

GOVERNANCE AND GOOD GOVERNANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF EUROPEAN MIGRATION: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS, INDICATORS AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

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Abstract

Our paper examines the conceptual architecture of governance and good governance and its analytical relevance for understanding the economic and social effects of migration in the Member States of the European Union. Drawing on an extensive review of the theoretical literature, the study traces the conceptual shift from the classical, hierarchical notion of governance to the contemporary understanding of governance as a system of self-organizing and interdependent networks of public and private actors (Rhodes, 1996; Pierre and Peters, 2000). Particular attention is paid to the multi-level governance framework developed by Hooghe and Marks (2003), which captures the fragmented distribution of competences characterizing migration management in the EU, where asylum policy is partly communitized, while the integration of migrants remains a predominantly national and sub-national responsibility. The paper further analyses the normative dimension of good governance and its empirical operationalization through measurement systems such as the Global Governance Indicators (Kaufmann, Kraay and Mastruzzi, 2010), the Corruption Perceptions Index and the OECD framework, while critically discussing their methodological limitations. The central argument is that, in terms of the institutional quality of destination states, it constitutes a key explanatory factor for the variation in migration outcomes across member states, shaping the composition of migration flows and their consequences on labour markets, social protection systems and social cohesion. Thus, the study provides a conceptual basis for the comparative empirical analysis pursued in the following chapters.

Keywords: governance, good governance, multi-level governance, Worldwide Governance Indicators, migration, European Union, institutional quality

Clasificare JEL: F22, F55, H11, O43, D73

1. Introduction

The relationship between the quality of governance and the management of the migration phenomenon is one of the fastest expanding research themes in the European economic and political literature of the last decades. As migratory flows have acquired an unprecedented scale and complexity in the European Union, the question regarding the factors that determine the variation of their economic and social effects between Member States has become increasingly pressing. The answers provided by the empirical literature converge towards an explanatory factor that transcends the macroeconomic context and the demographic characteristics of the flows: the institutional quality of the host states, operationalized through the concept of good governance.

We pursued two complementary objectives. The first consists in reconstructing the conceptual frameworks through which governance has evolved from the classical, hierarchical and state-centric model, towards the multi-level architectures that characterize the current functioning of the European system. The second aims to present the main systems for operationalizing and measuring good governance, with an emphasis on their relevance for the analysis of the migration phenomenon.

2. Governance – from classical governance to multi-level architectures

The modern concept of governance emerged in political science and public administration in the 1990s as a response to the limitations of the Weberian model of the centralized state. Rhodes (1996) was among the first to theorize the transition from government to governance, arguing that contemporary governance is no longer the monopoly of the state, but involves networks of public and private actors, with varying degrees of autonomy from the central authority. In his seminal work, Rhodes (1996, p. 660) defines governance as “self-organized and inter-organizational networks” characterized by interdependence, resource exchange, continuous negotiation, and autonomy from the state.

The term governance - taken over in Romanian literature from the English governance - has undergone a remarkable academic evolution since the ninth decade of the 20th century, marking a conceptual break with the traditional, monistic and hierarchical vision of the exercise of public authority. This conceptual transition is not without practical consequences: it reflects the real transformations that public governance systems have undergone under the pressure of globalization, administrative decentralization, the privatization of some public services and the proliferation of international organizations as actors with autonomous normative power.

Rhodes' fundamental contribution was continued and refined by Pierre and Peters (2000, pp. 43-72), who, in their work *Governance, Politics and the State*, proposed a systematic typology of governance models, distinguishing between the statist model, in which the state remains the central actor of social coordination, the liberal or pluralist model, in which the market and civil society take on essential regulatory functions, the network-based model, in which power is distributed horizontally among interdependent actors, and the resource dependence model, in which the configuration of power is determined by control over strategic resources. This typology is of particular analytical utility for the present research, as EU Member States do not adopt a uniform model of managing the migratory phenomenon, but oscillate between different paradigms depending on national administrative traditions, available institutional capacities and the internal political context, thus generating significant variations in performance which are precisely the object of the empirical comparison proposed in the following chapters. This dimension is essential because migration in the EU is not governed exclusively by Member States, but through a multi-level system involving European institutions (Commission, Parliament, Council, Frontex, European Union Agency for Asylum - EUAA), national states and local authorities - a paradigmatic example of governance in the sense of Rhodes (1996) and Pierre and Peters (2000).

