

# TOWARDS A STUDY OF THE METHODOLOGY OF SOCIO-POLITICAL SYSTEM VULNERABILITY

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## ABSTRACT

First of all, the article emphasizes the perspectives concerning development approaches and socio-political dynamics. Cultural and political changes are not linear, societies following different development trajectories. In accordance with socio-political change, there are some indicators that determine economical development, civic and political participation and the process of democratization. There are many measurements of the indicators that reflect the socio-political stability of a society. The quality of election process, generalized trust, trust in institutions, civic and political participations have a great role concerning socio-political stability, developing participative democracy, facilitating cooperation and access to information. The article proposes a discussion concerning the methodological aspects of the indicators mentioned, showing the vulnerabilities regarding their measurement and what should be improved for a good governance of a country.

**Keywords:** socio-political system, economical development, electoral process, trusts in institutions, civic and political participation.

## INTRODUCTION

The development of a country takes into account the socio-political evolution. This implies changes in the way political institutions are functioning, the stability of political institutions, the active participation of citizens to civic life, in a word, the good functioning of a democracy.

There are many measurements of the indicators that reflect the good governance. Putnam (1993) underlined that political and civic participation are the fundamental elements for the functioning of a democracy. He used the concept of social capital to emphasize the civic engagement. The same author underlined that

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the communities with higher social capital are more cooperative and have higher trust in each other. Concerning this, social capital takes in consideration generalized trust and the trust in institutions as important factors that highlight the relational capital. It creates the social networks that ensure the cooperation between the individuals, thus enhancing the access to resources and information.

This article is taking into account the methodology of studying the main indicators that reflect good governance and the stability of a democracy. The aim of the study is to show some vulnerabilities of the methodology and to propose some improvements for a better reflection of the reality. The importance of the analysis consists in an improvement of the methodology for a proper measurement of the indicators.

## 1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 1.1. DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIO-POLITICAL CHANGES

If we are taking into account the definitions of development, an interesting approach is that of Sen's 'capabilities approach', stating that "development is basically about the extent of opportunities for people to improve their lives; being free to do so and creating greater freedom as a consequence." (Sen 1993, 1999 apud Ware, 2014: 49)

There are many perspectives concerning the development approaches. The main theme in development discourse is the modernization theory. The modernization theory emerged in the '50s, explaining how the societies from Western Europe and North America evolved. According to some scholars (Rostow, 1960), societies have different stages of development. Rostow's stages of growth imply five levels (traditional societies, pre-conditions for take-off, take-off, drive to maturity, age of mass consumption).<sup>1</sup>

In the XX<sup>th</sup> century, modernization was viewed as a Westernisation process. Non-Western countries were oriented "to adopt modern values and institutions to become developed societies." (Bradshaw and Wallace, 1996 apud Inglehart and Baker, 2000: 20) Industrialization was viewed as a main concept for modernization, as Inglehart and Baker related, and that process affected all levels of society. The authors cited above highlighted that "economic development has predictable and political consequences." (Inglehart, Baker, 2000, 20) Inglehart and Baker (2000) mentioned that socio-economic development gave rise to two schools of thought: one school sustained the "convergences of values" – "economic and political factors drive to cultural change" (Inglehart, Baker, 2000: 20), meaning

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<sup>1</sup> G. Riley (2018). "Rostow's five stages of Economic Growth Model", accessed at: <https://www.tutor2u.net/economics/reference/rostow-five-stages-of-economic-growth-model>.

that the traditional values are replaced by modern values. The second school emphasized the persistence of traditional values in spite of economic and political changes. The modernization theory was criticized by other scholars. (Wallerstein, 1974, Frank, 1966, Chiot, 1977) They claimed that modernization is a pretext in which rich countries exploit poor countries, putting them in the structural dependence position.

Inglehart (2000) claimed that modernization and, implicitly, industrialization took to “occupational specialization rising educational level and income, broader political participation and less easily led publics.” (Inglehart, Baker, 2000: 21)

Bell (1973) was talking about a “post-industrial society”. “The changes in the nature of work had major political and cultural consequences.” (Bell, 1973 apud Inglehart, Baker, 2000: 21)

Cultural and political changes are not linear, different societies following different trajectories. Researchers observed that distinctive cultural attributes influence differently over long periods of time “society’s political and economic performances.” (Inglehart, Baker, 2000: 21) Putnam (1993) showed that the regions from Italy in which “democratic institutions function successfully are those in which civil society was well developed.” (Ibidem) A higher political participation and the involvement in civic societies are important elements for the functioning of democracies.

