an official, whom he would determine to do or not to do an act of his office, based precisely on his influence (ROMANIAN

LOBBY REGISTRY ASSOCIATION, 2021). The volitional act under the rule of which the deed is committed, consisting in any of the specified activities, is preceded, however, by an act of conscience, by a certain psychic attitude towards the deed and its result.

Lobbying involves the activity of a group (or person) that seeks to determine the legislative or executive power to adopt a position or take a decision that serves the legitimate interests of that group. Through the lobbying activity, the decision-makers, the parliamentarians, the representatives of the central and local public administration, etc., can benefit, via these groups, from the expertise, valuable insights and data of various specialists in different fields (IRIMIEȘ, 2015).

Lobbying should be understood as a transparent way of influencing legislative and executive decisions through actions aimed at upholding the legitimate, individual or community rights and interests of private institutions or entities in promoting, adopting, amending or repealing certain decisions and regulations by public authorities and institutions.

Lobbying is a direct or indirect influence on the formulation or implementation of legislation, regardless of how it is communicated, of outsourced entities, media sources, contacts of certain members, circulars or other forms of communicating information and promotion materials. These activities cover more than just influencing legislation and institutions, encompassing extensive actions, advocacy, government networking, all in a transparent and democratic framework (MANCIU & POSTELNICU, 2014).

Like any positive and somehow vital force in the democratic setting, it can also be a mechanism for powerful groups and individuals to put their mark on laws and regulations at the expense of the public interest that may result in undue influence, unfair competition, shadow dealings, to the detriment of effective policy making and, more often than not, with a long-lasting impact on the well-being and living standards of individuals and society as a whole (OECD, 2021). Assuming that a process of influencing decisions, in the interest of the citizen, is also marked by the interest of companies to ensure their existence on the market, in conjunction with the interests of the administrative decision-maker to remain

in the sphere of interest, sympathy and political success, it is necessary to add to the area of definitions and principles to be assumed by the parties, namely transparency, integrity, fair competition and equal access to the decision.

Decision-making transparency designates the set of tools by which the administration (local public administration institutions and authorities) accounts to citizens / taxpayers for their work and seeks to ensure wider access to information and documents held by state institutions, participation of citizens to the decision-making process and enforce the legitimacy, effectiveness and responsibility of the administration towards the citizen.

Transparency has the role of preventing actions that threaten public integrity (acts of corruption) and assessing the performance of local public administration (administrative capacity) and it represents the rule in all stages and procedures (preliminary, concomitant and subsequent) of the administrative decision, confidentiality being the exception that is limited to the information established by law due to the need to protect specific interests in the field of public safety, crime prevention, protection of currency and credit, privacy (ADMINISTRARE. INFO, 2019).

Integrity can be defined as the equal ratio between the cognitive approach to a need, its transformation into a comprehensive statement and then its manifestation in practical action. Although it seems a philosophical definition, the integrity of the administrative decision maker is the formula that seeks to avoid manipulating the citizen, through hidden purposes in statements and certifying that the basis for covering a need was not to defer to the interest of a company but the need itself (NATIONAL AGENCY OF CIVIL SERVANTS, 2011).

Analysing the principle of fair competition, one can conclude that it is respected when participants know and comply with the relevant rules in force of the state or of the European Union, regardless of their profile, state or private, and involves access to information equally, compliance with the conditions of compliant eligibility, together with common instruments and standards (VAUT, Schwäbe et al., 2018).

From the perspective of the legislator, which looks at the market economy, fair competition is given by the situation of market rivalry, in which each company tries to simultaneously obtain sales, profit and / or market share, offering the best practical combination of prices, quality and related services, in accordance with honest practices and the general principle of good faith (LAW 11/1991, 2014).

Equal access to the decision establishes the obligations of the public administration on how to notify, invite and accept the public or the organizations to the decision-making process (LAW 52/2003, 2013).

3. AN OPERATING FRAMEWORK OF ORGANIZATIONS

In direct connection with the evolution of the globalized and technological society, the standards of public participation at domestic and international level have constantly evolved. Citizens are demanding more and more transparency and accountability from the public administration. Thus, new forms of participation appear as citizens, but also different economic and social entities, seek ways to be actively involved in the decision-making of public institutions that affect their existence. In response, public administration has begun to show increasing openness and exploration of new ways to include citizens and civil society organizations in decision-making processes (OPAC, 2019a).

In Romania, too, in recent years, the trend is to increase interest in public participation, leading to a development of social dialogue and public consultation, since the 2000s, when the legislative framework governing public participation (information, consultation, transparency) appeared, due to the progress aimed at public administration reform, to the imposition of civil society and the need to align with European and international standards (OPAC, 2019b).

At present, however, the Romanian public institutions face a lack of trust. The general perception regarding them covers the lack of will, a low degree of structuring and efficiency

of public participation, the organization of public consultations that are considered mainly formal, the integration of organizations in the decision-making factor. From this perception of the dialogue's lack of authenticity, the rebuilding of trust in public institutions must start, and in this sense the regulations that are adopted at national level must capitalize on existing practices and, at the same time, create the framework for higher standards (Conference of INGO's of the Council of Europe, 2019).

Not infrequently, and in the context of the present COVID-19 pandemic we have the most recent examples, we have witnessed the involvement of companies and NGOs in helping public administration meet different needs or come up with proposals for various problems. At the beginning of the pandemic, civil society advanced some proposals, such as donations of equipment and visors, apps for the proximity of infected people, but for which no successful implementation solutions were found, as there was no state body mandated to manage and implement them.