Hooghe and Marks (2003) developed the concept of multi-level governance, demonstrating that, in the EU, competences are not exercised exclusively at national level, but are distributed between supranational, national and subnational levels. Applied to migration, this framework allows the analysis of the fragmentation of responsibilities: asylum policy is partly communitised (the Common European Asylum System - CEAS), while the integration of migrants remains largely a national and local competence. This fragmentation partly explains the disparities in performance between Member States.

If governance describes the architecture of governance, good governance prescribes the standards that it must meet. The concept has acquired theoretical and operational consistency through the documents of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1997) and the World Bank (1992), which identified a set of constitutive principles: participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity and inclusion, efficiency and effectiveness, accountability.

Kaufmann, Kraay and Mastruzzi (2010), within the World Bank's *Worldwide Governance Indicators*, operationalized good governance through six measurable dimensions: voice and accountability, political stability and absence of violence, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, control of corruption.

These indicators are relevant to the theme we are developing in this research, as empirical literature has demonstrated that the level of good governance of destination countries significantly influences migratory flows, their composition and the capacity to integrate migrants (Docquier and Rapoport, 2012).

For the European space, the Council of Europe has articulated its own doctrine of good governance through the Strategy for Innovation and Good Governance at Local Level (2008), which adds to the principle of managerial efficiency the democratic and ethical dimensions: citizen participation, subsidiarity, non-discrimination and social cohesion. The economic and social effects of migration are deeply linked to the institutional and ethical capacity of states to manage diversity, ensure equitable access to public services and prevent marginalization. Boswell (2007) has demonstrated that states with stronger institutions - measured precisely by indicators of good governance - produce more coherent and effective migration policies, while states with institutional deficits tend to produce reactive, uncoordinated responses with negative social effects for both migrants and host communities. An important contribution to clarifying the concept comes from the differentiation between government and governance, a distinction that has allowed the analysis to be extended beyond the limits of the administrative apparatus itself. In this sense, Graham, Amos and Plumptre (2003) show that governance must be understood as the broader process by which decisions are made, priorities are set and responsibility is distributed, involving not only state institutions, but also a variety of social and economic actors. This approach changes the way in which good governance is interpreted, since the emphasis is not exclusively on the formal structure of institutions, but on the way in which they interact with society and on their capacity to integrate diverse interests into a coherent framework of action. Consequently, good governance comes to be associated not only with administrative efficiency, but also with transparency, participation, accountability and equity, dimensions that do not operate in isolation, but are mutually conditioned.

Governance, in these conditions, acquires a meaning that goes beyond the formal framework of institutions and procedures, being linked to the way in which public issues are constructed and interpreted and to the capacity of institutional systems to respond to situations characterized by uncertainty and simultaneous pressures from several directions. The analysis proposed by Kalm (2008) goes beyond the administrative dimension and shows that migration is not only a field of public intervention, but a phenomenon that calls into question the relationship between state, territory and population, affecting the premises on which modern political organization is based. In this sense, the intensification of mobility does not only generate problems of flow management, but also forces institutions to function in a framework in which borders and political affiliation become less stable, and this instability is directly reflected in the way in which policies are formulated and implemented. Consequently, institutional efficiency can no longer be assessed exclusively through economic results or compliance with procedures, but must also be related to the system's ability to manage uncertainty and maintain a functional balance between stability and adaptation. Although governance has become a frequent research topic in European studies, there is still some confusion regarding its conceptualization. “The concept of governance is difficult to define; it is frequently used by both social scientists and practitioners, without a generally accepted definition” (Pierre and Peters, 2000, p.7). Schneider (2012) even argues that this conceptual ambiguity of the term is “the secret of its success”.

Beyond the multitude of existing definitions and interpretations, Pierre and Peters (2000, p. 3) identify two main meanings of the concept of governance:

- the first concerns “the empirical manifestation of the state’s adaptation to its external environment, as it emerged at the end of the twentieth century”. Through this lens, governance appears as both a process and a state of affairs in which public and private actors engage together in the deliberate regulation of social relations and conflicts. Thus, it is clearly distinguished from the classical notion of governance: the latter focuses on hierarchical decision-making structures and the

dominant role of state actors, while governance involves the equal participation of public and private actors, along with non-hierarchical forms of decision-making;