There are some authors (Lipset, 1959) that analyzed the relation between democratic development and democracy. He observed the fact that “the relation between levels of development and the incidence of democratic regimes is strong.” (Lipset, 1959 apud Przeworski and Limongi, 1997: 155) After Lipset, there are two explanations: “endogenous” and “exogenous”. When a country develops, its social structure “becomes complex, labour processes begin to require the active cooperation of employees, and new groups emerge and organize.” (Lipset, 1959 apud Przeworski and Limongi, 1997: 157). As technology develops and society becomes more complex, “the dictatorial forms of control lose their effectiveness.” (ibidem) The endogenous explanation, as Lipsed underlined, is that concerning the modernization process. “Modernization consists of a gradual differentiation and specialization of social structures that culminates in a separation of political structures from other structures and makes democracy possible” (Lipset, 1959 apud Przeworski and Limongi, 1997: 158). The same author argued that when the countries get at some level of development, they will become democracies. He underlined that economic growth brings political stability. Other researchers (Olson, 1963) have criticized this thesis. Olson (1963) demonstrated in his article “Rapid Growth as a Destabilizing Force” that “economic growth increases the number of nouveaux riches, who may use their economic power to change the social and political order in their interest and that economic growth may paradoxically also create a surprisingly large number of ‘nouveaux pauvres’, who will be much more resentful of their poverty than those who have known nothing

else” (Olson, 1963: 533). In other words, economic growth took to the formation of two social classes that may lead to political instability.

As a critical remark to Lipset thesis, Therborn underlined that “many European countries democratized because of wars, not because of modernization.” (Therborn, 1977 apud Przeworski and Limongi, 1997: 158).

### *1.2. MEASUREMENT OF THE ECONOMIC GROWTH AND POLITICAL STABILITY/INSTABILITY*

Przeworski and Limongi (1997) tried to demonstrate if “there would be more democracies among wealthy countries than among poor ones?” They took into account regime transition probabilities by per capita income or “levels of per capita income under which dictatorship survived in different countries.” (Przeworski and Limongi, 1997: 163)

The conclusion to this hypothesis is that “democracies tend to survive once they are established in rich countries.” (Przeworski and Limongi, 1997: 166)

Huntington and O'Donnell, cited by Przeworski and Limongi (1997), demonstrated that “there is a level beyond which further development decreases the probability that democracy will survive.” (Ibidem: 169). Huntington claimed that regimes might become unstable if a country encounters modernization, and that may occur at some intermediate levels of development.

O'Donnell argued that “democracies tend to die when a country exhausts ‘the easy stage of import substitution’, again at some intermediate level.” (O'Donnell apud Przeworski and Limongi, 1997: 169)

Huntington did not care whether the regimes were democratic or authoritarian. “The most important political distinction among countries concerns not their form of government but their degree of government.” (Huntington, 1968: 3) A focal point, showed Huntington, in politics and in economics is the gap between developed and underdeveloped political systems or “between civic polities and corrupt polities.” (Huntington, 1968: 4) The author remarked that during the '50s and the '60s political instability throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America increased. Huntington underlined the fact that “rapid social change and the rapid mobilization of new groups into politics were coupled with the slow development of political institutions.” (Huntington, 1968: 5). His observation was the fact that economic development and political stability are independent. Programs concerning economical development may promote political stability or, in some instances, political instability. He underlined the example of India. According to Huntington, India was among the poorest countries in the world in the '50s, but it gained a high level of political stability.

A discussion may evolve trying to give an answer to the question: In what terms can we talk about economic growth and political stability? How can we measure economic growth? And how can we measure political stability?

GDP per capita is the standard measurement of economic growth, it is considered to be the main indicator for measuring the development of a country. According to OECD, GDP per capita became the main indicator for the measurement of government activities.<sup>2</sup>

Paul Samuelson, Nobel Laureate and author of many textbook references, mentioned the fact that “GDP does not capture wellbeing.”<sup>3</sup> As Wallis (2016) said, “it tells you whether your economy is going faster or slower, but doesn’t tell you if you’re going in right direction.”<sup>4</sup> For measuring wellbeing, Dobbs et al. (2015) mentioned that “there are many alternative measures, including the Human Development Index (HDI), introduced by the United Nations in 1990, and the “OECD’s Better Life Index”. The New Economics Foundation proposed five indicators: good jobs, wellbeing (“by asking people about their life satisfaction”), environment (“a national indicator of lifestyle-related carbon emissions”), fairness (it is about inequality – comparing the average incomes of the top and bottom 10%) and health (“avoidable deaths” as a simple, easily-understandable measure that captures the quality of health interventions – not only treatment, but also prevention”).<sup>4</sup>

The measurement of economic growth, which takes into account more than one element, is actually a measurement of the development of a country concerning many important dimensions in the benefits of the citizens. However, GDP does not reflect the citizens’ experience, starting with inequalities, economic insecurities, subjective wellbeing, mistrust in institutions and in other people.

## 2. METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

This article emphasizes the methodological aspects of the socio-political system, highlighting the political stability of the society and the functioning of democracy.

Concerning political stability, it is not all about the lack of tensions or violence in society, but it is also about the stability of political institutions. Huntington stated that for Americans creating a government was not a problem. The Americans were rather more worried on “the limitation of authority and the division of power” than on “the problem of government-building” (Huntington, 1968: 8). For them government is based on free elections. As Huntington

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<sup>2</sup> OECD Working Paper, “Towards better measurement of government on Public Governance”, 2007/1, OECD Publishing, accessed at: <http://www.oecd.org/governance/digital-government/38134037.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> OECD Observers, “Is GDP a satisfactory measure of growth?”, accessed at: [http://oecdobserver.org/news/archivestory.php/aid/1518/Is\\_GDP\\_a\\_satisfactory\\_measure\\_of\\_growth.html](http://oecdobserver.org/news/archivestory.php/aid/1518/Is_GDP_a_satisfactory_measure_of_growth.html).

