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Public tolerance of corruption: Romania in the European context

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Abstract

The article identifies the Romanian specificity of corruption tolerance in the European context, through a secondary analysis of Eurobarometer 97.2 conducted in 2022. The EB 97.2 data support the findings of previous studies on higher tolerance of corruption among young people. In the case of Romania, there is a clear differentiation between the 15- to 24-year-old generation and the other generations, which share a similar and lower level of tolerance. At the level of the overall EU27 population, corruption tolerance is positively and most strongly associated with the experience of corruption in the health system, and then with the cumulative experience of corruption, the mediated experience of corruption and, with a small coefficient in intensity, with the perception of the extent of corruption. In Romania, however, it is the experience of corruption in the healthcare system that has the highest correlation coefficient with the tolerance of corruption in comparison to the other EU27 countries, and the level of this experience is also the highest in Romania. Overall, the previously documented positive associations between experience of corruption, perception of corruption, and tolerance of corruption are also confirmed in this study. Still, the negative association between corruption tolerance and the perception of the prevalence and evolution of corruption is also remarkable in the case of Romania, which is atypical in the context of other EU countries, indicating a possible feedback loop in which citizens react negatively to the perception of high corruption.

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Keywords

Corruption tolerance; Perception of corruption; Experience of corruption; Eurobarometer, Secondary analysis;

Introduction

In this study I will address the issue of the interaction between public officials and citizens, examining a topic that is frequently debated and of wide interest in Romania, namely the perception of corruption. The research question that I will try to answer through this analysis is: *What is the specificity of Romania regarding the public's tolerance to corruption, in relation to the European Union?* Based on this specificity I will discuss the implications for strategies to reduce public tolerance of corruption.

Corruption is a multidimensional phenomenon, which manifests itself at economic, political, social and cultural levels. The purpose of actions marked by corruption is the use of public or private funds for personal interests (Nițu et al., 2020). Most social studies on corruption focus on the corrupt behaviour of employees in the public system who use the authority of their position to obtain benefits for themselves or those close to them (OECD, 2007).

The Corruption Perceptions Index is measured at country level by Transparency International and shows the perceived level of corruption in the public sector. The index can take values on a scale from 0 to 100, with a lower value indicating a higher level of corruption (Transparency International, 2020). In 2021, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the countries included in the survey experienced a stagnation in the Corruption Perceptions Index. Values for 2022 reveal a similar situation. More than two-thirds of the 180 countries surveyed recorded values below the threshold of 50, indicating a high level of corruption (Transparency International, 2023, 2022). The latest values, for 2022, show that in countries such as Denmark, Finland and New Zealand corruption is perceived to be at very low levels (scores between 90 and 87), while in countries such as Somalia, Syria and South Sudan perceived corruption is at a very high level (scores between 12 and 13). Romania had a score of 46 in 2022, up one unit from 2021. Historically, the highest index score for Romania was 48, recorded in 2016 and 2017.

Much of the social research on corruption has presented an economic approach, centred on rational choice theory (Gorsira et al., 2018). This approach has underpinned many public policies aimed at reducing corruption in different societies (Andvig et al., 2001). However, economic factors have less influence on perceptions and behaviours in the sphere of corruption than factors such as social norms and the opportunity for individuals to conform to norms (Andvig et al., 2001). The phenomenon of corruption also depends on its tolerance by various social actors. Tolerance of corruption is a concept that describes the openness of individuals to accept unethical behaviour. Tolerance of corruption is also closely related to the perception of corruption. Perceptions of corruption vary at the

individual level and are influenced by the cultural context in which individuals operate. These ideas are supported by a variety of empirical studies in countries across the globe.

For example, in Taiwan, the higher individuals' tolerance of corruption, the lower they perceive corruption to be (Liu et al., 2023). Active involvement in corruption also influences how individuals perceive the extent of corruption, while also influencing their evaluation of anti-corruption actions. For example, Li and Meng (2020) showed that the experience of corruption influences perceptions among the Chinese population. Individuals who report involvement in actions characterized by corruption perceive corruption as more prevalent. At the same time, individual experience of corruption leads to negative evaluations of state efforts to eliminate corruption.

Gonzalez et al. (2019) analysed the experience and perceptions of corruption in 34 countries. Their article validates the hypothesis that perceptions of corruption are associated with previous individual experiences in which public officials have demanded bribes to provide services.

A comparative study of European countries concluded that a high level of tolerance of bribery (as an experience of corruption) at the country level is associated with a high perception of corruption at the country level (Keller, 2009). A strong correlation was also identified between corrupt practices and perceptions of corruption. High public tolerance increases the likelihood of corrupt practices (idem). The same study showed that in Spain, Italy and Portugal, public perception of corruption is lower than in external observers' reports.