- the second meaning presents governance as “a conceptual or theoretical representation of the coordination of social systems”. Starting from this, Pierre observes that two major directions of research are emerging. The first is a “state-centric” one, focused on the capacity of the state and its institutions to guide (“steer”) social developments, but also on the way in which they interact with non-state interests and actors, especially those in the private sector. The second direction, on the contrary, starts from a society-centered perspective and emphasizes coordination mechanisms - whether formal or informal - between public and private actors, embodied through networks and public-private partnerships (Kohler-Koch and Rittberger, 2006). The most influential theoretical framework for the analysis of governance in the European context remains, however, the concept of multi-level governance (MLG), developed by Hooghe and Marks (2003) in their series of works from the 1990s–2000s. Hooghe and Marks (2003) demonstrated, through a comparative analysis of decision-making processes in the EU, that political authority is not concentrated at a single territorial level, but is distributed - and often contested - between supranational, national and subnational levels, which coexist in relations of complementarity, but also of tension. Hooghe and Marks (2003, pp. 236-240) identify two distinct types of MLG:

- Type I, characterized by powers distributed across fixed and well-defined territorial levels (similar to classical federalism), and

- Type II, characterized by overlapping jurisdictions, with a functional character, and a variable number of governance levels depending on the area of public policy.

Migration management in the EU faithfully illustrates Type II of this classification: asylum policy is partly communitized through the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and operationalized through specialized agencies such as the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) and Frontex, while the integration of migrants remains overwhelmingly a national and, frequently, subnational competence, generating an extremely complex governance architecture, the dysfunctions of which partly explain the disparities in outcomes documented in the empirical literature.

In recent decades, more and more studies have stopped considering the EU simply as an international organization or as a supranational institutional construct. They analyze it rather as a complex system of governance, defined by “a unique set of multi-level, non-hierarchical and regulatory institutions, as well as a hybrid mix of state and non-state actors” (Hix, 1998, p. 39). This particular configuration has led to the emergence of several concepts intended to capture the sui generis nature of the European political system, including “multi-level governance” (Marks et al., 1996), “regulatory state” (Majone, 1996) or “network governance” (Eising and Kohler-Koch, 1999). The concept of European governance, however, implies a certain semantic broadening, since the institutional reality of the Union is too complex to be reduced to a single operating model. Some features, such as the multi-level dimension, are found throughout the European architecture, while others appear more prominently in certain areas of public policy – especially where the Community method grants an important role to supranational actors, and policies are developed through cooperation networks between European institutions, experts, private sector organizations and national authorities. As European integration has extended to sensitive areas such as economic and monetary policy, security, defense or judicial and police cooperation, the decision-making process has acquired more flexible forms of coordination, close to what the specialized literature calls “intensive transgovernmentalism” (Wallace, 2005, pp. 80, 87–89).

In this framework, Member States do not disappear from the equation, but maintain significant control, while adapting the traditional ways in which they exercise their authority. In this context, the Community method remains one of the clearest expressions of European governance. Scharpf (2003) characterizes it as a “co-decision mode”, in which the European Commission plays a central role in both the drafting and implementation of legislation, the

European Parliament gradually gains more influence, and the Council adopts acts by qualified majority or, in certain cases, by unanimity. Both in the preparation and implementation phases of policies, the European institutions do not act in isolation, but frequently resort to consultations and co-opt private interest groups, professional organisations and independent experts to integrate technical knowledge, diverse interests and specialist expertise. Also, committees composed of national representatives and specialists play an important role in finding compromises and facilitating the effective transposition and application of European norms at national and subnational level (Joerges and Vos, 1999). Another fundamental dimension of European governance is its multi-level character. Marks (1993), Marks et al. (1996) define multi-level governance as “a system of continuous negotiation between governments interconnected at several territorial levels”. In this view, decision-making authority no longer belongs exclusively to national governments, but is distributed between different levels – local, regional, national and supranational – creating a permanent interdependence between actors who negotiate, cooperate and constantly adjust their positions according to the context. Hooghe and Marks (2003) underline that, in this type of governance, relationships are interconnected rather than strictly hierarchical. Although national arenas remain essential for defining government preferences, sub-national actors are no longer limited to them. They can act directly in both national and European spaces. Therefore, national governments no longer have a monopoly on the processes taking place on their territory, but share control, in certain areas, with other levels of government and other actors.