<sup>4</sup> S. Wallis (2016). Five measures of growth that are better than GDP, accessed at: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/04/five-measures-of-growth-that-are-better-than-gdp/>.

remarked, in some modernizing countries the main problem is not about the elections, but about political organization. “The problem is not to hold elections but to create organizations.” (Ibidem)

### 2.1. THE MEASURING OF THE ELECTION QUALITY

Beyond the creation of political institutions and the way they are functioning, an important thing concerning elections and their efficiency is the measuring of the election quality. In some modernizing countries, if we are talking about the elections, we have to consider the quality of political processes beyond elections, the quality of organizing them, the fairness of voter registration and the fairness of counting the votes. As Elklit and Reynolds (2005) noted, the “failing of election assessment” has been the tendency of registering the election quality in “bimodal terms”. The elections may be declared “free and fair”, or “good or bad”, but, in reality, there may be other processes behind them that could alter the process of voting, the registration or the counting of votes. It is easy to register with a rigid methodology a score for every country that could indicate election quality. Every country has different history of elections, different territorial and administrative divisions, different rural/ urban disparities or different percent of population departed in other countries. The election process may also differ between regions of the same country. Maybe an effective measurement should take in consideration the specificity of every country, by constructing an appropriate battery of tests for every country and region.

Elklit and Reynolds (2005) proposed a model that includes 11 steps “ranging from the initial legal framework to the closing post-election procedures.” (Elklit, Reynolds, 2005: 151) They took in consideration: “districting; voter education; registration; the regulation and design of the ballot; polling and counting, along with some broader areas such as campaign regulation, complaints procedures and the implementation of election results.” (Elklit, Reynolds, 2005) They used 54 questions functioning as indicators and each step had 3–10 questions. The result was a scoring index.

The election quality methodology should consider quantitative, but also qualitative methods. The aim is to capture “the perceptions of political stakeholders, which may include electoral experts, academics, civil society, and the public.”<sup>5</sup>

For the election process, it is important to take into consideration the characteristics of the population, especially the variables that measure migration. Migration is important when we talk about the elections. It is also an important element for the socio-political system. It influences the dynamic of the population, birth rate and the natural increase of population. Migration has a great impact upon many aspects of social and political life: family relations, health and social services, economic aspects, social capital, norms, values etc. According to

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<sup>5</sup> The Electoral Knowledge Network, “Measuring the Quality of Elections”, 2014, accessed at: <http://aceproject.org/electoral-advice/archive/questions/replies/531723839>.

Censuses from 2002 and 2011, the resident population of Romania decreased by almost 1.6 million people. And on January 1, 2017, the data from National Institute of Statistics showed a decreasing trend (19.6 million inhabitants).<sup>6</sup> An increasing number of immigrants influence the election process. There are some variables that influence the political process: the different socio- demographic characteristics, attitudes and values of the migrants, the fact that migrants are related more on the information from the Internet and the social learning effects (theory explained by Bădescu, in his book published in 2011). Bădescu (2011) showed that the researchers on social psychological and political studies identified three different results of exposure to cultural diversity. The contact theory enhances that “diversity dilutes differences between groups and contributes to increasing solidarity between different categories.” (Allport, 1954 apud Bădescu, 2011)

The theory of conflict underlines “the strenghtening of the solidarity only inside of the groups and not between them.” (Bobo and Tuan, 2006 apud Bădescu, 2011) Another recent theory, the “constrict theory” (Putnam, 2007 apud Bădescu, 2011) exhibits that the two solidarities, inside the group and between the groups, are diminished by exposure to cultural diversity. So, there are many attributes that may influence the political processes, especially the voting process.

Of course, besides all this we may take into account the effective voting process, the implications and effects concerning the introduction of the electronic vote and the vote by correspondence, the time for voting etc. It should be necessary a separate article in order to explain all these aspects and the political effects of the migration regarding elections.

## 2.2. THE MEASURING OF SOCIAL CAPITAL AND TRUST

Bourdieu (1982), Coleman (1990) and Putnam (1993, 1995) were the main theorists that emphasized the concept of social capital. The studies on social capital concentrated on social activism, civic involvement and civic cooperation. As Putnam (1993) mentioned, the communities with higher social capital are more cooperative, have a propensity towards development and their individuals have higher trust in each other. Concerning this, social capital includes generalized trust, trust in institutions and civic participation.

## 2.3. GENERALIZED TRUST

Trust is seen as “social glue”, as Lange (2014) mentioned; it connects people and “facilitates behaviors, thoughts that promote collective goals.” (Van Lange, 2014: 71) As Van Lange (2014) admitted, a country with a high level of generalized trust is “more likely to sustain volunteering activities and report greater