It is true that the economic, social, medical and educational repercussions of the crisis caused by the pandemic are unprecedented, proving that there are situations that, even with all the forecasts and strategies, can take by surprise and even surpass the public administration capabilities. Decision-making and communication in the case of public institutions during the pandemic highlighted shortcomings and imposed ad-hoc solutions and also provided space for the awareness of change and adaptation. However, the fact that any crisis involves a certain solidarity of society, a sense of compassion for those at the forefront of the challenge, helps the image of public institutions in such times. When effort and good faith are observed in the context of the difficulty of a crisis situation, distrust can turn into trust, converting into an opportunity for institutions to regain, in a very short time, a favourable image, for which, in 'normal' times put a lot of effort (LINKS ASSOCIATES, 2021).

We note that the COVID-19 pandemic is itself a framework for improving public administration collaboration with NGOs and private companies and their inclusion in the decision-making

factor, leading to awareness of certain changes in public institutions as: increased transparency, integrity and openness to civil society, which will lead to higher trust in public institutions and greater availability on the part of organizations to collaborate; a more honest communication, based on owning possible mistakes or shortcomings; digitization of communication platforms, a field where organizations have shown superior skills; diminished bureaucracy; awareness of the importance of image capital; and continuous observance of the measures taken.

On the other hand, involvement in public administration decisions depends, to some extent, on the social responsibility of a company, an indispensable factor for sustainable development in a society with a global economy, also, in terms of the Romanian NGO sector, its dynamics is closely linked to the evolution of the legal, political, economic and social environment in which it operates. A participatory approach to the public policy-making process and the creation of an enabling environment for it are therefore absolutely necessary in the context of a democratic system, in which civil society is rightly valued and supported (DINU, GHINEA, CIUCU & ALBIȘTEANU, 2013).

4. DECISIONS OF PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS IN NEED OF INFLUENCING. THE NEED FOR REGULATIONS

COVID-19 public health crisis made, once more, abundantly clear that the Romanian public service system is poorly prepared to handle crisis situations, as it was the case, almost repeatedly, with natural disasters like floods or epizooties. Sure enough, the disturbing magnitude of the pandemic wave was probably one of the causes for the weak, insufficient, and often disconnected response of the institutional apparatus. However, the extent and novelty of the pandemic cannot solely be made responsible for the shortcomings in terms of efficient communication, remote problem solving or technological preparedness. A lack of public confidence and poor institutional performance paired with inadequate leadership

are, in any situation, poor prerequisites for successful crisis management. The operability of any public institution is hinging on formal laws, political commitment, and available resources. The Romanian context has brought grave transgressions against all three.

Faced with unpredictability and bureaucratic disturbance, the in-place mechanisms provided a weak response to citizens' problems. Of course, this does not equate with a previous stellar performance and high appraisals from satisfied 'clients'. Citizens have long had a contentious history with public institutions that failed to meet expectations for basic requirements. It has been proven that the general public reacts accordingly to institutional performance: those that perform well are likely to elicit confidence and trust, those that perform poorly or ineffectively are regarded with distrust and low confidence. That is to say that there is a long-standing, ingrained perception of Romanians, from decades of simulated reforms, incompetent leadership and management, and all-encompassing corruption, that eroded trust in public institutions and officials. A dissatisfied and disgruntled civil society denounced public institutions for their democratic shortcomings and staged large-scale street protests against corruption and abuse of power. Fallacies in the Romanian public sector were thoroughly detailed by academia (MITU & COMĂNESCU, 2019). Issues of incoherence, poor coordination, corruption and accountability have plagued the system for the better part of the post-communist era. We shall contextualize each, since every one of them has a specific impact on the institutional decision-making capacity.

Public organizations are newly created, replicated or merged in order to address new challenges or persistent societal problems. We shall now embark on an understanding quest on how public institutions see fit to meet their commitment to citizens and the reasons why so many of them fail to produce envisioned outputs. On an excursus to identify the chronic deficiencies associated with the public sphere systems, we set to surpass the clichéistic adage that public system inadequacies are often the consequences of a toxic mix consisting of power abuse and poor performance. The efficiency and

efficacy of a public institution is contingent on performance and also on its ability to absorb to new demands and adapt accordingly. When it comes to why public organizations typically underperform, we must consider the whole package of intimidating constraints that operate on the actual performance of public service system components, ranging from control deficiencies to budget shortages, from political unreasonabilities to bureaucratic pathologies, from media scrutiny to citizen censure.

A performative organization must respond to a double challenge: it must build an effective way of working while maintaining or gaining the support of its stakeholders. The way in which individuals view and experience their encounters with the state via its institutions proof of the state's functionality. Some very well-established studies have inquired whether or not there has been a visible erosion of public confidence in public institutions (NATIONAL AGENCY OF CIVIL SERVANTS, 2015; SOLÉ-OLLÉ & SORRIBAS-NAVARRO, 2014). Optimal performance, together with perceived or experienced levels of corruption determine whether or not distrust will emerge. Generally, the public vacillates between perceiving public institutions as milieu for corrupt practices proliferated at the expense of ordinary citizens, or as entities that stand out through lack of expertise, lack of capacity, and/or lack of resources. As a result, public institutions are expected to do nothing more than "muddle through" or are simply destined to fail. Overall, diminished trust and the perception of corruption interfere with the principle of efficient administration and endanger the stability of the institutions.