As such, the governance of the European Union reflects a profound change from the classic model of hierarchical governance, centered almost exclusively on the state. It describes a more flexible and inclusive coordination system, in which public decision-making results from the permanent interaction between European institutions, national governments, regional and local authorities, experts, civil society organizations and other relevant actors. Precisely for this reason, the notion of governance is better suited than that of governance to describe the functioning of the European Union, as it captures both the plurality of decision-making levels and the importance of non-hierarchical forms of public policy development and implementation (Kohler-Koch and Rittberger, 2006). The introduction of the concept of multi-level governance in European studies essentially marks the overcoming of the traditional separation between European and national politics, as this analytical framework shows that European integration cannot be understood without the effects it produces on the institutions, processes and internal policies of the member states (Lenschow, 2005). In this way, the multi-level perspective significantly broadens the field of analysis and leads to the issue of Europeanization, a concept used to capture the way in which European integration generates adaptations at the national level (Featherstone and Radaelli, 2003). In the specialized literature, Europeanization has received numerous definitions, precisely because its effects can be observed through a variety of mechanisms and channels through which “Europe” determines or favors internal transformations (Radaelli, 2000; Olsen, 2002; Lenschow, 2005). From a governance perspective, research on Europeanization starts from the institutional and decision-making arrangements at the European Union level, considered as an explanatory factor for the changes produced internally. These transformations can be analyzed through changes in national public policies, discourses, institutions or the capacity of domestic actors to act in the new contexts created by European integration.

A look at research devoted to Europeanization shows that public policies are usually more exposed to European influence than national political or institutional structures as a whole. At the same time, some areas of public policy prove to be more permeable to pressures coming from the European level, while others remain more resistant to change (Radaelli, 2000). However, comparisons regarding the domestic impact of European governance do not always lead to clear results. The relationship between different modes of governance and forms of internal change remains difficult to generalize, especially when trying to explain the conditions under which inertia, withdrawal, absorption, accommodation, or transformation of national governance arrangements

occur. Although the literature on Europeanization has contributed substantially to the understanding of the influence of “Europe” on domestic public policies, its conclusions are often limited to narrow sets of comparisons and rarely allow for the formulation of general propositions. One of the more stable ideas that emerges from this research is that European regulations do not produce full uniformity, but rather a “differentiated Europe”, in which the effects of integration vary according to the national context, existing institutions and the capacity of domestic actors to adapt (Héritier et al., 2001).

The dominant perspective in the literature on Europeanization, however, remains a “top-down” or unidirectional one, in which Europeanization is understood as the process by which domestic policy areas become increasingly subject to policy-making at the European level (Börzel, 1999). However, this approach has begun to be complemented by research that also introduces a “bottom-up” perspective, focusing on how national actors in turn influence the European decision-making process (Börzel, 2002). At the same time, some contributions propose a more comprehensive understanding of Europeanization, in which the relationship between European governance and national governance arrangements is analyzed as a reciprocal process, not as a simple transmission of rules from the EU level to the Member States.

Research on the links between European Union governance and national governance has generated several important observations. First, the European level can be understood as an opportunity structure that domestic actors can use, depending on their interests and resources, to promote their own objectives and, indirectly, to influence both EU and national governance arrangements. Héritier (1996) shows, for example, that the expansion of regulatory policies in the EU can be explained, in certain cases, by the initiative of a national “first mover” actor, which tries to transfer a certain national regulatory style to the European level. Second, understanding the relationship between European and national governance as an interactive and highly context-dependent process draws attention to the temporal dimension. If internal changes are analyzed only at a single point in time, through a “snapshot” perspective, adaptation to new forms of governance can often appear unsuccessful or insufficient (Pierson, 1998). In the medium and long term, however, the costs of adjustment may change, especially when exogenous changes occur in the general framework of national governance, which may make internal adaptation gradually possible.

Third, the European system of networked governance presents structural characteristics closer to neo-corporatist systems, such as the German one, than to statist, hierarchically organized and state-centered systems, such as the French one. For this reason, European partnership-based arrangements are more easily absorbed by neo-corporatist governance systems than by statist ones, in which the decision-making logic remains more hierarchical and concentrated at the state level (Lenschow, 2005; Schmidt, 2002).

Understanding governance as an institutional architecture distributed over multiple levels of authority does not, however, exhaust the question of the quality of this architecture and the standards against which it can be assessed. It is precisely this normative dimension that is covered by the concept of good governance, which does not describe how governance systems work, but prescribes how they should work, while also providing the tools by which their performance can be measured and compared.

2. Principles of good governance and measurement indicators

The concept of good governance did not appear in the economic literature as a clearly defined theoretical construct from the beginning, but gradually took shape, as development analysis began to highlight the fact that differences between states could no longer be explained solely by the level of resources or by economic policy options, but especially by the way in which these policies were institutionally supported, coherently implemented and maintained over time.

