

## TOWARDS NATIONAL METHODOLOGIES FOR MEASURING CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS

Balázs Hohmann

*Assistant professor, University of Pécs, Faculty of Law, Department of Technology Law and Energy Law (Hungary)*

*Corresponding address: [hohmann.balazs@ajk.pte.hu](mailto:hohmann.balazs@ajk.pte.hu)*

*ORCID: [0000-0003-4252-1923](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4252-1923)*

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to examine internationally used methods for measuring corruption perceptions and to draw findings and conclusions on the need for national corruption perception methodologies and how they can be aligned with international approaches. The article's findings suggest that there are a number of technical criticisms of international indicators regarding their validity, reliability and objectivity, which could be addressed by the development of a national indicator, while potentially improving aspects of the international indicator with respect to the above issues. The findings of this article are based on the results of the research and preparatory study carried out by the author in the framework of the KÖFOP-2.2.3-VEKOP-16-2016-00001 project, so-called "Capacity building and awareness raising for the increased detection and prevention of corruption cases".

### KEYWORDS

Corruption, Corruption perception, Methodology, Interdependence.

### ARTICLE HISTORY

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I. Introduction

The theoretical starting point for the topic under study is the idea that corruption is typically a latent phenomenon<sup>1</sup> embedded in the surrounding political, social, and economic environment, and therefore its assessment from official documents, statistics or other recorded sources is subject to significant limitations.<sup>2</sup> In line with this, the vast majority of national and international methodologies for measuring corruption focus on capturing perceptions of corruption. In order to delineate the international measurement methodologies, it is worth following the methodological division published in Debora Valentina Malito, *Measuring corruption indicators and indices* (2004), as it is considered suitable for categorising a wide range of indicators.<sup>3</sup>

Table 1 - Summary table of methodologies for measuring corruption

	Provider	Measures
Corruption survey based	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) & World Bank	Business Environment and Enterprise Performance Survey (BEEPS);
	Gallup International	Voice of the People Survey (VOPS);
	Global Business Media Limited	Business International Index; Corruption Experience Index
	International Budget Partnership	Open Budget Survey
	Transparency International	Corruption Perceptions Index
	Transparency International & Gallup International	Bribery perception index (BPI); Global Corruption Barometer (GCB)
(Global) Governance Indices (II)	European Commission	Eurobarometer
	EU ICS Research Consortium	International Crime Victimization Surveys (ICVS)
	European Values Study	European Values Study
	Freedom House	Nation in Transit (NIT)
	Global Integrity & Mo Ibrahim Foundation	Africa Integrity Indicators; Index of African Governance; The Corruption Notebooks; Global Integrity Index
	HIS Global Insight	Global Insight
	Institute for Management Development (IMD)	The Global Competitiveness Report (GRC)

<sup>1</sup> Luca Pieroni, Giorgio d’Agostino and Francesco Bartolucci, *Identifying Corruption through Latent Class Models: Evidence from Transition Economies* (MPRA Paper No 43981, 2013) 3–5.

<sup>2</sup> Anastasiia Shukhova and Yulii Nisnevich, *Measurement of Validity of Corruption Indices* (NRU Higher School of Economics Research Paper No 42, 2017) 3–8. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2901307>

<sup>3</sup> Debora V Malito, *Measuring Corruption Indicators and Indices* (Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies Research Paper 13, 2004) <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2393335>

(Global) <b>Governance Indices (II)</b>	Latinobarometro Corporation	Latinobarometer
	Michigan State University	Afrobarometer
	The Political Risk Service Group	The International Country Risk Guide (ICRG)
	UNECA	Africa Governance Indicator (AGI)
	World Bank	World Governance Indicators (WGI); WB Country Policy and Institutional Assessment
	World Economic Forum	Executive Opinion Survey; World Competitiveness Yearbook; Global Competitiveness Report (GRC).
	WVS Association	World Value Survey (WVS)
<b>State Capacity Indices (III)</b>	Brooking institute	Index of State Weakness in the Developing World
	Brooking institute, the Institute for State Effectiveness, Institute for State Effectiveness, and the Australian National University	Sovereignty Index
	Canadian International Development Agency	Country Indicators for foreign policy project
	Centre for Global Policy, George Mason University	Political Instability Task Force
	Center for Systemic Peace and Center for Global Policy at George Mason University	State Fragility Index
	Columbia University	State Capacity Survey
	Fund for Peace, Foreign Policy	Failed States Index
	World Bank	LICUS

**Source: Malito (n 3)**

The first group of indicators examined by the author above is composed of survey-based indicators of corruption, typically developed in the 1990s, when the first calls for effective anti-corruption policies led to the development of a number of general and specific corruption indices or indicator systems. It should be noted here that these surveys have been criticised, in several instances in the literature, for being based on aggregated data rather than on self-reported surveys, which undermines the reliability of the indicators. In this article, it is mainly these indicators that are examined.