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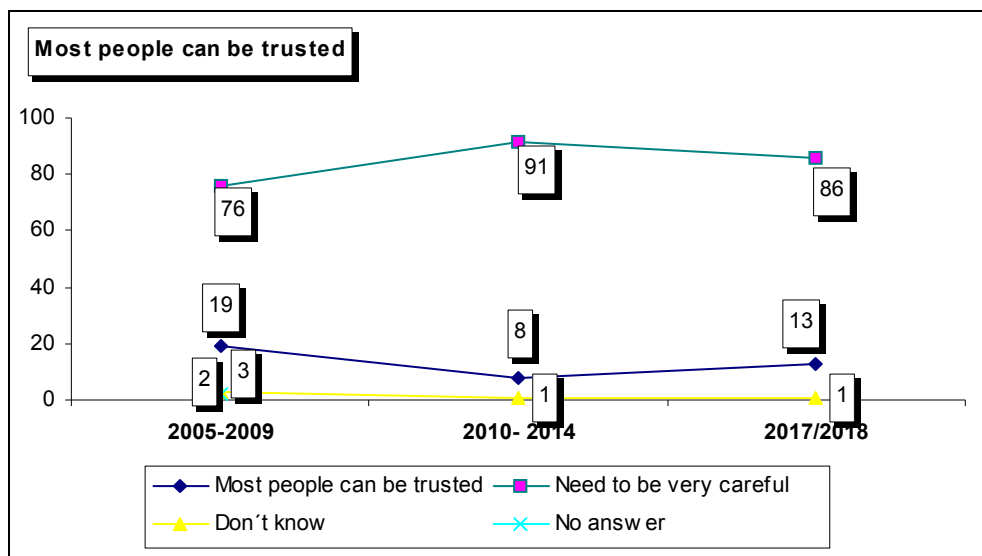
<sup>6</sup> Data from: V. Dumitrașcu, A. Trică, N. Caragea, “Population of Romania- shapes and demographic trends”, in the *Romanian Journal of Sociological Studies*, no 2, 2018.

life satisfaction.” (Van Lange, 2014: 41) “Trust allows individuals to focus on self-expression and self-reliance and assures the importance of bridging social capital for the efficiency of the institutions of social organization. All these assure a high standard of the quality of life and constitute an objective for durable development.” (Voicu, 2008: 86) Trust is very important at community levels. “If we ‘trust someone’, we expect that person to behave favorably towards us in doubtful situations. If we distrust someone, on the other hand, we view his intentions towards us with suspicion”.<sup>7</sup> The trust in a community is like a barometer that shows many things about its people, about the development of the community, about the good functioning of the institutions. A community in which people have trust each other is a community with a low level of criminality.

Trust is an important element that should be measured at the national, regional and local levels at least two times a year. Unfortunately, the public data on trust are limited. The data from Eurostat are available only for 2013, the data from World Values Survey are available on waves, (1981–1984, 1990–1994, 1995–1998, 1999–2004, 2005–2009, 2010–2014), for Romania on waves (2005–2009 and 2010–2014). Recently it was released the EVS and WVS Romanian data for 2017–2018.

*Graphic 1*

Trust in people (Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?)



Source: data from World Values Survey (2005–2009 and 2010–2014) and data from EVS and WVS Romanian data for 2017–2018.

<sup>7</sup> Eurobarometer 25, Spring 1986, Commission of the European Communities, p. 26.

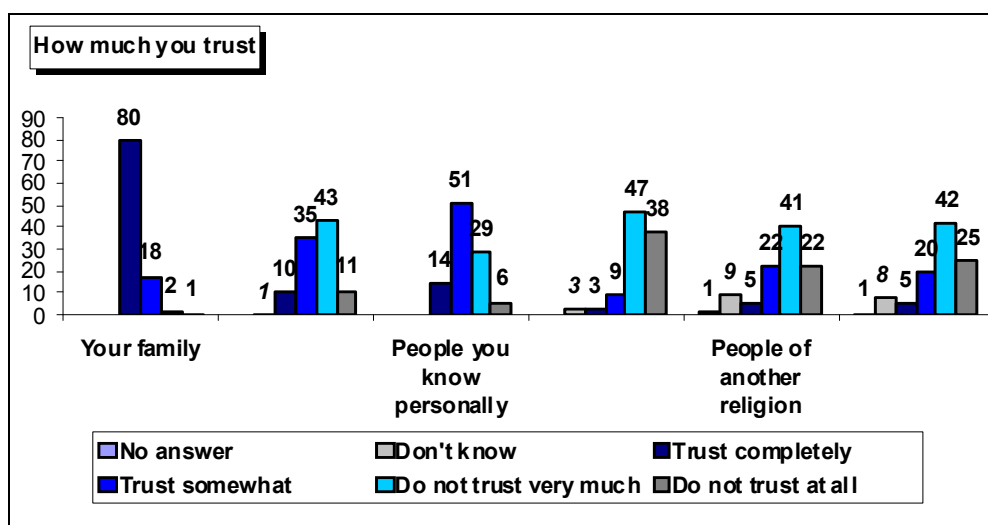


The graphic shows that most Romanian people do not have much trust in others. Even if it is an increase of the trust in 2018, the indicator is still at a low level.

Because the notion of “trust in others” is rather ambiguous and its significance varies culturally, another indicators were proposed: “the trust in family”, “the trust in people in your neighborhood”, the “trust in people you meet for the first time”, “the trust in people of another religion” and “the trust in people of another nationality.”

Graphic 2

How much you trust?



Source: data from EVS and WVS Romanian data for 2017–2018.

Data show that besides trust in their family, Romanians do not have much trust in people they meet for the first time, people in their neighborhood or people of another nationality or religion. They trust to some extent in people they know personally. The graphic shows that Romanians do not have much trust in people besides their inner circle.