In this context, analytical interest gradually shifted from the content of decisions to the mechanisms that make them possible, those less visible structures that give consistency to public

action and that become decisive precisely at the moments when blockages, delays or deviations from the initial objectives appear. From this perspective, governance begins to be understood not as a simple exercise of authority, but as a set of interconnected processes, in which the stability of rules, the coherence of their application and the ability to manage unpredictable situations acquire an importance comparable to the formulation of policies themselves, which explains why the literature ends up treating good governance as a condition for the functioning of the system rather than as its result.

This change in perspective is supported by numerous analyses that show that economic performance cannot be separated from the quality of the institutional environment, since development directly depends on the capacity of institutions to reduce uncertainty, to provide a predictable framework and to maintain a certain consistency of decisions over time, even under conditions of economic or social pressure. In this line of interpretation, good governance no longer appears as a set of abstract principles, but as a framework that concretely influences the way decisions are made at the individual and collective level, because the stability of rules and their credibility reduce the need for defensive reactions and allow resources to be directed towards productive activities, not towards permanent adjustments generated by uncertainty. In the analysis proposed by Srivastava (2009), good governance is directly associated with the efficiency, accountability and capacity of the administrative system to function in a coherent and understandable way, which explains why economies characterized by a higher degree of institutional stability tend to register not only more constant growth, but also a greater capacity to absorb shocks without entering into major imbalances. At the same time, the contributions developed around international organizations have played an important role in transforming the concept into a more concrete tool of analysis, by attempting to anchor it in criteria that can be traced in the effective functioning of institutions.

Without reducing the complexity of the phenomenon, these approaches have emphasized the way in which power is exercised in the administration of economic and social resources and the capacity of public systems to produce sustainable results, which has led to good governance being analyzed increasingly frequently in terms of efficiency, accountability and transparency. In this direction, the interpretations discussed by Srivastava (2009) highlight the fact that institutional dysfunctions can cancel the effects of well-designed policies, not through lack of intention, but through the system's inability to support them coherently, which explains why public interventions can become fragmented and difficult to maintain over time. Against the background of these developments, the literature does not insist on a single and rigid definition of good governance, preferring to highlight a core of dimensions that constantly reappear and that become relevant especially through the way they are combined in practice. What matters is not so much the isolated presence of principles, but the coherence between rules, decision and implementation, because the lack of this coherence almost inevitably leads to the emergence of dysfunctions that cannot be corrected by specific adjustments, but require deeper interventions at the institutional level. For this reason, good governance remains an open and adaptable concept, and its usefulness does not derive from the rigidity of a definition, but from the ability to explain why some systems manage to transform policies into relatively stable outcomes, while others remain marked by incoherence and implementation difficulties.

The proliferation of governance indicators in recent decades is not accidental nor is it simply the result of a technical evolution of analytical tools, but rather reflects a deeper change in the way the role of institutions in the economy is understood, as it has become increasingly difficult to explain differences between states solely through resources, policies or macroeconomic conjunctures, without taking into account the way in which these elements are supported and filtered by institutional capacity. In this context, the need to transform a complex and difficult-to-define concept into a usable tool has led to the development of a very large number of indicators and databases, each trying to capture, from a certain perspective, the way in which institutions

function and how efficiently they manage public resources, implement policies and maintain a certain degree of coherence in public action. As Maurseth (2008) notes, this evolution is closely linked to the growth of economic interdependencies and the increasing emphasis on international comparability, which has led not only to the expansion of the use of governance indicators, but also to the diversification of the methodologies by which they are constructed, without this process leading to a standardization of the measurement method, but rather to a coexistence of different approaches, each with its own assumptions and limits.

This diversity should not be understood as a problem that can be solved by the technical refinement of the indicators, because it essentially reflects the nature of the concept of governance, which cannot be reduced to a single and easily observable dimension, but involves a set of institutional processes and relationships that manifest themselves differently depending on the economic, social and political context. For this reason, any attempt at measurement involves an inevitable selection, both in terms of the dimensions included and the way in which they are quantified, which makes the indicators not simple reflections of reality, but analytical constructions that capture only certain facets of it. In his analysis, Maurseth (2008) highlights precisely this limitation, showing that there is no universal standard of governance that can be applied identically to all states, and differences in results must be interpreted in relation to the methodological assumptions underlying each set of indicators.

The problem becomes even more evident when these dimensions are aggregated into a single score, a process that allows for quick comparisons and the use of indicators in empirical models, but which at the same time introduces an additional level of simplification. The transformation of heterogeneous information - coming from different sources and constructed using different methodologies - into a composite index implies the assumption of some assumptions regarding the comparability between dimensions that, in reality, are not always directly equivalent, which can lead to the loss of relevant information or to the overestimation of the precision of the results. This limitation is clearly highlighted by Manasan, Gaffud and Gonzalez (1999), who show that the process of constructing a governance index involves trade-offs between relevance, data availability and the need for comparability, and the final result should be seen as a useful approximation, not as an exact measure of institutional quality.