On the whole, the quality of governance is declining. World Bank's World Governance Indicators (WGI) that reports aggregate and individual governance indicators of six broad dimensions of governance for over 200 countries and territories ranked Romania for the year 2019 as follows: on the 'Voice and Accountability' scale at 61.58 out of 100; the 'Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism' indicator puts Romania at 65.24 out of 100; out of 100, it ranked 40.38 on the 'Government Effectiveness' scale; with the 'Regulatory Quality' indicator Romania

sored a 67.31 out of 100; the `Rule of Law` indicator registers a 51.44 out of 100; `Control of Corruption` indicator places Romania at a 64.42 out of 100 on the percentile rank (WORLD BANK, 2020). The Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI) that analyses and evaluates the quality of democracy, market economy and governance in 137 developing and transition countries, using a total of 17 criteria, places Romania, on the `Governance Index` at no 74, with a 4.85 score out of 10, registering thus a moderate improvement compared with the previous years; for `Economic Transformation`, Romania places as advanced at 18 of 137, with a 7.64 on a 1 to 10 scale; with a score of 7.64 out of 10, Romania registers as a defective democracy, ranking 22 on `Political Transformation` (BERTELSMANN STIFTUNG'S TRANSFORMATION INDEX, 2020). Despite strict guidance from international finance institutions and the European Union, Romania fails to implement reforms with lasting positive effects in key sectors such as energy, education, health care or management of state-owned enterprises. The reprehensible priorities of ruling elite directed towards recriminations and self-serving interests gave way to impossibly alarming stagnating or backtracking tendencies. Strategies do exist, in abundance really, but fail to make any realistic budget connections. The frequent replacement of ministers led to lack of follow-through on reforms and inconsistencies both in policy-making and in actual implementation. Laws are subject to hasty revisions, redacted with little consultation and without any preamble, followed by endless corrections once the changes become effective. This has led to a high degree of instability and unpredictability, especially in the taxation and regulatory regimes. Troublesome legacies are still present in its economic and social practices, though slowly fading. *De facto* access to state-provided services is sometimes subject to informal filters (social capital, informal payments, favouritism) or certain conditions, generally related to resources and budgetary reasoning. Uneven or discriminatory access to subsidized services and goods is visible throughout the system (BERTELSMANN STIFTUNG'S TRANSFORMATION INDEX, 2020).

As all former communist states, Romania went through several phases in dealing with corruption:

from denying its existence as a pervasive and rife phenomenon, through its acceptance and to mitigation and partial containment. With a score of 44 from 100, Romania consistently rates as one of the most corrupt European Union countries on the Corruption Perception Index (CPI), ranking on 69 from 180 countries/territories around the world for perceived levels of public sector corruption in 2020 (TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL, 2021). Drawing from World Bank's (1997) definition of corruption as abuse of entrusted power for private gain, we can list under the term's umbrella: bribery, receiving undue presents/advantages, embezzlement, theft, fraud, extortion and blackmail, favouritism, nepotism and clientelism, abuse and discretionary use of power, influence peddling, misappropriation of funds, trading in influence, laundering, concealment, participation and attempt, knowledge and intent, obstruction of justice. Broadly speaking, the act of corruption ranges from the misuse of public power to specific bribery involving a public servant and/or transfer of tangible resources. Depending on the reach of corruption, different levels can be identified, from high-level/grand corruption (political corruption) carried out by high-ranking officials or people in positions of authority that distort policies or the central functioning of the state, enabling them to benefit at the expense of the public good, to low-level/petty corruption (bureaucratic corruption) typically referring to everyday abuse of entrusted power by low- and mid-level public servants in their interactions with the average citizen trying to access basic goods or services. (JOHNSTON, 2005) Because interests of the corrupted differ, a classification of corrupted behaviours according to their end-game is also relevant. Mihaela V. Cărăușan (2005) compiled a list of five outcomes which applies to the corrupted: income increase, comprising corrupt actions with no other immediate effect than supplementing the income of the provider; information altering fees involving bribes that subvert the flow of true and complete information within a society or an economic unit (*i.e.* selling professional diplomas, certificates, or permits); acceleration or facilitation price entailing corrupted practices, whose sole outcome is to accelerate or facilitate decision making, the supply of goods and services or the leaking of information;

changing fees including pay-offs and promises of pay-offs which modify decisions or affect them, or which affect the decision-making of policies, laws, regulations, or decrees, to the advantage of the bribing entity or person; re-allocation fees equating with pay-offs paid (mainly to politicians and political decision makers) in order to change the allocation of economic resources and material wealth or the rights of veto (*i.e.* concessions, licenses, permits, privatised assets).

As Hess and Dunfee (2000) astutely inferred, corruption is universally disapproved yet universally prevalent and most definitely not the prerogative of the public sector. Corruption also affects the running of administrative bodies and interfere with the responsibilities of political echelons, but non-compliant and objectionable practices in the private sector and among individuals in their personal dealings are equally largely spread. The disruptive and damaging effects of corruption are associated with undermining democracy and the rule of law, hindering economic growth, limiting the competence of public services, and hampering confidence in governments, consequently diminishing the quality of life (ATUOBI, 2007; JOHNSTON, 2005; ODEMBA, 2012; SHAH, 2007). The United Nations reports that the growth-retarding effects of corruption in terms of economic deficits, wasting of public funds and resources and poses a major barrier to poverty reduction and progress (UNITED NATIONS, 2004). For the purpose of this study, we identified eight main causes of corruption as follows: 1) unclear and partisan legislation; 2) non-compliant application of laws, rules and regulations; 3) changing political atmosphere; 4) weak management of administrative system; 5) complex rules; 6) restricted access to information; 7) lack of credibility and authority in the judiciary; 8) poverty and low wages. Corruption is facilitated by weaknesses in the legal system that can be nefariously exploited. Weakness in this sense means legislation that may favour certain parties or detailing provisions in a manner that leaves room for interpretation. Failure to execute or implement legal provisions leaves room for it to be replaced by informal rules. Furthermore, frequent ministerial changes can and will prevent consistent development and implementation of

