

RESPONSIBILITY, DETERMINANT FOR THE EFFICIENCY OF GOVERNANCE

*Florina Popa, Researcher, Institute of National Economy, Bucharest, Romania,
florinacarina@yahoo.com*

ABSTRACT: Understanding the governance concept implies the identification of the leaders, rules and directions pursued by a country in terms of its economic, social and cultural policy.

The article briefly refers to the concept of responsibility and its importance within democratic governance. It is one of the basic principles whose way of application influences the running of institutions and the regulations of governance, either fostering or influencing their effectiveness and efficiency. The paper presents the ways responsibility displays in the main fields expressing the attributes of governance: economic, political, social, legal, related to human development, related to freedom of expression.

Key words: governance, responsibility, good governance

JEL Codes: H, H1, H11

Some elements concerning the governance concept

It can be stated that there is no single generally valid model that can lead to the consolidation of governance and already established forms should be adapted to local conditions and national historic frameworks. Thus, governance is a lengthy process of democratic development and existence of fundamental institutions, whose success is guaranteed by the prevalence of democratic culture, values and principles governing individual and group behaviour. Generally, governance comprises traditions, institutions and processes that determine the way power is wielded, citizens have the right to opinion, and decisions regarding commonweal problems are made. There are opinions galore in the literature of the field regarding the definition of governance, which highlight the importance of its exercise for the society. A brief presentation of these opinions is outlined below:

- Conceptually, **governance** is defined as the leaders' law, the way society is ruled within a set of regulations, as well as the process through which they are applied and modified; it does not only refer to governments but also to other decision-makers (religious or military leaders, media, large corporations, community groups or the police)

- Within the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) governance is defined as "the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. It comprises the mechanisms, processes and institutions, through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences."¹ It is allegedly represented by presidentship, legislature, judiciary, executive and other public administration bodies. In this respect, the definition of governance can be threefold: the process through which governments are elected, held responsible, monitored and replaced; the ability to efficiently manage resources and to formulate, implement and enforce tenable policies and

¹ *** *Social Research Center United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM)* www.aucegypt.edu citing United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

regulations; the respect for the institutions governing the economic and social interactions among them.

• **Democratic governance** implies strengthening institutions in such a way that they adapt to economic and political changes and promote political democracy at the same time. This can result in decision-makers participating and being held responsible even outside the formal state institutions scope. The important pillars for democratic governance are **transparency and responsibility**. They have a significant role in rendering the economy efficient and fostering welfare. Holding authorities responsible for their actions is done by dint of transparency, whose role is to ensure the availability of information for the measurement of the authorities' performances and supervision against abuses on behalf of the power.

Responsibility. Definitions, display forms

Webster's English dictionary **defines responsibility** as "the obligation or wish to accept or consider somebody else's actions." From the governance standpoint, the responsibility principle requires the government's obligation to formulate public policies and account for their efficiency and implementation, and to accept and bear the consequences of their non-execution.

Responsibility in governance is based on efficient institutions, clear rules and the respect for human rights. It has to display in all fields expressing the attributes of governance and requiring reform: **economic, political, social, legal, related to human development, related to freedom of expression**.

• **The economic side of the responsibility** of a government is expressed by the effectiveness of economic policies formulation and implementation and the efficient use of resources. By promoting transparency and responsibility, decision-makers stimulate building confidence relationships between them and those governed by them and encouraging social stability and a proper environment for economic growth. Experience has shown it that if countries adopt these principles they have higher opportunities to obtain better economic performances, which can be checked both for developed and developing countries. There are many examples of international initiatives that confirm the role of the international community in promoting good practices for the improvement of the quality of political and investment decisions, which should result in social reforms.

• Good governance is related, inter alia, to the concept of **public responsibility** for and towards the citizen, contrary to the traditional idea stating authority exercise over a nation; legitimacy stems from public consent and participation in governance that cares about the welfare of its citizens. The moral responsibility towards citizens is crucial for the legitimacy of a democratic society. Citizens will simultaneously assume the responsibility of the running of the government to the extent to which they have the freedom to examine the government's transactions and held its representatives responsible for their actions.

Assuming responsibility towards citizens at a higher level, such as government members or civil servants do, means facing the challenge of governance and, as a consequence, education for public service becomes a central issue for concerns regarding good governance. The behaviour and efficiency of civil servants who have regulation functions and make public policies in the management of public resources are governance determinants. In any administration system the government is the strongest institution because the laws and regulations it imposes have to be observed by individuals, private corporations and associations, no matter how authoritative the latter may be. Consequently, the government and its components are held responsible for the welfare of the society, for their actions or for the failure of their actions.