The same difficulties are also found in attempts to adapt these instruments to the national or local level, where many of the essential components of governance - such as the capacity to formulate policies, the coherence of implementation or the relationship between institutions and citizens - cannot be observed directly and must be captured through intermediary variables, which function more as approximations than as exact measures. Under these conditions, the measurement of governance cannot be separated from its interpretation, as each methodological choice influences how the results and their limits are understood. If governance as such is a relatively normatively neutral analytical concept, describing how systems of governance work without prescribing how they should work, the concept of good governance introduces an explicit evaluative perspective, defining standards against which institutional performance can be measured, compared and, ultimately, reformed.

This normative dimension was initially systematically articulated through the documents of the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which used the concept as a tool for conditioning development assistance and as a framework for assessing the institutional quality of beneficiary states. The World Bank introduced the term into the vocabulary of development policies through the report *Governance and Development* (1992), in which good governance was defined as the exercise of political power to manage the public affairs of a nation and was conditioned by the existence of an efficient public sector, a predictable legal framework and accessible and transparent public information (World Bank, 1992). Later, UNDP expanded this definition through the document *Governance for Sustainable Human Development* (1997), identifying eight constitutive characteristics of good governance: participation, rule of law,

transparency, responsiveness, consensus-building, equity and inclusion, efficiency and effectiveness, and accountability (UNDP, 1997). This enumeration has acquired special status in the academic literature and in the public policy documents of international organizations, becoming the implicit reference frame for the vast majority of empirical research that seeks to assess the quality of governance at the national or subnational level.

The empirical operationalization of the concept of good governance has received the most elaborate measurement tool through the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) project, developed by Daniel Kaufmann, Aart Kraay and Massimo Mastruzzi (2010). In the methodological reference work published in 2010 as a World Bank working paper, Kaufmann, Kraay and Mastruzzi (2010) propose six aggregate dimensions of governance: voice and accountability, which captures the degree of citizen participation in political processes and press freedom; political stability and the absence of violence; government effectiveness, which measures the quality of public services and civil service; regulatory quality, which reflects the government's capacity to formulate and implement policies favorable to private development; rule of law, which assesses compliance with the rule of law, including the quality of contracts and property rights; and control of corruption, which captures the extent to which public power is exercised in private interest (Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi, 2010). These indicators have been used extensively in the empirical literature examining the relationship between the quality of governance and international migration flows, with converging results suggesting that states with high scores on good governance attract more skilled migrants, produce higher integration rates, and are less vulnerable to the negative effects of emigration, including the brain drain phenomenon. This six-dimensional architecture of the WGI reflects the belief that good governance cannot be reduced to a single dimension, but that each component contributes, through distinct and partly independent channels, to the creation of a coherent institutional environment capable of supporting both economic performance and social cohesion.