policies. Nepotism in the state apparatus, namely people with low qualifications but strong party connections appointed to senior public positions, is a long-time concern for the anti-corruption drive. Shown to possess little or negligible influence in the face of bureaucratic protocols, the public institutions add issues of incoherence, of poor coordination and accountability to what is desired to be a sustainable development of public sector. Overcomplicated, often redundant, conflicting, and ultimately confusing procedures not benefiting from solid auditing mechanisms leave ample room for manipulations in favour of dubious practices. It can be argued that extreme red tape and slow bureaucracy can hold back entrepreneurship and stall investments, resulting in frustrated citizens, slowing development and growth, and fuelling general discontent. At the same time, it might impress on the common citizen the need to cut corners by utilizing bribes to get things done. This may further induce officials to simulate bureaucratic bottlenecks, with the intention of extorting more bribes from members of the public (TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL, 2004). Often the idea of data protection is turned on its head and used to hide shady decisions and transactions. However, the phenomenon goes beyond the formal structures of public sector, to the informal networks of patronage and influence. Corrupt individuals or groups gain confidence in their impunity as they are able to avoid trials and convictions. There is also empirical evidence linking low income to the susceptibility to corruption and the likelihood of public officials performing corrupt acts: for instance, poorly paid civil servants may be induced to take bribes or are more likely to engage in other corrupt activities to supplement their limited income (BLECHINGER, 2005; SALIFU, 2008; TREISMAN, 2000). This might be one explanation as to why corruption is more abundant in poorer nations where relative poverty prevails (JETTER, AGUDELO & HASSAN, 2015; KSENIA, 2008; OTHMAN, SHAFIE & ZAKIMI, 2014; TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL, 2021).

Regarding the effects of corruption, we have pinpointed three large categories comprising of large-scale economic effects, political effects, and social costs. In terms of repercussions for the

economy at large, corruption brings damages to the national economy through reduction in growth and development, drop in numbers and volume of investments in the country, spread of poverty in society, and rise of underground economics and black markets (AMUNDSEN, 1999, ATA & ARVAS, 2011; LAMBSDORFF, 2005; LIPSET & LENZ, 2000; MAURO, 1998; MYINT, 2000; NWABUZOR, 2005; OTHMAN, SHAFIE & ZAKIMI, 2014; TANZI, 1998). Corruption has crippling financial effects, reflected through both sides of national budgets, in terms of volume and the composition of revenue and expenditure. It decreases direct and budgeted revenue, *i.e.* through tax evasion or the payment of bribes in return for reducing taxes, customs duties, dues and other public service charges. Misappropriation, embezzlement and fraud of public funds add to the damage (ASSAKAF, SAMSUDIN & OTHMAN, 2018; FRIEDMAN, JOHNSON, KAUFMANN, & ZOIDO-LOBATON, 2000; JOHNSON, KAUFMANN, & ZOIDO-LOBATON, 1998; LAMBSDORFF, 2005; MYINT, 2000; TANZI & DAVOODI, 1998). It simultaneously affects economic performance through its negative impact on value creation: bribery negatively impacts investment, since investors regard corruption as an unnecessary cost, bearing negatively on the business bottom line. In addition to being a hindrance to the domestic entrepreneurs, corruption also makes a country unattractive to foreign investors. The consequences for the expenditure side of government budgets are even more serious, when corrupt officials misallocate huge funds in various illegal deals. Furthermore, some of the resources siphoned through corruption are invested in sectors that are not productive, acting as money pits and preventing more efficient and judicious sectoral financing (ASSAKAF, SAMSUDIN & OTHMAN, 2018; MYINT, 2000). To this is added the practice of nepotism that leads to misuse of the nation's skills and manpower with many qualified and skilled employees remaining unemployed (NWABUZOR, 2005). Corruption impacts the political systems in relation to the extent of state power in the application of laws and in connection to strength of its institutions (AMUNDSEN, 1999).

Corrupt control, unimpeded by auditing and controlling bodies, a free press, the police or by the opposition will impact state legitimacy, resulting in no turnout for elections, citizen unrest, mass protests (KUMLIN & ESAIASSON, 2012; SOLÉ-OLLÉ & SORRIBAS-NAVARRO, 2014). On the social scale, the incidence of corruption must be reviewed in congruence with the guiding rules meant to defend general interests, such as prudential banking rules, environmental controls, building codes and traffic laws. Deviating from these laws through dishonest conduct can bring tremendous harm in the form of abject poverty or health hazards, lack of access to resources, to mention a few (ASSAKAF, SAMSUDIN & OTHMAN, 2018). Social corruption also comprises all manner of personal relationships of dependence and loyalty, ranging from clientelism to nepotism, and other favouritism. There was revealed that the poor and less privileged bear the consequences of corruption most, since they lack the resources to pay bribes or other means to secure proper healthcare, decent schooling, good jobs, fine housing or other necessary services (MYINT, 2000). This roadblock to equal and unfettered access to resources, well-being, justice, opportunities, and social privileges enforces systemic disparities in wealth and social standing. As such, it constitutes a major slight to social justice and its goals of rights, access, participation, and equity.

Corruption is a widespread practice, found at various levels and implicates various agencies of the State and public officials. All societies are affected by it and must face damaging consequences. Of course, suppression of corruption entirely is nothing if not a utopia. Getting it confined and its effects minimized are, on the other hand, reachable and attainable goals. There is even a methodical corruption control formula imagined by Robert Klitgaard (1988), with an addendum by Constantin Stephan (2012):

$$\text{Degree of Corruption} = \text{Monopoly Power} + \text{Discretion by Officials} - \text{Accountability} - \text{Transparency} - \text{Morality}$$

As a systemic phenomenon, is costly to democracy and affects social and state stability. Mitigating the effects of corruption is therefore essential and must be part of an ongoing fight.