New democracies can introduce institutional mechanisms and procedures aimed at ensuring and strengthening the government's responsibility towards the public whether there is political will,

meaning a certain degree of commitment which is proven by decision-makers or the political class in the implementation of this process.

• The interest taken in using social indicators in respect of **social responsibility** has been justified by several arguments, three of which being identified by Land (1975)²:

- improving the ability to measure social conditions and to change and implement economic indicators;

- monitoring social progress, with an emphasis on certain society-related purposes;

- evaluating the government's activity and establishing social relations and purposes.

Land (1975)³ notices the interdependences among these arguments because an improvement of the ability of social change is essential for an effective social reference, which, in its turn, is necessary for guiding social policies.

The different characteristic of any action is determined by the economic climate. The social indicators requirement occurred from the need to monitor social conditions within the context of higher economic incomes; it contrasts with the interest taken in these indicators under scarcity conditions.

The state is still highly focused on the economy and social progress as the financing of social programmes is scanty, but there is a constant increase in demand for responsibility and transparency in spending budgets.

In defining **social policies** the following issues should be considered:

a. They represent a set of ways and methods, activities and measures whose purpose is to meet social protection needs, education needs, health needs, culture needs etc., social development needs in general by dint of public resources redistribution. From this perspective, social policies are considered to have a rather pragmatic, operational character.

b. They are included in social justice models, which assume a set of values, principles, traditions, norms that mould formal social relations built between individuals and groups and institutions in respect of resources redistribution at community and society level.

c. They cannot be dealt with separately from other categories of public policies: economic policies, fiscal policies, salary-related policies, cultural policies, urbanification policies, environment protection policies, demography-related policies etc. A clear cut would be difficult to achieve given that the ways of implementing them are of financial, economic, legislative, political and/or administrative nature.

When talking about public policies one mainly refers to actions through which the state, by dint of its specialised institutions – governments and local administrations – intervenes in view of accomplishing objectives regarding social protection, individual and group welfare. Also, one should know that there are other potential factors that can – more or less – accomplish objectives of the same type on their own: NGO's, the private sector of the economy etc.

The government's responsibility assumed in reaching social policies mainly concerns:

- promoting several public services (defence, security, infrastructure, city planning, health, education, culture, science);

- providing social protection for the underprivileged;

- confirming the human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights; this responsibility can be assumed by supplying quality public services and decent work conditions;

- providing physical, social and economic child protection;

- fostering the active participation of the civil society (including the participation of social groups comprising the poor, women or people with special needs) in making decisions and implementing development policies;

² **Ekos Research Associates Inc.** *The Use of Social Indicators as Evaluation Instruments – Final Report – Rationale for New Accountability Mechanism*, [http/ www.hrsdc.gc.ca](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca), 1998; citing Land (1975)

³ Idem 2

- fostering social development generally speaking.

Social policies are focused on the sensitive issues of the social system, which are essential for its good running, while economic policies are aimed at the whole, at the entire society. However, this distinction is not absolute; according to the specificities and the extent of the field concerned, social and economic policies can be drafted simultaneously precisely because a clear-cut demarcation cannot be made between the two. Good governance has to ensure a set of economic and social policies regarding: economic growth, sustainable development, reaching a high degree of labour force employment.

• **Legal responsibility** assumes the supremacy of justice, which depends on the development of an honest and independent judiciary, on the quality and efficiency of justice acts and on the decision-makers' will to show respect for the law.

Achieving an independent unbiased credible efficient judicial system represents a necessary condition for the supremacy of the law and the principles of the rule of law. The measures taken to strengthen the independence of the judicial system have to lead to the assertion of the principle of separation of powers and its application into practice.

Decision-makers are held responsible towards the society and they have to meet the commitments taken for those who elected them. They have to institute equity and social and economic justice and to stop all types of violence against women, by supporting their rights, including their active participation in the political life. All these issues can be solved only by ensuring adequate regulations.

• **From the human development perspective, the responsibility** of governance is translated by the present meaning of the concept of democracy, according to which people's problems have priority and the government has to take responsibility to deal with the problems faced by the population and not the vice versa. The government has to come up with solutions for these problems.

Promoting human development is not only a social, economic or technical necessity but also a political and institutional challenge. Many of the impediments in the way of accomplishing human development objectives stem from problems arising in the governance style. Poverty mitigation through human development is the main objective of UNESCO programmes and good governance is indispensable for these efforts. It presumes ways through which citizens and groups in the society articulate their interests, mediate their differences and exercise their legal rights.