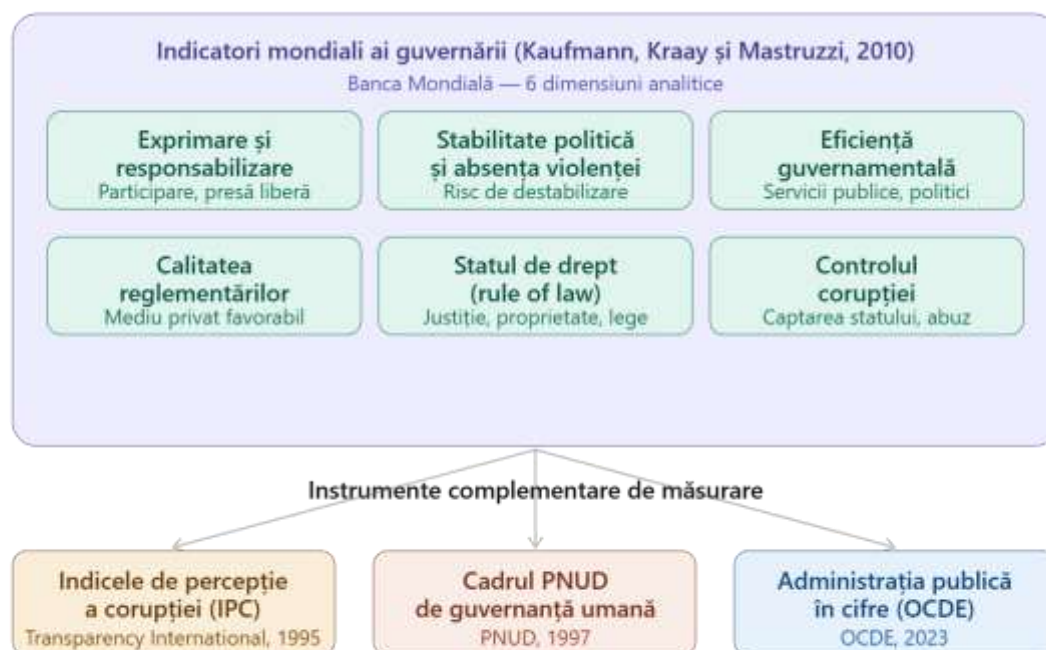


Figure 1. Multidimensional architecture of governance quality measurement

Source: Own processing after Kaufmann, Kraay and Mastruzzi (2010), UNDP (1997) and OECD (2023)

Along with the WGI, the specialized literature has produced other systems for measuring governance quality (Figure 1.1), each with its own methodological foundations and a narrower or more specialized scope of application. The Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), published annually by Transparency International since 1995, is one of the most widely used instruments in studies on institutional integrity, capturing the perceptions of experts and business people regarding the level of corruption in the public sector. UNDP (1997) has developed, in turn, an approach focused on the human dimension of governance, which emphasizes not only administrative efficiency, but also the state's capacity to ensure fundamental rights and equitable access to public services. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2023) has proposed, through the Government at a Glance initiative, a comparative framework focused on the concrete results of public administration - the efficiency of spending, the quality of regulations, the integrity of civil servants - offering a complementary perspective to the indicators based on perception. Each of these systems captures partial dimensions of good governance, and their comparative or combined use allows for a more complete picture than that offered by any instrument taken individually, especially when the research targets different institutional contexts, such as that of the European Union member states.

The use of governance indicators in empirical research has generated a consistent methodological debate on the validity and limits of these instruments, a debate that cannot be ignored without the risk of overinterpreting the results of quantitative analyses. A first line of criticism concerns the perceptual nature of most indicators: unlike objective variables, such as GDP or the unemployment rate, governance dimensions cannot be observed directly, but are reconstructed based on the assessments of experts or specialized institutions, which means that perceptions of the quality of governance can be influenced by economic performance instead of explaining it - thus creating a problem of reverse causality that is difficult to solve using classical statistical methods. Another problem reported in the specialized literature is that of aggregating heterogeneous dimensions into a single score: combining such different information as political stability, regulatory quality and corruption control implicitly implies a weighting of them, and this weighting reflects value judgments that are not always transparent or empirically justified. Despite these limitations, the WGI indicators remain the most widely used instrument in comparative governance studies, precisely because they ensure extensive geographical coverage and longitudinal comparability, allowing the inclusion of institutional quality in panel models that track the evolution of the relationship between governance and economic and social outcomes at the European Union scale.

Recent developments in the global economy, coupled with increased international mobility, have made good governance no longer understandable in classical terms of administrative efficiency, because institutions no longer operate in a stable, delimited and relatively predictable framework, but in a space where external pressures – generated by labor movement, market integration and economic interdependencies – permanently modify the conditions in which public policies are designed and implemented. In this direction, Betts (2008) treats international migration as an integral part of globalization processes, emphasizing that population mobility reflects the intensification of connections between states and, implicitly, the limits of their capacity to act in isolation. From this perspective, public policies are no longer formulated in an exclusively domestic framework, but in an environment characterized by interdependence and the need for forms, even if incomplete, of coordination between states, which makes good governance increasingly closely linked to the capacity of institutions to function under the pressure of processes that go beyond national borders and to integrate these constraints into their own decision-making mechanisms.

Another conceptual framework relevant to the multi-actor dimension of migration governance is that of policy networks, theorized extensively by Marsh and Rhodes (1992) and

subsequently applied to the field of migration by authors such as Geddes (2008), who demonstrated that European migration policies are the product of the interaction between European institutions, Member States, interest groups, non-governmental organizations and international organizations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in a web of interdependencies that makes any mono-causal explanation of national policy variation unlikely. Geddes (2008, pp. 17–45) also emphasizes that this network is not value-neutral: it reproduces and amplifies asymmetric power relations between Member States, between transit and destination states, and between migrants and the institutions that manage their legal and social status.