The second group of indicators is linked by the fact that they are based on analyses related to governance and are used to assess the performance, quality or even deficiencies of governance as a whole or of some of its components. However, some of these indicators are also survey-type, based directly on empirical survey

data. The indicators are only partially concerned with the measurement and assessment of corruption and its perception,<sup>4</sup> but this does not mean that the corruption-related data and sections they include are of little relevance for the indicator or for the survey topic in general. Rather, we can consider their corruption sections as a prominent aspect of each indicator that has a marked impact on overall government performance. It is important to stress, however, that the focal points and topics of the indicators are less important than their methodological solutions and, in particular, whose perceptions they measure (the public, economic actors or public administration employees) - therefore, the following will deal with the general methodological problems related to this issue.

The last group of corruption indicators consists of state capacity indices, which are mainly aimed at assessing the availability of the means of state action in relation to activities most exposed to corruption. These indices have proliferated since the 2000s, when the discourse on state capacity became a major focus of the governance debate.

## II. A Critical Approach to international indicators

The critiques of international indicators are worth examining in relation to the development of national indicators because they will form one of the bases for the development of national corruption detection methodologies. Almost without exception, the literature presented here emphasises that the general methodological problem with the international indicator could be at least partially addressed by trying to remedy the problem by setting up and consistently maintaining national indicators.

In the context of indicators in this article, and taking into account the limitations of scope and the focused approach, I will analyse the general methodological gaps and problems that arise in the research related to this article not only in relation to the methodological solutions for the perception of international corruption, but also as critical observations and areas for improvement in relation to the indicators in general.

Perhaps the most relevant of these is the issue of *conceptual clarity*. A problem that arises in the joint examination of the individual indicators is that the different methodological approaches mean different things by the individual concepts examined, and this can undermine the basis for their consistency.<sup>5</sup> There are already differences in the interpretation of the central concept of corruption,

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<sup>4</sup> Toke Aidt, Jayasri Dutta and Vania Sena, 'Governance Regimes, Corruption and Growth: Theory and Evidence' (2008) 36(2) *Journal of Comparative Economics* 205–209. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jce.2007.11.004>

<sup>5</sup> Anja Rohwer, 'Measuring Corruption: A Comparison between Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index and the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators' (2009) 7(3) *CESifo DICE Report* 42–52.

which, in terms of detailed methodological and survey aspects, create the possibility that indicators measuring corruption and its perception are at least partially not interpretable in relation to each other.

An excellent illustration of this is Malito's study cited above, which shows that even the two leading corruption perception methodologies, Transparency International's *Corruption Perception Index* (CPI), and the World Bank's *Control of Corruption Index*, show that organisations have somewhat different understandings of corruption and the phenomena it covers.<sup>6</sup>

According to Transparency International 2013, corruption is defined as "*Corruption is the abuse of entrusted power for private gain.*" which has as its core element the abuse of power and its purposefulness.<sup>7</sup>

By contrast, the World Bank defines corruption as "*The extent to which public power is exercised for private gain, including both petty and grand forms of corruption, as well as "capture" of the state by elites and private interests*" which, like the definition above, emphasises private ends, but not necessarily only in relation to the abuse of power, but also situations where the exercise of public power does not actively, but by omission, reveal situations of corruption.<sup>8</sup> Additions are also important in this respect: in comparison to Transparency International's definition, the World Bank's interpretation also provides non-taxative examples that can shape the perception of the phenomena that are eventually interpreted as falling under corruption when creating indicators.