In terms of both international and domestic undertakings, Romania has only sporadically assumed an active stand on the fight against corruption in terms of legal framework, empowerment of designated institutions, supervision and control mechanisms, sanctions and penalties. In reality, we are still struggling to address corruption effectively and the progress made in tackling corruption is mostly formal. Furthermore, the country registered a significant backslide by governmental attempts to decriminalize corruption offences and undermine judicial independence. The battle over graft and corruption was met with heavy tension and regular protests that pushed policy development and implementation to take a backseat. The 2019 Cooperation and Verification Mechanism (CVM) Report, that operates as a judicial and anti-corruption monitoring mechanism set up by the Commission as a post-accession for Romania and Bulgaria to the European Union transitional measure, raised serious concerns in relation to developments on judicial reforms and the fight against corruption, in contrast with previous years, when Romania was reported to have made steady progress (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2019). The effects of the corona pandemic threaten to intensify the propensity towards abuse of power, cronyism and clientelism. The fight against COVID-19 will further promote the trend towards a strong executive branch and will be instrumentalized by some heads of state to consolidate authoritarian structures, as was the case with the Hungarian emergency legislation and its indefinite suspension of the separation of powers (BERTELSMANN STIFTUNG'S TRANSFORMATION INDEX, 2020).

The mitigating measures taken so far are insufficient. Progress will require concrete steps, both legislative and administrative, and the key institutions of Romania need to collectively demonstrate a strong commitment to judicial independence and the fight against corruption, and to ensure the effectiveness of national safeguards and checks and balances (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2019). Real and sustainable change must include deep institutional transformations, improved legislative measures, substantial changes in the administrative culture and massive insertion of citizens' input in the

decision-making and practice of public institutions. Redefining limits of public powers is a must, as are the more concrete ways of ensuring compliance with the anti-corruption measures in support of public integrity. Expertise must be developed or accessed and solutions must be translated into structured practices that later are to be sanctioned by the stakeholders. Accountable and inclusive institutions are a measure of success for a participatory and plural democracy. To that exact purpose, public policies and regulations need to broaden the voices represented in all stages of design and application processes. Deficiencies must be rectified through encouraging the reporting of errors and near misses and diligent implementation of correction plans. Concurrently, complains and perceptions of external stakeholders must be competently addressed.

In order to keep corruption in check, an active opposition, uncompromised press, and assertive civil society are paramount. Regrettably, the system is known to be slow to respond to societal pressure and concerns. The civil society organizations are regarded somehow with wariness and there is still a long road till full participation of social interest groups in the decision-making process. While the world has long recognized the legitimate uses of advocating and lobbying in a democracy by citizen groups, associations, labour unions, corporations to influence crucial decisive stakeholders in order to advance and improve conditions for their selected target group, Romania still registers visible shortcomings in the development of a more participatory and plural democracy. Either due to a lack of an organized civic culture, resources, or basic ignorance, civil society has yet to effectively exercise of the right to petition public authorities instead of enforcing its areas of incidence through sporadic demonstrations. Although, the large protests against decriminalization and anti-judiciary measures in 2017 to 2018 acted as a catalyst for upstart civic parties, accordingly the civil rights agenda has started to gain more domestic standing (BERTELSMANN STIFTUNG'S TRANSFORMATION INDEX, 2020). We should also keep in mind that there are limits to what may realistically be accomplished through advocacy and more specialized lobby strategies as the success

is contingent to the matter needed to be changed, the beneficiaries of said change, the persons able to perform the desired change, the extent of the planned change and the timelines related to the intended change (ICCO, 2010).

Public institutions may be described as transparent when they are both responsive and answerable to service users, requiring that citizens be able to exert influence on the way that public services are provided, as well as exercising some input into public decision making. Because they allow for an *ex ante* as well as *ex post* say in the way in which public services are provided, it is argued that through the use of these mechanism the 'publicness' of the institutions and services is enhanced (STIRTON & LODGE, 2001). *Ex ante* influence is aimed at the range of issues over which individuals can make their own choices concerning the nature, extent, and quality of consumed public services as well as the quality of information on the basis of which these choice-decisions are made, *i.e.* 'benchmarking' of different products or services, the explicit listing of alternative consumer packages. *Ex post* voice mechanisms add to the strength of the choice mechanisms by guaranteeing the appropriate handling of complaints and offering redress where particular aspects of public services fall below mandated standards (STIRTON & LODGE, 2001). This brings the concept of transparency closely to the notion of accountability, repudiating the overly-optimistic expectations of what can be achieved by traditional channels of political accountability. Arguably, it is primarily through the opposition of competing centres of control that it becomes possible to achieve transparency of a highly complex public service regime (MONFARDINI, 2010). Transparency, systemically, should be approached depending on the distinction Guillermo O'Donnell (1998) makes between vertical and horizontal accountability. The vertical accountability is enforced through elections and media scrutiny, the horizontal accountability, on the other hand, relies on the existence of state agencies that are legally enabled and empowered, and factually willing and able, to take actions in the manner of routine oversight to criminal sanctions or impeachment in relation to actions or omissions by other agents or

agencies of the state that may be qualified as unlawful (O'DONNELL, 1998). O'Donnell's dichotomy comes to situate Andreas Schedler's (1999) bi-dimensionality of accountability, as 'answerability' or the monitoring and justification of the exercise of political power as well as 'enforcement' or the threat of sanctions for abuses of the exercise of power.