The relationship between good governance and migration has been systematically analyzed in the economic literature through the contributions of Docquier and Rapoport (2012, pp. 700–712), whose synthesis demonstrated that differences in institutional quality between countries of origin and destination constitute one of the determining factors of migrant selection, in the sense that better institutions in destination countries attract migrants with a high level of human capital, thus amplifying the selective effects of emigration on economies of origin. This finding has direct implications for the analysis of the economic and social effects of migration in the European Union countries: the variation in the quality of governance between member states is not only an explanatory factor of the differences in institutional management of migratory flows, but also a mechanism through which the typology and composition of these flows are configured, with differentiated consequences on labor markets, social protection systems and social cohesion.

An additional dimension of good governance, of particular relevance to the European context, is that formulated by the Council of Europe through the Strategy for Innovation and Good Governance at Local Level (2008), which adds to the technical-managerial dimension promoted by international financial organizations a strong anchoring in democratic values and fundamental rights. The document identifies twelve principles of good local governance, among which the following stand out as relevant for the management of migration: non-discrimination and ensuring equitable access to public services for all categories of the population, including residents of foreign origin; subsidiarity, which requires that decisions be taken at the level closest to the citizen; and participation, which involves the involvement of all affected groups - including migrant communities - in the processes of developing local public policies (Council of Europe, 2008, pp. 5–9). This democratic-participatory perspective goes beyond the purely managerial framework of the WGI indicators and introduces the legitimacy of governance processes into the equation, an aspect all the more important in a field with a strong political and identity charge such as migration.

Boswell (2007) has empirically demonstrated that states with stronger institutions - measured by indicators similar to those in the WGI - produce more coherent migration policies, better coordinated between levels of governance and with more favorable social effects for both migrants and host communities, while states with institutional deficits tend to produce reactive, fragmented and vulnerable responses to electoral instrumentalization, with documentable negative effects both in terms of migrant integration and in terms of social cohesion of the communities affected by their presence. This finding reinforces the central theoretical argument of this paper: the variation in the economic and social effects of migration in the member states of the European Union cannot be satisfactorily explained exclusively by the demographic characteristics of migratory flows or by the macroeconomic situation, but requires taking into account the institutional quality of host states, operationalized by indicators of good governance.

Beyond its theoretical construction and operationalization through indicators, the concept of good governance proves its analytical relevance in a concrete way through the effects that the quality of governance produces on economic and social development.

Conclusions

What emerges clearly from this analysis is that governance is not an abstract concept reserved for academic treatises — it describes, in very concrete terms, the difference between a state that manages to transform immigration into a resource and one that transforms it into a problem. This difference is not about the number of migrants or their geographical origin, but about the capacity of institutions to manage diversity, to provide functional public services and to maintain policy coherence over time.

The theoretical transition from classical, hierarchical and exclusively state-centered governance to the multi-level governance architectures described by Hooghe and Marks (2003) is not a simple exercise in conceptual refinement. It reflects a reality that EU member states experience every day: no state manages migration alone anymore. Asylum policy is partly decided in Brussels, the integration of migrants falls to local authorities, and the social tensions generated by the presence of migrant communities are felt at the neighbourhood level. This fragmentation of responsibilities explains, to a large extent, why the results are so different from one country to another, even when the volume of migratory flows is comparable.

Good governance indicators — in particular the six in the WGI developed by Kaufmann, Kraay and Mastruzzi (2010) — provide a useful tool for measuring these institutional differences and relating them to the concrete effects of migration: employment, the risk of social exclusion, the contribution to economic growth. The data show that countries with stronger institutions attract more qualified migrants, integrate them more effectively and benefit more from their presence. Countries with institutional deficits tend to absorb migrants in informal sectors, produce reactive policies and accumulate social tensions that are difficult to manage in the long term.

One result worth highlighting is the bidirectional nature of the relationship between governance and migration. The question usually posed in the literature is how the quality of institutions influences migration flows. Less often, the reverse is analyzed: how migration modifies institutions. States that manage demographic diversity well tend to develop more inclusive and adaptable institutions. Those that fail risk a vicious circle in which social tensions erode trust in institutions, and weakened institutions become increasingly less able to produce coherent migration policies.

The limitations of this analysis must be fully acknowledged. Governance indicators measure perceptions, not directly observable realities, which always introduces a risk of reverse causality: we do not always know whether good institutions generate positive economic outcomes or whether economic prosperity produces favorable perceptions of institutions. This issue cannot be resolved conceptually—it requires rigorous econometric tests, which are the natural direction of further research.

The conclusion is that good governance is not an optional ingredient for successful migration management. It is the condition without which no migration flow, no matter how well selected, truly produces the economic and social effects it promises.

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