It should also be added that it is not only the conceptual clarity of corruption and related concepts within and between the organisations conducting the survey that is needed. The perceptions and conceptualisations of the surveyed participants about corruption and the divergence of the phenomena perceived as belonging to the scope of corruption within the framework of this conceptualisation may also cause serious methodological dilemmas,<sup>9</sup> which can be clarified on the basis of the different views in the literature, for example by means of information materials to assist the respondents.<sup>10</sup> However, this clarification may distort the participants' perceptions and perceptions of the issues under investigation and may ultimately

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<sup>6</sup> Malito (n 3) 5-7.

<sup>7</sup> Transparency International, *What is Corruption?* <https://www.transparency.org/en/what-is-corruption> accessed 15 August 2025

<sup>8</sup> World Bank Data Catalog, *Control of Corruption: Estimate* <https://datacatalog.worldbank.org/control-corruption-estimate-1> accessed 15 August 2025

<sup>9</sup> Mike Szymanski, Ivan Valdovinos and Evodio Kaltenecker, 'How Far Are We from Understanding Corruption? The Effect of Cultural Distance on Corruption Perception' (2021) 17(1) *Critical Perspectives on International Business* <https://doi.org/10.1108/cpoib-06-2020-0079>

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Roca, *Measuring Corruption: Perception Surveys or Victimization Surveys? Towards a Better Comprehension of Populations' Perception Mechanisms* (2011) <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1909860>  
Kokom Komalasari and Didi Saripudin, 'Integration of Anti-Corruption Education in School's Activities' (2015) 12(6) *American Journal of Applied Sciences* 445-448.

cause more problems in assessing authentic interpretations than it solves along the lines of divergent attempts to interpret corruption.

In most cases, the picture may be further clarified and the possibility of conceptual coherence may be undermined if the indicators are not considered specifically, but the interpretation of their results is considered in a broader perspective in relation to national and international organisations.<sup>11</sup>

The above conceptual divergence may become particularly problematic in cases where composite indicators to detect corruption are based on surveys of other indicators,<sup>12</sup> where some concepts may not be understood in the same way in different surveys and assessments, and where the indicator may eventually lose its conceptual clarity,<sup>13</sup> and this may be particularly true when indicators are based on other indicators whose methodological properties are not publicly available. Accordingly, the design of composite indicators requires a very high degree of methodological coordination on the part of the designing organisation.

The second aspect examined relates to the **dependence of indicators**. The internal validity and credibility of an indicator is compromised if the independence of different sources cannot be guaranteed: the aggregation of several data sources may in fact include data that rely on the same survey or source to construct their own indicators. As a result, the resulting bias may not be avoided in the construction of the composite indicator.<sup>14</sup> The very use of a weighting system in taking the results of an indicator is a form of bias, the judgement of which depends on whether the bias can be considered methodologically justified or the result of a methodological error, without assuming that an intentional and unjustified bias has been made.

This circularity and interdependence is typically evident in the input data series of the corruption perception indicators - each indicator refers to and takes into account the values of the other indicator and as a result the indicators are at least partially disconnected from the primary data set. In themselves, the calculated correlations or referential methodologies would not imply a reduction in the credibility and validity of the indicators, and indeed, given the social science research methodologies, this is a natural solution that perception indicators using these survey and analysis methodologies rely on. However, the interdependence between indicators goes beyond this, and the results of each indicator reveal a part of what

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<sup>11</sup> Marina D Mijatović and Dražena B Pejanović, 'The Comprehension of Corruption in Scientific Theory, International Documents of UN, EU, and Practice of Bosnia and Herzegovina' (2018) 46 *Bastina* 201–209. <https://doi.org/10.5937/bastina1846201M>

<sup>12</sup> Tina Søreide, *Business Corruption: Incidence, Mechanisms, and Consequences* (Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration 2006) 20–31.

<sup>13</sup> Jan Van Dijk and Fanny Klerx-Van Mierlo Indicators of corruption: further explorations of the link between corruption and implementation failure in anti-trafficking policies. *Working papers of International Victimology Institute (INTERVICT)*, 1. (2011), 15–30.