5. INSTEAD OF CONCLUSIONS

The COVID-19 medical crisis will no doubt lead to a recession that will translate into austerity policies and budget cuts, and possibly public unrest. So, the perennial double threat of budget cuts and shifting political priorities that always hover above the organizational future will be more acutely felt. Thus, there are no grounds for complacency or to get lost in political rhetoric. We need to erect trustworthy organizations that command respect from both the political and social stakeholders, capable to reliably perform its critical tasks in a turbulent environment consisting of shaky political context, media hype, citizen criticism, and scarce resources. Hopefully, greater public leaders and better public organizations will emerge, daring to take on what is felt as a monumental challenge of dealing with budget for public spending cut-downs, stakeholder pressure on matters related to quality and accessibility of public services, or the expansion of information technology. In this regard, the authors argue for an integrative approach aiming at government legitimacy, decision-making transparency, civil servant integrity, and anti-corruption measures and offer some suggestions for future reform agendas. As the purpose is sustainable transformation, they hold out hope that planned changes in the outlined direction will contribute to producing a less conflictual, unequal, and unjust society.

Initiative no. 1: Facilitate access. Must focus on simplification of procedures and cut-down on red-tape. According to the World Bank's 2020 *Doing Business Report*, it is relatively uncomplicated to establish a business in Romania and it takes six procedures and 20 days to do so, placing the country at a rank of 91 out of 190 in the "starting a business" sub-index. It is

gratifying to see some moderate improvement regarding regulations compared to the previous year when Romania was ranked at 111 in the aforementioned category. Overall, Romania is gradually becoming more business-friendly in terms of procedures and the time it takes to accomplish them, but still requires an inordinately amount of work in areas such as tax payments or inspections (WORLD BANK, 2020).

Initiative no. 2: Improve communication with stakeholders. Efforts should be made to incorporate a more hand-on forms of decision transparency and social dialogue. The relationship with civil organizations and private sector is more lucrative in some areas than others. While some collaboration might elicit ethical questions in terms of unfair advantages, or even clientelism and money laundering accusations, other can be set as examples of successful interchange of solutions, as was the case of social assistance or minority rights.

Initiative no. 3: Increase the transparency of regulatory processes public in terms of, inter alia, auction regulation, government subcontracting and procurement. Transparency initiatives should include online public procurement, public town hall meetings, open talks of budgetary issues, disclosure of income statements, updated online content.

Initiative no. 4: Improve the use of resources. Should focus on judicious use of budgets and absorption of European funds.

Initiative no. 5: Enforce transparent and meritocratic reasoning in recruitment, selection and evaluation practices. It should incorporate efforts to adapt the processes to the requirements of performance management, in order to increase the degree of professionalism and stability in the public service. A National Agency of Civil Servants (2015) evaluation shows that almost a quarter of the respondents perceive the public administration system unfavourably and know little or very little of the recruitment and promotion system for the Romanian public administration staff.

Initiative no. 6: Enforce equity in recruitment, promotion, career development and pay. It is necessary for governments to consider reasonable and fair payment of public servants as means to improve quality of life and reduce

the level of corruption, but should employ such strategies based on needs analysis and bearing macroeconomic indicators in mind, not as a populist solution. The disproportionate public salary rises in 2017 that diverted resources away from investments should serve as a cautionary tale.

Initiative no. 7: Promote compliance with the rules of conduct for civil servants and public officials. Must converge towards a 'culture of ethics'.

Initiative no. 8: Increase engagement and motivation of public servants. Should include fair pay, raises, bonuses, promotions, personal development actions.

Initiative no. 9: Improve the capacity of public institutions through recurrent training. Must aim at increasing the knowledge, skills and competencies of the target group.

Initiative no. 10: Improve strategic management. Should focus on key performance indicators, optimization of performance through planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and control, new hires for the seriously understaffed departments, crisis management, improved coordination between different levels of administration. An institution's life is punctuated by crises and a deficient management of the arisen situation is likely to create enormous internal upheaval and/or harsh external criticism. Measures aimed at improving image of institution and representatives should include increasing the attractiveness of the civil service, promoting trust in public administration, enforcing ethics and integrity in the civil service etc.

Initiative no. 11: Implement quality standards. Supplement efforts to better integrate the Romanian bureaucracy into the EU bureaucracy in crucial sectors.

Initiative no. 12: Develop the digital component of administration. Efforts should be aimed at promoting efficiency through innovation in the public sector relating to use of information technology, developing human resources and expertise. Under the COVID restrictions and digital transformation imperative, ePlatforms had the unforeseen opportunity to operate as a de-bureaucratization catalyst. But the ill designed electronic systems and untrained employees rendered menial administrative tasks impossibly difficult. Overcomplicated, often redundant steps

and confusing instructions resulted in more blockage and eventually temporary system crashing. Sustainable development is closely connected to the adequate implementation of digital technologies achieved through simultaneously development of appropriate infrastructure and working protocols, as well as through increase of digital literacy and skills of all performers of public services. As such, digitalization requires an integrated approach to technology, process, and people. The strenuous task that lies ahead of public sector is to protect privacy concurrently with promoting transparency, and that may be the only way of achieving the balance between digitalized public institutions and trust of the society (PŪRAITĒ, ADAMONIENĒ & ŹEMECKĒ, 2020).