Democratic incentive governance for human development means turning public institutions into efficient and effective social bodies, whose main traits are transparency, participation, responsibility, social justification and social justice. These attributes are vital in an institutional environment that sets objectives regarding human development.

• **Free expression** can only be ensured if the government **assumes responsibility**. All the issues of good governance are promoted and they can develop if the media sector is strong and independent within the society and if journalists can supervise, investigate and criticise the public administration policies and actions. There is a substantive connection between good governance and the way the media function, as the latter enable a permanent examination and evaluation of the government's activities with the help of the population, who can help express public concerns and provide a base for dialogue. In order for the media to function within the public sector, governments should protect their independent expression and allow the free expression of different opinions in the society. Thus, the concept of good governance has to be analysed from the standpoint of the freedom of expression and the right to access to information.

The freedom of the media makes it possible to build a public space where different debates can take place and various opinions can be expressed so that citizens can show their assent or dissent regarding issues that are not officially allowed for. It is within the government's responsibility that the media are allowed to contribute to this participation process.

As they can identify and uncover the cases of disrespect for human rights, free and independent media can sensitise citizens and represent a source of information based on which civil society organisations and public authorities can act to prevent such abuses. Ensuring the freedom of expression and the freedom of the press is a priority because guaranteeing human rights represents a precondition for the functioning of a democracy.

By developing investigation journalism and promoting transparency within judicial, legislative and administrative procedures and by claiming access to civil servants and public documents, the media sector is the most effective segment of the society, because it is able to promote alertness over the supremacy of justice. The role of the government is to ensure protection of independence and pluralism for this sector, especially at critical moments within the process.

Providing a better *transparency* in the public administration and ensuring the access of the media to public documents and the decision-making process can unfold potential conflicts of interest and help the government maintain accuracy in the execution of its directives.

In the context of the *fight against poverty* a free press can play an important role in fostering and promoting good governance. By acting against corruption and permanently strengthening the institutions in charge of promoting global society development it can contribute to the enhancement of the importance assigned to development problems regarding resources allocation.

The key objective of UNESCO programmes is to mitigate poverty through sustainable development. One important step in accomplishing this objective is to offer the poor access to the media and provide them with quality information, which allows them to make informed decisions and make the best choices for their lives; at the same time, they will have the opportunity to express their own opinions, to have a role in electing decision-makers, thus rendering possible a more efficient allocation of resources.

Conclusions

The political system of a country can be an incentive or a barrier to reforms. It defines the boundaries within which policies and institutions are built. The government form directly influences the human development level; the institutional and political environment plays an important role in the economic development of a country. Progress is achieved through the implementation of policies and institutions. It requires that decision-makers' should be held responsible in this respect, take adequate action and consider several issues:

- promoting the relation economic growth-governance-public policies through a common action strategy and strong institutions, which are able to improve the standard of living at national and regional level;

- ensuring transparency within administrative institutions in view of improving their running; this presumes the necessity of enhancing the government's responsibility in its relation with citizens. This can be achieved if there is a focus on informing citizens to a wider extent about the government's proposals and activities;

- people belonging to all social categories should be given the opportunity to express their opinions about the way public institutions function because:

- taking part in drafting regulations regarding the access to community structures, resources and opportunities represents a fundamental human right and an embodiment of human development.

- the governance is representative to the extent to which it is socially open and it is equitable to the extent to which it is socially inclusive.

- improving the efficiency of resources distribution, the quality of public services and implicitly improving governance through a clear definition of the roles played by the central and local public administration and of their responsibilities in the political and administrative scope;

- being aware of the condition of the civil servant, who is permanently held responsible towards the citizen, should be one of the education components within the administration sector;

- given the negative impact that corruption has on competition and on the ability of the state to implement laws and regulations, one of the priorities of the governance should be the achievement of adequate policies and strategies meant to generate progress in the short run, especially under the conditions in which corruption cannot be entirely eradicated. Thus, reforms should be supported and they should have an intensive character.

- enabling press investigations – which can also be arduous – that focus on the activities run by the elected executive, civil servants, government agencies and the programmes they operate and reveal situations where the employees of the public sector do not have a proper behaviour in their relation with the citizens;

- judicial protection of the press, respect for the freedom of expression, access to information, mitigation of restrictions and sanctions applied to the journalism activity – these can all stand as proofs of an open relation between the media and democratic governments. Disseminating unpopular opinions reflecting strains in the society represents a way of display of these relations and of democracy, which is only possible if the media sector is open and pluralist;

- an enhanced governance institutional ability should ensure an efficient achievement of the desiderata concerning the supervision of the way the law is applied and the respect for human rights, which are essential elements for guaranteeing the rule of law, individual rights and individual security.