<sup>14</sup> Stephen F Knack, *Measuring Corruption in Eastern Europe and Central Asia: A Critique of the Cross-Country Indicators* (World Bank 2006) 13.

is implied by the methodological specificity of the indicators themselves.<sup>15</sup> These are independent - at least in part - from the original survey data, a kind of specific measurement error, a bias. However, the main international perception indicators presented below do not treat this phenomenon as an error and accordingly make efforts to eliminate or at least reduce the effects of bias, but simply acknowledge it. This is of great relevance for the professional, scientific evaluation and comparison of indicators, because the CPI indicator produced by Transparency International or the results of the World Bank's survey instruments, for example, typically have a major influence on the development of world economic trends and, within them, on the perception of individual states.<sup>16</sup> This phenomenon has been the subject of strong validity criticisms, often justified, by representatives of countries with lower scores in the ranking of the above indicators.

The large data collection resources required to construct the international indicator and the alternative provision of these resources provide a third line of criticism that can be taken into account, the **problem of data gaps and substitutions**. A kind of resource rationalisation is at stake here, which can be partly justified from a professional point of view: international corruption perception indices, indicators and rankings, given the large geographical area, only partly use their own primary survey data, with the bulk of the input data being the results of other surveys and analyses carried out at fixed intervals.<sup>17</sup>

In the application of methodologies, in addition to the above, data gaps can cause problems that can greatly affect the transparency of the overall indicator and its methodology.<sup>18</sup> The biggest problems can arise when there are time-series data gaps for some of the factors and indicators considered and the analysts involved in developing the indicator try to make up for this by obtaining or deriving data from alternative sources, such as other indicators or each other's results.<sup>19</sup> And time series data gaps are likely to arise when observing the input data sets of some corruption perception indicators, because some international methodologies typically take into account more than two dozen surveys, indicators, indices and rankings when

<sup>15</sup> Paul G Wilhelm, 'International Validation of the Corruption Perceptions Index: Implications for Business Ethics and Entrepreneurship Education' (2002) 35(3) *Journal of Business Ethics* 177–189. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1013882225402>

<sup>16</sup> Omar E Hawthorne, *Do International Corruption Metrics Matter? The Impact of Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index* (Lexington Books 2015) 5–35.

Hongying Wang and James N Rosenau, 'Transparency International and Corruption as an Issue of Global Governance' (2001) 7(1) *Global Governance* 25–32. <https://doi.org/10.1163/19426720-00701005>

Matilda Dahl, 'How Do International Organizations Scrutinize Transforming States? The Case of Transparency International and the Baltic States' in Luis de Sousa, Barry Hindess and Peter Larmour (eds), *Governments, NGOs and Anti-Corruption* (Routledge 2008) 180–193.

<sup>17</sup> Pornanong Budsaratagoon and Boonlert Jitmaneeeroj, 'A Critique on the Corruption Perceptions Index: An Interdisciplinary Approach' (2020) 7(1) *Socio-Economic Planning Sciences* 217–236.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.seps.2019.100768>

<sup>18</sup> Rohwer (n 5)

<sup>19</sup> Christiane Arndt and Charles Oman, *Uses and Abuses of Governance Indicators* (OECD 2006) 30–45.

creating an indicator, some of which do not have time series data available to be used in all the assessments of the international indicator under study.

If it is necessary to supplement data to establish an indicator, in many cases it may not be necessary to consider whether the information that is being supplemented and taken into account is of sufficient quality, from a verifiable source and can be aggregated with other indicators. For this purpose, the literature suggests that the same set of requirements should be met for the surrogate input as for the intended original input. Thus, it is necessary that the methodology for generating the additional input data or indicator is pre-defined and published,<sup>20</sup> and that all its components are known or can be known.<sup>21</sup> If the additional data also process data from a composite indicator,<sup>22</sup> several surveys or other indicator systems, then the indicators, surveys and indices used to calculate and base these indicators should also meet the same requirements in terms of methodological aspects as the additional data, otherwise the content and construct validity of the indicator and the transparency of the methodology may be greatly reduced. Finally, it should be stressed that the replacement of data should not imply an expectation of an independent and impartial compilation of the original indicator, nor of a balanced approach.<sup>23</sup> This balance must be reflected both in the choice of the replacement and in the methodological elaboration of the aggregation.<sup>24</sup>

### III. Critical remarks – National Solutions

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In this chapter, I will analyse the feasibility of resolving the criticisms raised above by the development of national indicators, whether the development of a national indicator could provide a solution to the relevant problems.