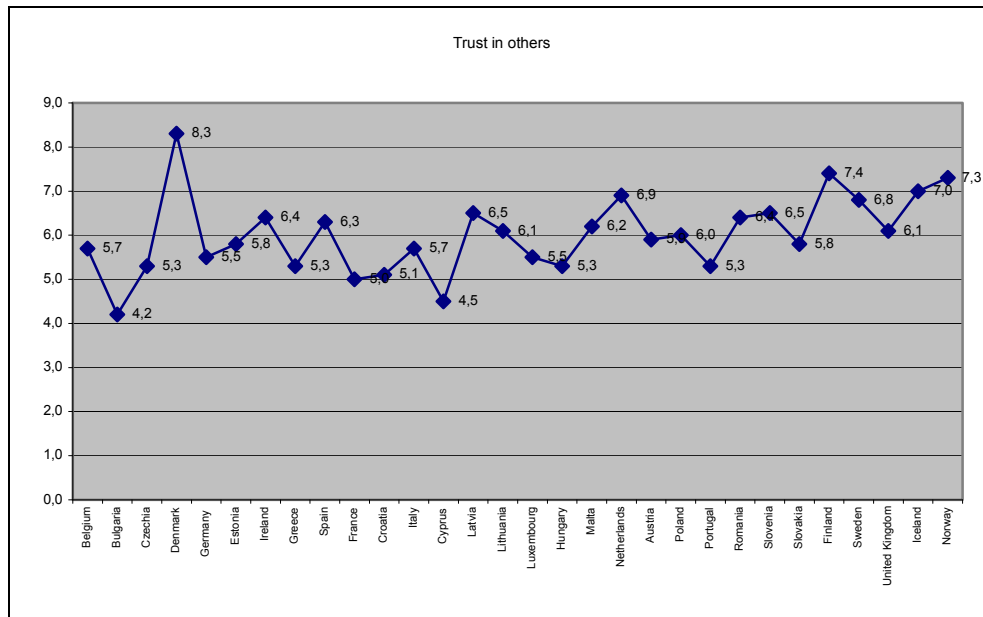
At the European level, in 2013 the trust was higher in Northern and Western countries (Denmark, Germany, Iceland and Norway) and lower in Southern and Eastern European countries (Bulgaria, Greece, Cyprus, Hungary, Portugal etc.). In 2013, Romania had an average of trust of 6.4, above most Eastern and Southern European countries.

The trust in other people says a lot about relational capital. It involves the relationship with other individuals, the creation of the social networks ensuring the access to resources and exchange of information. It is very hard to develop relations with other individuals if you do not have trust in them. The generalized

trust has a great role in the developing of participative democracy, facilitating cooperation and access to information. A society evolves if its social networking is functioning.

Graphic 3

Average rating of trust – European countries



Source: Eurostat, cf. [https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=ilc\\_pw03&lang=en](https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=ilc_pw03&lang=en).

The data on trust are important and they should be measured more often, as they are an important indicator for the cohesion and for the development of the society.

#### 2.4. TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS

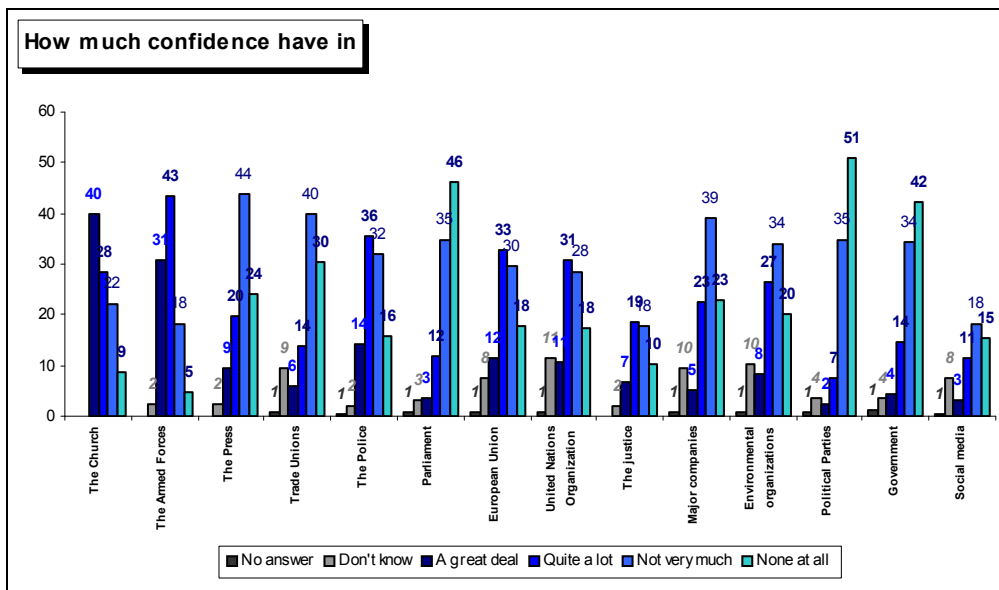
An important element for political stability is the trust in institutions, especially in the political and governmental institutions. The trust in institutions is an important indicator for good governance. “Countries with higher trust in political institutions have a lower level of tax evasion (VAT gap) and greater public support for policy reforms”.<sup>8</sup> The trust in institutions is measured through

<sup>8</sup> “Societal change and trust in institutions”, 2018, <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/report/2018/societal-change-and-trust-in-institutions>.

questions regarding the trust in: Government, Church, The Army, Parliament, Political Parties etc. European Values Survey includes variables like: confidence in the church, in the armed forces, in the press, in trade unions, in the police, in parliament, in the European Union, in the United Nations Organizations, in the justice systems, major companies, environmental organizations, political parties, government, social media etc.