References:

- ADMINISTRARE.INFO (2019) *The Concept of Decisional Transparency* [in Romanian]. Available at: <https://administrare.info/domenii/administra%C8%9Bie-public%C4%83/9859-conceptul-de-transparenta-decizionala> [25 April 2021].
- AMUNDSEN, I. (1999) *Political Corruption: An Introduction to the Issues*. Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute.
- ASSAKAF, E. A., SAMSUDIN, R. S. & OTHMAN, Z. (2018) Corruption: The Intertwined Problem of Cause and Consequence. *Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*. 6(4), pp. 74-82.
- ATA, A. Y. & ARVAS, M. A. (2011) Determinants of Economic Corruption: A Cross-country Data Analysis. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*. 2(13), pp. 161-169.
- ATUOBI, S. M. (2007) Corruption and State Instability in West Africa: An Examination of Policy Options. *KAIPTC Occasional Paper*. (21), pp. 1-24.
- BERTELSMANN STIFTUNG'S TRANSFORMATION INDEX (2020) *Country Report – Romania*. Available at: bti-project.org/content/en/downloads/reports/country_report_2020_ROU.pdf [25 April 2021].
- BLECHINGER, V. (2005) Political Parties. In SPECTOR, B. I. ed. *Fighting Corruption in Developing Countries: Strategies and Analysis*. Bloomfield: Kumarian Press Inc., pp. 27-41.
- CĂRĂUȘAN, M. V. (2005) Transparency and Integrity of Public Administration. In: GYORGY, J., BARABASHEV, A. & van den BERG, F., eds., *Institutional Requirements and Problem Solving in the Public Administrations of the Enlarged European Union and its Neighbours*. Bratislava: NISPAcee, pp. 357-374.
- CONFERENCE OF INGO'S OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE (2019) *Civil Participation in the Decision-making Process. Report on Fact Finding Visit to Romania, December 3-5, 2018* [in Romanian]. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/report-visit-of-the-conference-of-ingos-to-romania-2018-romanian/16809891e4> [25 April 2021].
- DINU, D., GHINEA, C., CIUCU, C., ALBIȘTEANU, R. (2013) *Civil society participation in the decision-making process. Guide* [in Romanian]. Bucharest: Romanian Center for European Policies. Available at: <http://www.crpe.ro/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/ghid-de-consultare-ONG.pdf> [25 April 2021].
- EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2019) *Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on Progress in Romania under the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism*. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/progress-report-romania-2019-com-2019-499_en.pdf [25 April 2021].
- FRIEDMAN, E., JOHNSON, S., KAUFMANN, D. & ZOIDO-LOBATON, P. (2000) Dodging the Grabbing Hand: The Determinants of Unofficial Activity in 69 Countries. *Journal of Public Economics*. 76(3), pp. 459-493.
- HESS, D. & DUNFEE, T. W. (2000) Fighting Corruption: A Principled Approach: The C Principles (Combating Corruption). *Cornell International Law Journal*. 33(3), pp. 594-626.
- ICCO (2010) *Guidelines on Lobby and Advocacy*. Utrecht.
- IRIMIEȘ, C. (2015) *Lobbying, University Course* [in Romanian]. Cluj-Napoca: Babeș-Bolyai University, Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences.
- JETTER, M., AGUDELO, A. M. & HASSAN, A. R. (2015). The Effect of Democracy on Corruption: Income is Key. *World Development*. 74, pp. 286-304.
- JOHNSTON, M. (2005) *Syndromes of Corruption: Wealth, Power, and Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- JOHNSON, S., KAUFMANN, D., & ZOIDO-LOBATON, P. (1998) Regulatory Discretion and the Unofficial Economy. *The American Economic Review*. 88(2), pp. 387-393.
- KLITGAARD, R. (1988) *Controlling Corruption*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- KSENIA, G. (2008) Can Corruption and Economic Crime Be Controlled in Developing Countries and If so, Is It Cost-effective? *Journal of Financial Crime*. 15(2), pp. 223-233.
- KUMLIN, S., & ESAIASSON, P. (2012) Scandal Fatigue? Scandal Elections and Satisfaction with Democracy in Western Europe, 1977-2007. *British Journal of Political Science*. 42(2), pp. 263-282.
- LAMBSDORFF, J. G. (2005) *Consequences and Causes of Corruption: What Do We Know from a Cross-section of Countries?* Passau: Volkswirtschaftliche Reihe.
- LAW 11/1991 (updated) (2014) *On Combating Unfair Competition* [in Romanian]. Available at: <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/160531> [25 April 2021].
- LAW 52/2003 (republished) (2013) *On Decision-making Transparency in Public Administration* [in Romanian].