The first of these problems I will start with the issue of conceptual clarity. In this respect, the development of national indicators seems to worsen the overall picture, since with the introduction of each new indicator, whether national or international, new conceptual interpretations may be introduced into the process of assessing the perception of corruption, which undermines the credibility of the data collected with regard to the different forms of corruption.

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<sup>20</sup> Shukhova and Nisnevich (n 2) 3–10.

<sup>21</sup> Stuart C Gilman, 'To Understand and to Misunderstand How Corruption Is Measured: Academic Research and the Corruption Perception Index' (2018) 20(1) *Public Integrity* 76–82. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10999922.2018.1472974>

<sup>22</sup> Mihály Fazekas, István János Tóth and Lawrence P King, *Anatomy of Grand Corruption: A Composite Corruption Risk Index Based on Objective Data* (Corruption Research Center Budapest Working Paper No 3, 2014) 2.

<sup>23</sup> Staffan Andersson and Paul M Heywood, 'The Politics of Perception: Use and Abuse of Transparency International's Approach to Measuring Corruption' (2009) 57(4) *Political Studies* 746–767. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.2008.00758.x>

<sup>24</sup> Kilkon Ko and Ananya Samajdar, 'Evaluation of International Corruption Indexes: Should We Believe Them or Not?' (2010) 47(3) *Social Science Journal* 508–515.



However, this is only *prima facie* in this case: if existing definitions are taken into account in the development of the national indicator, the use of a completely new definition can be avoided. On the other hand, it should be stressed that the creation and use of a nationally specific definition of corruption can be an important task in the development of a national indicator, as it can more accurately assess and react to the evolution of a nationally sensitive parameter of corruption. As a result, it can provide a more credible feedback on some national specificities of high latency corruption. In many respects, this is achieved by using focus group surveys to develop the conceptual framework of the national indicator, which can be used to measure back the conceptual framework of society and to design the measurement tools accordingly. However, one step should be avoided with great caution: neither in the implementation of the survey nor in the interpretation of the survey results should the data collected on the perception of corruption be confused with the characterisation of the real situation of corruption.

Several authors of the relevant literature also criticise the fact that the development of the Transparency International *Corruption Perception Indicator*, which is the most prominent of the international corruption perception indicators, and the choice of certain aspects of the methodology are not ultimately aimed at measuring the actual corruption situation or perception of corruption and thus improving it.<sup>25</sup> Rather, these authors see the use of corruption perception indicators, especially when coupled with aid or the justification of international economic decisions, as serving geopolitical ends and as a means for an interest group to intervene in the internal politics, power structure and even economic and social environment of a state.<sup>26</sup>

This point of view can be most clearly seen in William De Maria, paper titled *Measurements and markets: deconstructing the corruption perception index*, in which the author points out,<sup>27</sup> also in the context of the corruption perception index created by Transparency International, that the perception indexes are identified as the reality of corruption in the aid and business decision-making processes in the African developing countries he studied, according to the level of corruption in each state, as rated by organisations and interest groups he typically identifies as Western

<sup>25</sup> Carmen R Apaza, 'Measuring Governance and Corruption through the Worldwide Governance Indicators: Critiques, Responses, and Ongoing Scholarly Discussion' (2009) 42(1) *Political Science & Politics* 139–143. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096509090106>

<sup>26</sup> William De Maria, 'Measurements and Markets: Deconstructing the Corruption Perception Index' (2008) 21(7) *International Journal of Public Sector Management* 777–785 <https://doi.org/10.1108/09513550810904569>

Steven Sampson, 'Diagnostics: Indicators and Transparency in the Anti-Corruption Industry' in Stephan Jansen, Eckhard Schröter and Nico Stehr (eds), *Transparenz: Multidisziplinäre Durchsichten durch Phänomene und Theorien des Undurchsichtigen* (VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften 2010) 97–111. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-531-92466-3\\_7](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-531-92466-3_7)

Scott V Campbell, 'Perception Is Not Reality: The FCPA, Brazil, and the Mismeasurement of Corruption' (2013) 22 *Minnesota Journal of International Law* 243, 247–281.