Therefore, from the human development standpoint, responsible democratic governance can be successful as it ensures the respect for fundamental human rights, while people can influence political decisions directly influencing their lives in real terms. But public policies respond to priorities. The present concept of human development expresses what political decision-makers consider as having priority in defining the chances to life and defence for individuals and group social agents.

References:

1. Ahmed Mohiddin, Ph. D., *Towards good governance and working democracy*, www.undp.org.ls;
2. Alexandru Bogdan Munteanu - *Societatea Civilă*, www.muntealb.com ;
3. Allan Rosenbaum - *Good governance, Accountability and the Public Servant* — www.unpanl.un.org.;
4. Anca Daniela Giurgiu, Adrian Baloi-Stroe, Simona Luca - *Corupția în administrația publică locală*, Editura FDSC, 2002, www.fdsc.ro;
5. Augustin Carstens - *The Role of Transparency and Accountability for Economic Development in Resource – rich Countries* www.imf.org/ian.2005;
6. Bernard Perret, *L'Evaluation des politiques publiques*, www.hcci.gouv.fr;
7. Dan Dodiță - *Evaziunea fiscală* www.e-referate.ro;
8. Daniel Kaufmann - *Transparency, Incentives, and Prevention (TIP) for Corruption Control and Good Governance, Empirical Findings, Practical Lessons, and Strategies For Action Based on International Experience*, The World Bank, 2002, www.info.worldbank.org;
9. Dorel Șandor, *Ambivalența factorilor politici în susținerea politicilor reformei în România*, CRPE/Lucrare nr.17/octombrie 1999, www.cerpe.ro;
10. Gh. Cercelescu, *Economia gri – un dar pentru clasa politică*, 6 noiembrie 2006, www.gandul.info;
11. Irina Mateescu - *Contrafacerea și economia*, Bizwords, www.bizwords.ro;

12. James Anderson and Cheryl Gray (lead authors) - *Anti-Corruption in Transition 3: Who is succeeding ... and why?*, iulie 2006, www.worldbank.org;
13. Mariana Stanciu *Politici sociale si politici economice*, www.biblioteca.ase.ro;
14. Silvia Martis - *Societatea civilă, câinele de pază al puterii*, www.româniliberă.com, decembrie 2005;
15. Simona Ilie – *Economia informală*, www.iccv.ro;
16. Ekos Research Associates Inc. - *The Use of Social Indicators as Evaluation instruments – Final Report –Rationale for New Accountability Mechanism*, [http/ www.hrsdc.gc.ca](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca), 1998;
17. *** *Raportul național al dezvoltării umane 2003-2005 - Guvernarea locală și dezvoltarea umană*, PNUD;
18. *** *Accountability*, www.adb.org;
19. *** *Dictionar de economie, editia a doua, Bucuresti, Editura Economica, 2001*;
20. *** *Strategia de reformă a sistemului judiciar 2005-2007*www.gov.ro;
21. *** *Strategia națională anticorupție 2005 – 2007*, www.gov.ro;
22. ****Journée mondiale de la liberté de la presse – Medias et la bonne gouvernance*, www.portal.unesco.org;
23. *** *Quelle est la performance des pays en matière de gouvernance*”, *Le group Banque Mondiale*, www.go.worldbank.org/ADEYIC 9080, *WGI World Bank*);
24. *** *La mauvaise gouvernance ne concerne pas que les pays en developpement*, *Le service en francais de Xinhua* 15.09.2006;
25. *** *Starea mediului de afaceri*, www.ccir.ro;
26. *** *Governance and leadership*, www.worldvision.com.au, 2004;
27. *** *Governance: The World Bank’s Experience*, World Bank 1994, www.worldbank.org;
28. *** *Issues Report Card, Good Govenance Cultural Heritage Developing capacities for good urban governance*, *The urban governance initiative (TUGI)*, www.gdrc.org;
29. *** *Social Research Center United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM)* www.aucegypt.edu;
30. *** *Ce este Guvernarea?, A ajunge la o înțelegere comună a "guvernării"*, World Bank Group, 2006, www.worldbank.org;
31. *** *Economia subterană - economia subterană în România și rolul sistemului fiscal în relevarea și distrugerea ei*, www.referate.ro;
32. *** *Raport de monitorizare, cap.24 Cooperarea în domeniul justiției și afacerilor interne*, MIE, www.mie.ro;
 *** *OADO – Corupția – un pericol mortal pentru România*, octombrie 2004, www.oado.ro.