*Graphic 4*

How much confidence you have in:



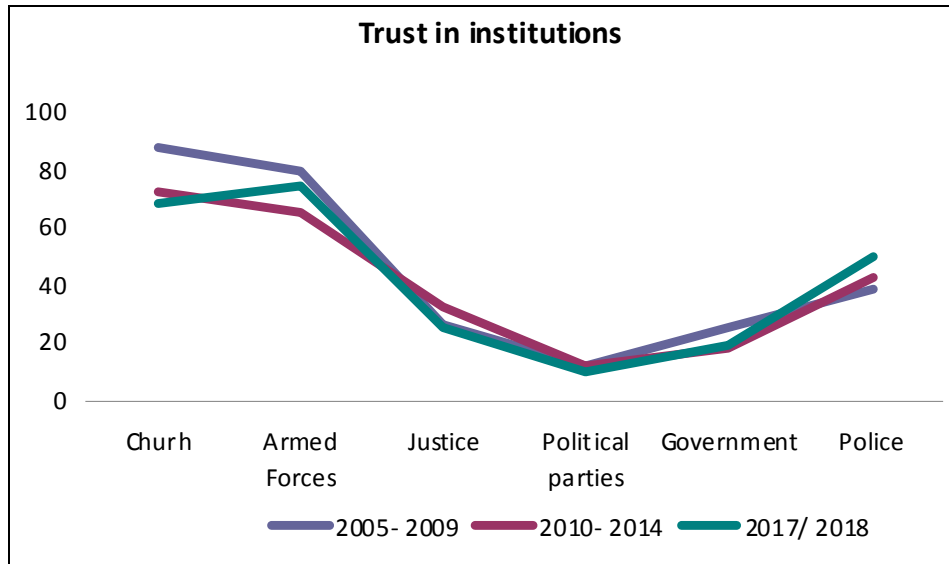
Source: data from EVS and WVS Romanian data (2017–2018).

The data regarding the confidence in main institutions show that the Romanians have great confidence in the Church (40%) and in the institutions of force (The Armed Forces and The Police). The Romanians do not have trust in political institutions (Parliament, Government and Political Parties) and are skeptical about Press, Environmental organizations and Major companies.

The comparison on years concerning the main institutions shows that the trust of Romanians in Church is decreasing (from 88 per cent in 2005–2009 to 68 in 2018), but the trust in the institutions of force (Armed Forces and Police) is increasing (from 65% in 2010–2014 to 74% in 2018 in Armed Forces and from 39% in 2005–2009 and 42% in 2010–2014 to 50% in 2018). The trust in Justice is decreasing from 33% in 2010–2014 to 25% in 2018. The trust in political parties is decreasing only with two percentage points in 2018.

Graphic 5

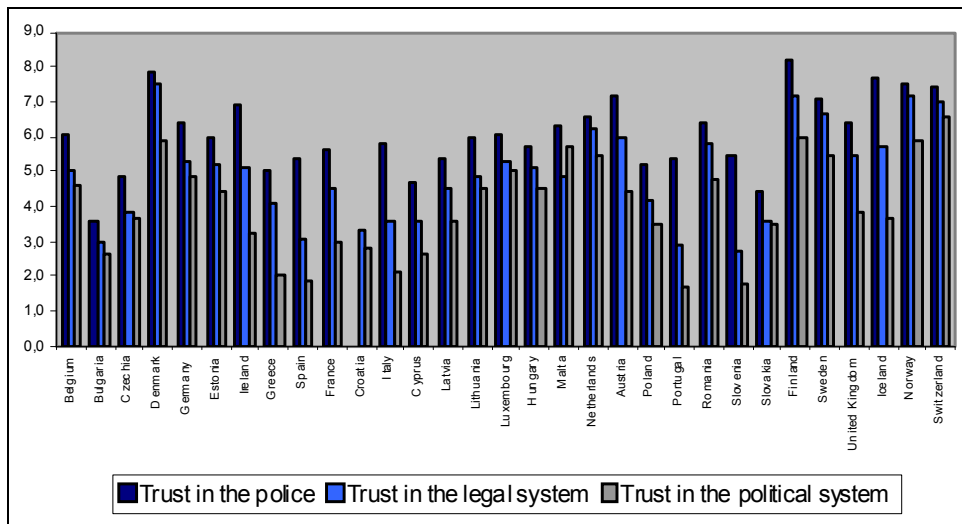
Trust in institutions



Source: World Values Survey (2005–2009 and 2010–2014) and data from EVS and WVS Romanian data (2017–2018).

Graphic 6

Trust in institutions – Eurostat (2013)



Source: data from Eurostat, <http://s9.ro/p60>.