<sup>27</sup> De Maria (n 26)

economic interests. In his view, this situation is perverse because the perception index is not actually used to attribute the state of corruption, but its perception in the context under study, and generalisation and confusion of the individual aspects can cause serious social and economic disadvantages for developing countries. With regard to the methodological aspects, it finds that the index is inadequate to detect and address the relevant cultural differences in a real way, and that this is not given much attention in the development of the methodology. Moreover, the author believes that the most important aspects of the methodology are related to economic and business decision-making, and in this respect the perception of corruption of the respondents and respondents' perceptions of corruption are identified, assessed and analysed without taking into account the socio-cultural context, without which the data and contexts analysed are out of context and, in fact, uninterpretable. The author also concludes that while African governments and stakeholders contribute in good faith to the creation of indicators such as the above index, when analysing the deeper purposes of each indicator, they serve more to serve economic and geopolitical interests identified as Western, under the guise of filtering out what is falsely portrayed as a universal negative. Some authors identify this as a kind of neo-colonialist endeavour.<sup>28</sup>

That this is not an isolated problem for African countries is well illustrated by Muhamad Ferdy Firmansyah, *Impact of Political Institution Role to Anti-Corruption Perception Index: An Experience From Indonesia*, 2021,<sup>29</sup> in which he explains that the value and evolution of the national indicators considered by global corruption perception indicators, Indonesia's Indonesian Democracy Index (IDI) and Anti-Corruption Perspectives Index (Indeks Persepsi Anti-Korupsi/IPEK), are both highly dependent on the attitude of the government in power, because the content of the indices and the factors taken into account can be dynamically shaped by the choice of the statistical sample, and on the other hand, they have been interpreted differently in the past depending on whether the government in power was cooperating with or not with external interest groups.

Another line of criticism is the interpretation of the indicator results. In the review article by Erzsébet Németh and her colleagues, entitled „*The Scientific*

<sup>28</sup> Bill De Maria, 'Neo-Colonialism through Measurement: A Critique of the Corruption Perception Index' (2008) 4(2–3) *Critical Perspectives on International Business* 184–202. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17422040810870079>

Denisse R Olivari, 'Why Corruption Is Perceived to Be Higher in Poor Countries than in Richer Countries? A Critical Assessment of the Corruption Perception Index' (2013) 18(1) *Politikon* 46–48. <https://doi.org/10.22151/politikon.18.4>

<sup>29</sup> Muhamad F Firmansyah, 'Impact of Political Institution Role to Anti-Corruption Perception Index: An Experience from Indonesia' (2021) 2(1) *International Journal of Community Service & Engagement* 20–41.

*Reliability of International Corruption Rankings*”,<sup>30</sup> the authors formulate a very important context for the assessment of the methods of measuring corruption, including the perception of corruption (i.e. perceptual and empirical methods and composite methods and indices partly or entirely formed from these), that the measurement system of the corruption perception indices - and this was also examined with particular reference to the Transparency International indicators - does not actually measure corruption itself with regard to a given country under study, but in many respects even these perceptual and empirical indicators do not interpret and approximate perception itself well, and elements distorting independence, impartiality and transparency can be identified in connection with the measurements. Much more radical criticisms are also voiced in the literature, with Seligson and Budsaratragoon et al. suggesting that it is wrong to draw any parallel between survey data on perceptions of corruption and the reality of corruption, based on survey data alone, because surveys only measure indirect and subjective opinions on corruption. In their view, processing this subjective and referential information in an objectified and standardised context and methodology does not give the results and the conclusions drawn from them any more credibility in terms of perceptions of corruption.<sup>31</sup>

This highlights the fact that conceptual clarity, the assessment and interpretation of results according to the correct conceptual framework, is a key issue in the field of corruption assessment, and that the national indicator to be developed, combining local specificities with internationally accepted concepts, can help to assess national specificities, which in many cases is more important than achieving a forcibly common conceptual web between nations.