- Available at: <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/41571> [25 April 2021].
- LINKS ASSOCIATES (2021) *Crisis communication guide for public institutions* [in Romanian]. Available at: <https://www.yourlink.ro/ghid-de-comunicare-de-crisa-pentru-institutii-publice/> [25 April 2021].
- LIPSET, S., & LENZ, G. (2000) Corruption, Culture and Markets. In: L. HANSON & S. HUNTINGTON. eds. *Cultural Matters*. New York: Basic Books, p. 112-124.
- MAURO, P. (1998) Corruption: Causes, Consequences, and Agenda for Further Research. *Finance and Development*. 35(1), pp. 11-14.
- MITU, E. I. & COMĂNESCU E. L. (2019) Organizational Behavior in the Central Public Institutions. *International Conference 'Knowledge-Based Organization'*. XXV(2), pp. 63-68.
- MONFARDINI, P. (2010) Accountability in the New Public Sector: A Comparative Case Study. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*. 23(7), pp. 632-646.
- MYINT, U. (2000) Corruption: Causes, Consequences and Cures. *Asia Pacific Development Journal*. 7(2), pp. 33-58.
- NATIONAL AGENCY OF CIVIL SERVANTS (2011) *Ethics and Integrity in Public Administration* [in Romanian]. Available at: <http://www.anfp.gov.ro/R/Doc/2020/Proiecte/Manuale/Suport%20de%20curs%20Etic%20si%20integritate%20C3%AEn%20administra%C8%9Bia%20public%C4%83,%202011.pdf> [25 April 2021].
- NATIONAL AGENCY OF CIVIL SERVANTS (2015) *Linking Life Long Learning and Labour Market Report* [in Romanian]. Available at: [http://www.anfp.gov.ro/R/Doc/2015/Studii si prezentari/sinteza Raport studiu CIPM.pdf](http://www.anfp.gov.ro/R/Doc/2015/Studii%20si%20prezentari/sinteza%20Raport%20studiu%20CIPM.pdf) [25 April 2021].
- NEW UPDATED CRIMINAL CODE (2020) *Law no. 286/2009 Article 291, line 1, Corruption Offences, Traffic of Influence* [in Romanian]. Available at: <https://legeaz.net/noul-cod-penal/art-291> [25 April 2021].
- NWABUZOR, A. (2005) Corruption and Development: New Initiatives in Economic Openness and Strengthened Rule of Law. *Journal of Business Ethics*. 59(1), pp. 121-138.
- O'DONNELL, G. (1999) Horizontal Accountability in New Democracies. In: SCHEDLER, A., DIAMOND, L. PLATTNER, M. F. eds. *The Self-Restraining State: Power and Accountability in New Democracies*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, pp. 29-52.
- ODEMBA, A. S. (2012) Corruption in sub-Saharan Africa: A Phenomenological Study. *Journal of Psychological Issues in Organizational Culture*. 3(1), pp. 21-40.
- OECD (2021) *Lobbying in the 21st Century: Transparency, Integrity and Access*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- OPAC-OPERATIONAL PROGRAM ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY (2019a) *Good Practice Handbook for Promoting a Proactive Approach to the Principles of Transparent, Open, and Participatory Governance* [in Romanian]. Available at: www.poca.ro [25 April 2021].
- OPAC-OPERATIONAL PROGRAM ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY (2019b) *Good Practice Handbook for Increasing Transparency, Ethics, and Integrity in Local Public Administration* [in Romanian]. Available at: www.poca.ro [25 April 2021].
- OTHMAN, Z., SHAFIE, R., & ZAKIMI, F. A. H. (2014) Corruption - Why Do They Do It? *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*. 164, pp. 248-257.
- PŪRAITĚ, A., ADAMONIENĚ, R., ŹEMECKĚ, A. (2020) Sustainable Digitalization in Public Institutions: Challenges for Human Rights. *European Journal of Sustainable Development*. 9(3), pp. 91-102.
- RĂDULESCU, C. (2009) *Communication and Protocol* [in Romanian]. Bucharest: University of Bucharest Publishing House.
- REBER, B. H., & BERGER, B. K. (2006) Finding Influence: Examining the Role of Influence in Public Relations Practice. *Journal of Communication Management*. 10(3), pp. 235-249.
- ROMANIAN LOBBY REGISTRY ASSOCIATION (2021) *The current legal framework for lobbying* [in Romanian]. At: <http://www.registruldelobby.ro/legea-lobby-ului.html> [25 April 2021].
- SALIFU, A. (2008) Can Corruption and Economic Crime Be Controlled in Developing Economies - And If So, Is the Cost Worth It? *Journal of Money Laundering Control*. 11(3). pp. 273-283.
- SCHEDLER, A. (1999) Conceptualising Accountability. In: SCHEDLER, A., DIAMOND, L. PLATTNER, M. F. eds. *The Self-Restraining State: Power and Accountability in New Democracies*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, pp.13-28.
- SHAH, A. (2007) Tailoring the Fight Against Corruption to Country Circumstances. In: A. SHAH. ed. *Performance accountability and combating corruption*. Washington: World Bank, pp. 233-254.
- STIRTON, L. & LODGE, M. (2001) Transparency Mechanisms: Building Publicness into Public Services. *Journal of Law and Society*. 28(4), pp. 471-489.
- SOLÉ-OLLÉ, A., & SORRIBAS-NAVARRO, P. (2014) Do Corruption Scandals Erode Trust in Government? Evidence from a Matched Sample of Local Governments. In: *CESifo Area Conference on Public Sector Economic*. Munich: CESifo, pp. 1-27.
- STEPHAN, C. (2012) *Industrial Health, Safety and Environmental Management*. Münster MV-Wissenschaft.
- MANCIU A., POSTELNICU V. (2014) *Mediafax Conference - The Regulation of Lobby, Viewed with Reluctance by Practitioners, in Favour of Self-regulation* [in Romanian]. Available at: <https://www.mediafax.ro/social/conferinta-mediafax-reglementarea-lobby-ului-privata-cu-reticenta-de-cei-care-profeseaza-in-favoarea-autoreglementarii-11981557> [25 April 2021].
- TANZI, V. (1998) Corruption Around the World: Causes, Consequences, Scope, and Cures. *International Monetary Fund Staff Papers*. 45(4), pp. 559-594.
- TANZI, V., & DAVOODI, H. (1998) Corruption, Public Investment, and Growth. In: H. SHIBATA & T. IHORI.

- eds. *The Welfare State, Public Investment and Growth*. Springer Japan, pp. 41-60.
- TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL (2004) *Global Corruption Report 2004*. Berlin.
- TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL (2021) *2020 Corruption Perception Index*. Available at: https://images.transparencycdn.org/images/CPI2020_Report_EN_0802-WEB-1.pdf [25 April 2021].
- TREISMAN, D. (2000) The Causes of Corruption: A Cross-national Study. *Journal of Public Economics*. 76(3), pp. 399-457.
- UNITED NATIONS (2004) *United Nations Convention Against Corruption*. New York.
- VAUT, S., SCHWÄBE., S. et. al. (2018) *Social Democracy Reader 2: Economics and Social Democracy*. Bonn: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.
- WORLD BANK (1997) *Helping countries combat corruption: The role of the World Bank*. Washington.
- WORLD BANK (2020) *Doing Business 2020 Romania*. Available at: <https://www.doingbusiness.org/en/reports/global-reports/doing-business-2019> [25 April 2021].
- WORLD BANK (2020) *World Governance Indicators*. Available at: <https://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/Home/Reports> [25 April 2021].