Eurostat includes variables such as; trust in police, in the legal system and in the political system. The graphic above shows that the Northern and the Western countries had the higher trust in the police and legal system in 2013. All the countries had more trust in police and legal system than in the political system in 2013. The countries from South Eastern Europe (Spain, Greece, Portugal and Slovenia) had the lower trust in political system in 2013.

Trust in institutions is an important factor for the measurement of the democracy. It determines the degree of the development of a country. Generalized trust and trust in institutions are important variables that evaluate the state of the nations, the direction towards a state is heading. For a good measurement of the development of a country and for a good evaluation of the country it is necessary to measure these variables more often (annually or twice a year) and the data should be made public. For Romania, public data on trust are available at World Values Survey and European Values Survey every four years (the data are collected and made public by the Romanian Group for the Study of Social Values). These variables, in correlation with other variables, may show the political trust, the stability and the good governance of the country.

A group of researchers (Bersoff et al., 2018) proposed an index and an algorithm for the measurement of trust in institutions. They measured volatility trust. "The volatility measure is the aggregate year-over-year change in trust for each institutions. The individual trust changes (positive and negative) were summed across all four institutional entities to yield the aggregate trust volatility".<sup>9</sup> This method is used to reflect the change in the positive or the negative direction, "rather than the absolute amount of change across the institutions." There can be observed the polarization of trust and trust gains and losses. It is interesting to see the dynamic of trust taking into account the absolute amount of change across the institutions, and also the volatility trust, measurements that are not considered in the official *i.e.* the public statistics.

## 2.5. THE MEASURING OF POLITICAL AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION

Civic and political participation of the individual is a sign of a good functioning of democratic systems. Almond and Verba (1963) were talking about "civic culture". The authors sustain that civic culture is "a third culture neither traditional nor modern, a pluralistic culture based on communication and persuasion, a culture of consensus and diversity, a culture that permitted change but moderated it." (Almond, Verba, 1963: 12) One of the main characteristics of the civic culture has a connection with social capital. (Putnam, 1995) We are talking about attributes such as: cooperation, social trust, participation or implication in political life or in activities of civil society.

Almond and Verba (1963) mention about a variation on civic engagement based on different values internalised by members of each societies. Some authors

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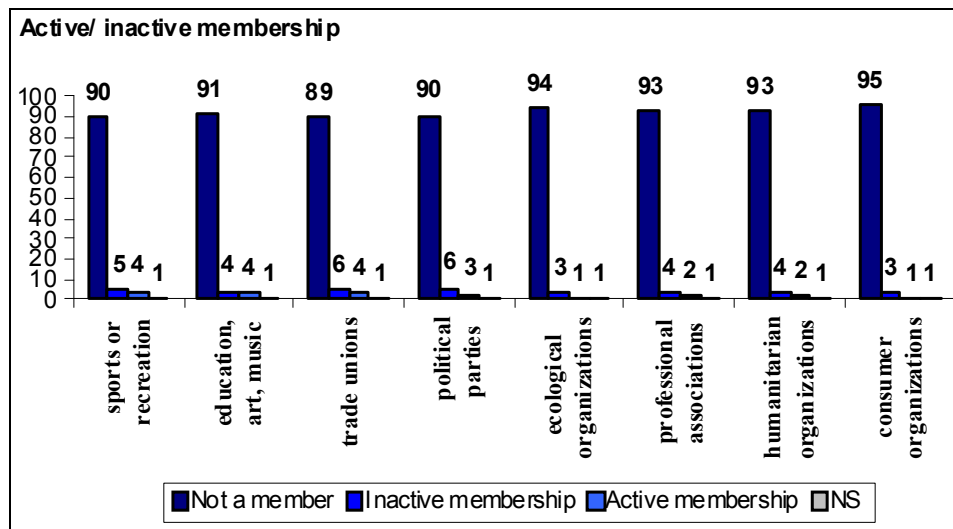
<sup>9</sup> 2018 Edelman Trust Barometer Global Report, [https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/201810/2018\\_Edelman\\_Trust\\_Barometer\\_Global\\_Report\\_FEB.pdf](https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/201810/2018_Edelman_Trust_Barometer_Global_Report_FEB.pdf).

(Wallace, Pichler, Haerper, 2012) showed the difference regarding civic participation from Eastern and Western democracies. In another article written by the author (Dumitraşcu, 2015) it is emphasized the difference of the civic engagement between Western and Eastern Europe and the dynamics of the civic engagement in Romania from 1990 until 2014.

Civic and political participation may be explained through individual variables, but also through political and institutional patterns. Schofer and Foucarde-Gourinchas (2001) emphasize how politico-institutional structures “are mediated at the individual level to produce particular attitudes and behaviours (e.g. ‘post-materialist values,’ ‘trust’, and ‘social capital’) that are themselves conducive to the formation of voluntary associations, and (ultimately) to the prosperity of democratic institutions.” (Schofer, Foucarde-Gourinchas, 2001: 807) Some authors (Skocpol, 1996; Skocpol, Fiorina, 1999; Tarrow, 1996) argue that political institutions configure civic activity-not only the other way around.

Graphic 7

Active/ inactive membership



Source: data from EVS and WVS Romanian data (2018).