A further good example of this is the criticism of the World Bank's governance sub-indices, which Melissa Thomas, cited above, elaborated in her 2010 study, *What Do the Worldwide Governance Indicators Measure?*. In her paper, the author notes that as policymakers and researchers increasingly focus on the impact of governance on economic development, there is a parallel and growing need to measure the quality of governance and to create indices and rankings similar to the World Bank indicators. He also points out that, while critical analyses in the literature have focused primarily on problems of bias or lack of comparability of indicators, for him it is more a question of whether indicators have '*construct validity*', i.e. whether they measure what they are intended to measure. In this context, the author argues that it is precisely in this respect that criticisms can be made, because aggregated

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<sup>30</sup> Erzsébet Németh, Bálint Tamás Vargha and Katalin Ágnes Pályi, 'Nemzetközi korrupciós rangsorok tudományos megbízhatósága [The Scientific Reliability of International Corruption Rankings]' (2019) 3 *Hungarian Financial Review* 321–337. <https://doi.org/10.35551/PSZ.2019.3.1>

<sup>31</sup> Mitchell A Seligson, 'The Measurement and Impact of Corruption Victimization: Survey Evidence from Latin America' (2006) 34(2) *World Development* 381–404. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2005.03.012>  
Budsaratragoon and Jitmaneeeroj (n 19)

questionnaires will not necessarily be suitable to measure the real level of corruption, nor even to provide an objective indicator of the perception of corruption, primarily because the data sources considered will have different concepts of corruption and related concepts. The data are not suitable for the aggregation process described above, which would allow for statistically sound findings and conclusions to be drawn from them, in the final analysis, for each country under study. Thomas's criticism is that governance and government activity and its expressions in relation to the indicators are so broad and poorly defined in a uniform way that they cannot be measured to a good approximation and therefore aggregation cannot be successful.

The next set of criticisms, to which national indicators can provide a response, relates to aggregation processes and data replication.

This is the subject of a study by Laura Langbein and Stephen Knack, also from 2010, paper *The worldwide governance indicators: six, one, or none?*,<sup>32</sup> in which the authors have specifically examined the validity and reliability of the World Bank's aggregate indices examined above, using factor analysis, measurement and causal analysis models. In the paper, the authors find that while the World Bank's methodological solutions were originally intended to measure various concepts of corruption control, rule of law, government effectiveness, quality of governance, political stability, and freedom of expression and accountability, and government performance towards them, but rather, they measure the same broad concept of government performance in a statistically verifiable way, with questions on specific dimensions of that concept, which is not suitable for the World Bank and the literature interpreting the indicators to draw far-reaching conclusions, e.g. for example, government efforts to reduce corruption and their impact.<sup>33</sup>

Although the World Bank experts have provided professional responses and reactions to the critical remarks,<sup>34</sup> it can be argued that the development of national indicator systems can provide an answer to the aggregation problems at the international level, since, in addition to providing a credible picture of the perception of corruption in a given country, it can also reduce the data gaps in the development of international indicators and provide them with continuous input data based on direct data collection.

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<sup>32</sup> Laura Langbein and Stephen Knack, 'The Worldwide Governance Indicators: Six, One, or None?' (2010) 46(2) *Journal of Development Studies* 350–370. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220380902952399>

<sup>33</sup> Gene A Brewer, Yujin Choi and Richard M Walker, 'Accountability, Corruption and Government Effectiveness in Asia: An Exploration of World Bank Governance Indicators' (2007) 8(2) *International Public Management Review* 200–217.

<sup>34</sup> Daniel Kaufmann, Aart Kraay and Massimo Mastruzzi, 'Response to "What Do the Worldwide Governance Indicators Measure?"' (2010) 22(1) *European Journal of Development Research* 55–58. <https://doi.org/10.1057/ejdr.2009.49>

Daniel Kaufmann, Aart Kraay and Massimo Mastruzzi, *Response to: "The Worldwide Governance Indicators: Six, One, or None"* (World Bank Group 2010) 4.

#### IV. Conclusion

The phenomenon of corruption naturally takes a latent form in all cases, and in view of this, international indicators on corruption almost invariably measure not the general or actual situation of corruption, but its social perception.

The most important problems, however, arise from this delimitation and its consistent enforcement, based on the results obtained and the literature analysed. On the one hand, the international indicators are invariably criticised for the fact that the methodologies they use do not use the same conceptual framework for certain phenomena of corruption and therefore cannot be aggregated without further correction. It should be noted that problems of conceptual identity cannot typically be rectified *ex post* on the basis of the data already collected and thus, if identified, may undermine the credibility of the indicator in relation to the issues under consideration.

On the other hand, the analysis carried out also identified that composite indicators are typically inputs to each other, and the resulting interdependence may not necessarily avoid the resulting bias - this was particularly evident in the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index and the World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators.