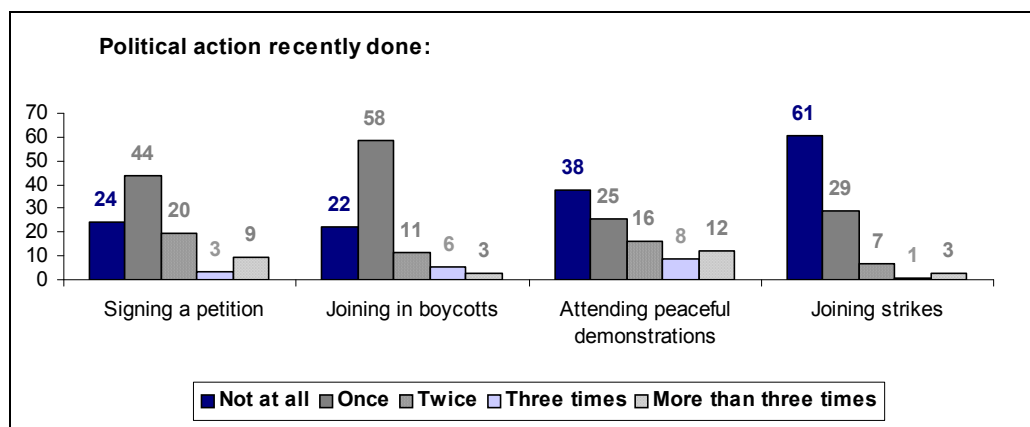
Schofer and Foucarde-Gourinchas (2001) underline that “the cultural and organizational dimensions of political institutions are constitutive of the groups themselves and of the civic activities their members engage in.” (Ibidem) The authors examined how politico-institutional patterns affect a number of 32 countries (the data are included in World Values Survey-1990 and 1991). Schofer and Foucarde-Gourinchas (2001) concluded that politico-institutional patterns have a major impact

on the forms of the civic participation. For example, as the authors underlined, “in the USA the number of the people who are members of religious non-governmental associations or organizations of so-called new social movements is much higher than in other countries with the same economic and democratic development level.” (Ibidem) In Germany the participation in classical organizations as trade union, professional associations and political parties have the higher rate.

The graphic shows a weak participation in Romania in 2018 in the classical organizations (trade unions, professional associations and political parties) and in other organizations (sports, art, music, education, humanitarian and consumer organizations). Besides that, those who are members in these organizations are rather more inactive than active. Beyond civil participation, as dimension of the social capital, another indicator is political participation.

Graphic 8

Political actions



Source: data from EVS and WVS Romanian data (2018).

The data reflect the fact that Romanians are not active in attending strikes or peaceful demonstrations. Over 50% of the respondents said that they joined once to boycotts and over 40% signed a petition only once.

The measurement of the protest participation does not take into account the situations of the individuals that are supporting offline protests, boycotts, and strikes as active participants in these actions. For an improvement of the political active participation measurement, it is necessary to analyse the interaction between online and offline activism. The low participation of the citizens in civil and political actions has many causes, among these being the legislative deficiencies, the lack of transparent information of the organizations' and associations' activities, the lack of education concerning civic culture and active participations of the citizens to decisional processes.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

The development approaches are taking in consideration socio-political changes of the society. The stability of political institutions related with relational capital and the active participation of citizens to civic life are reflecting the good functioning of a democracy.

The article enhances the vulnerabilities regarding the methodology of the main indicators that reflect good governance and the stability of a democracy. The quality of the election process, such as generalized trust, trust in institutions, civic and political participations, has a great role concerning socio-political stability. If we are taking into account the socio-political stability beyond the political institutions and the way they are functioning, an important thing concerning elections and their efficiency would be the measurement of election quality. It is easy to register with a rigid methodology a score for every country that could indicate election quality. Every country has a different history of elections, different territorial-administrative divisions, different rural/urban disparities or different percent of population departed in other countries. The election process may differ also among the regions of the same country.

An effective measurement should take in consideration the specificity of every country, thus constructing an appropriate battery of tests for every country and region. Besides that, the election process should take into account the socio-demographic characteristics of the population and especially the migration process. Also, the election quality methodology should consider quantitative, but also qualitative methods. There should be measured the perceptions of political stakeholders, which may include electoral experts, academics, civil society, and the public.

Another important element concerning social capital, trust (generalized trust and trust in institutions), should be measured at national, regional and local level at least two times a year. Unfortunately, the public data on trust are limited. The data from Eurostat are available only for 2013, the data from World Values Survey are available on waves (1981–1984, 1990–1994, 1995–1998, 1999–2004, 2005–2009, 2010–2014), for Romania only for 2005–2009 and for 2010–2014 and recently there were released the EVS and WVS Romanian data for 2017–2018. Practically, the data on trust are publicly available only on the fourth year.

Concerning civic and political participation, it is a variation on the civic engagement based on different values internalized by members of each societies. As other study (Wallace, Pichler, Haerpfer, 2012) showed, there is a difference regarding civic participation from Eastern and Western democracies. Beyond the actional dimension of the social capital, another indicator is protest participation. A complete methodology concerning civic engagement should take into account indicators that reflect the interaction between online and offline activism.



The article reveals only a part of the indicators that could better reflect political stability of a country and a good functioning of a democracy. Due to lack of space, the study is limited to these variables and the related methodology. On future, the analysis will be improved concerning other variables and their measurement.

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