Thirdly, it can be highlighted that not only the source of the data, but also the method of its collection is highly relevant to the validity of the data included in the indicator: in many respects, it has been identified that when the survey methodology is published, the organisations carrying out the survey work for the indicator do not disclose information on the measures taken to exclude or reduce to the minimum permissible level the distortions arising from the use of the chosen survey method. In a number of cases, it can be assumed that the failure to publicly disclose this information means that this aspect has not been assessed or has been given insufficient weight in the development of methodological considerations.

On the basis of the above experiences and conclusions, it becomes possible to delineate the aspects with regard to which the justification for the development of a national corruption perception methodology can be demonstrated, along the following lines. On the one hand, in view of the criticisms raised in relation to conceptual identity, a national corruption perception methodology may be able to provide a satisfactory synthesis: its methodology may use the internationally accepted conceptual framework of corruption to the extent necessary, but it allows for a country-specific survey and thus a more complete assessment of the perception of corruption in society. It is important to underline that the measurement of perceptions of corruption does not aim to provide an absolute measure of the state of corruption, but rather to narrow down the social perception, so "allowing" national specificities in this direction will, in my professional opinion, only improve the accuracy and credibility of the indicator.

On the other hand, the development of a well-established national indicator system can also help to improve the credibility of international indicators by

providing the possibility to use national survey results as input for international indices. This will help to reduce the number of situations where data have to be filled in, estimated, missing data bridged, which, despite all precautions, could distort the sample. In this respect, it is also advantageous to establish a national indicator and measure it over time to help us to rate a nation against itself, showing how the perception of corruption in society has changed in a given country over a given period. By comparing this with the time when the policy measures to prevent and prosecute corruption were introduced, it is possible to at least determine what social impact they had, whether there was any change in the perception of corruption among the target respondents. This could help to reduce the criticisms that arise when the reference to corruption indices is interpreted as foreign interference in a country's internal affairs.

However, in order to ensure the credibility of the national measurement methodology, a number of measures need to be taken, which can be derived from the criticisms of international indicators

Potential bias should be eliminated by preventive methods during the methodological development. A pre-defined and published methodological description is of particular relevance, and all its elements and solutions must be known or made known. This will ensure that methodological considerations remain transparent, understandable and traceable for both professional and lay audiences, and will also make the published survey results suitable for reproduction, as a test, from the sample of data surveyed at any time.

Publicity and openness ensure that the survey can be subjected to peer review at an early stage. The aspects included in the critique can be the main basis for methodological development later on, alongside other methods (e.g. focus group surveys). It is therefore advisable to make the methodology widely publicised before the surveys are carried out, even by discussing it at public events. Consistent collection and dissemination of these critical comments and a system of appropriate feedback and action can also create the possibility for flexible but deliberate changes to the methodology's specific features in response to changes in the social environment.

Every effort should be made to ensure that the input data samples of indicators considered are as far as possible based on primary data collection and do not take into account the results of other, possibly composite indicators, and that, where possible, no additional data series are used to address data gaps. Taking into account the literature, the methodologies that have been the least criticised are those that implement primary data collection, and this is not by chance: the adoption of data from other surveys always requires careful methodological consideration to avoid the problems described above. Data gaps should be addressed on the basis of prior considerations: the scope of the data collected should be based on the

methodological specifications and, if this is not feasible, the methodologists should respond by making changes and taking action where necessary.

The survey and analysis of the indicator should preferably be carried out by an independent and impartial organisation, separate from both government and economic actors, in all relevant respects - otherwise even the most robust methodology will be subject to the shadow of intended bias.

The methodology should also cover how the results can be interpreted, with what limitations, so that no conclusions can be drawn from the results that are not inferred from the survey results. In this context, it would be useful to draw up a communication code to guide the survey and the organisation carrying out the communication in terms of interpretation, and to communicate this guidance to the partners, government and social contacts involved in the methodology and in the creation of the survey, in order to encourage them to draw and publish conclusions from the survey data in accordance with the methodology, as a preventive measure.

To summarise the findings, national and international corruption perception indicators do not in fact work against each other, but mutually help to understand the complex phenomenon of corruption, and rather than favouring one or the other, the focus should be on the synergistic positive effects of their co-existence when considering the introduction of a national perception indicator.