In European countries there are significant percentages of the population that tolerate corruption, as Gouvêa Maciel (2021) shows. Tolerance of corruption, perception of corruption and experience of corruption are, however, not evenly distributed in the population. Studies have identified socio-demographic differentiations and according to other factors related to respondents' life experiences. For example, in Eastern and Central European countries, a higher tolerance of corruption was found compared to Western and Northern European countries. In terms of socio-demographic factors, the same study showed that in all European countries, younger individuals who are less satisfied with their lives, have had previous experiences of corruption and perceive corruption as widespread are more tolerant of corruption. Another study of European countries (Hunady, 2017) presented results that variables such as gender, age and education are associated with perceptions of the spread of corruption and tolerance of corruption. Individuals who report being victims of corruption are more likely to be men around the age of 30, with a higher level of education. People who have difficulties paying bills also indicated that they are victims of corruption.

An earlier study (Gatti et al., 2003) of 35 countries identified the following socio-economic factors as being associated with lower tolerance of corruption: feminine gender, employment status, lower material wealth and older age.

An analysis of Eurobarometer 72.9 data shows that, at country level, the factors influencing perceptions of corruption are the level of GDP and formal education, measured as average years of schooling. At the individual level, perception of corruption is strongly influenced by social and occupational status (Pázmándy, 2011).

The relationship between corruption and age was analysed by Torgler and Valev (2006) using data from eight Western European countries collected in the World Values Survey and the European Values Survey between 1981 and 1999. The objective of the study was to identify an age effect and differentiate it from a cohort effect in terms of corruption tolerance. Also in this study older individuals have a lower tolerance of corruption, but no cohort effect was identified.

A study of the Dutch population by Gorsira et al. (2018) addressed corruption in both the public and private systems. For both types of employees, tolerance of corruption is influenced by perceptions of colleagues' behaviour (how colleagues act in situations characterised by corruption). Other factors influencing employees' tolerance of corruption are the existence of a social norm condemning corruption and perceptions of the possibility of following the rules regarding corruption.

Knowledge of ethical standards is associated with low tolerance of corruption. In addition, this type of knowledge is more strongly associated with a lower tolerance of the political consequences of corruption compared to the economic consequences (de Sousa et al., 2022). Professional experience is another factor influencing tolerance of corruption, according to the results obtained by de Sousa et al. (2022) on a sample of respondents in Portugal. Senior employees, who have more professional experience, are less accepting of the political and economic consequences of corruption than younger, less experienced employees.

In Romania, similarly to studies in other countries and regions of the world, the younger population perceives corruption as a widespread and inevitable phenomenon, and these perceptions are at a higher level compared to older social categories (Gavreliuc et al., 2009). As far as the Romanian healthcare system is concerned, patients who have a high tolerance for corruption in the healthcare system are more likely to be from rural areas and with a poor socio-economic situation. Patients with a high tolerance of corruption in the healthcare system also have a high experience of corruption through the offer of money or gifts in exchange for medical services. (Horodnic et al., 2018).

Perceived corruption in Romanian hospitals is associated with an individual's economic resources and self-perceived situation of social exclusion. In contrast, perceived corruption among family doctors is at a higher level among urban, younger, better educated individuals. Also, the perception of corruption among family doctors is not influenced by the use of health services, which shows that the perception of these social categories in Romania is not influenced by the experience of corruption. This is in contrast to the perception of corruption in hospitals, which is influenced by the use of medical services (Precupețu and Pop, 2020).

Another set of studies highlights the negative relationship between public servants' job satisfaction and the experience of corruption in different countries. For example, in Bhutan, civil servants who are involved in corrupt activities have lower levels of job satisfaction. In this research (Venard et al., 2023), job satisfaction mediates the relationship between corruption and civil servant performance. In this model, corruption is associated with lower job performance. In another study, perceptions of corruption were lower among employees with higher levels of job satisfaction and engagement at work

(Saithibvongsa and JinKyo, 2019). This result was obtained in Laos, one of the countries with a very high level of perceived corruption in the public system, according to Transparency International.

The motivation of public officials in South Korea is negatively associated with the experience of corruption (Kwon, 2012). The motivation of civil servants has also been studied by Dhillon et al. (2017), who concluded that extrinsic motivation, in the form of financial incentives, leads civil servants to be more willing to engage in corruption.

Next, I will build on the observation already made in the literature that there is a two-way relationship between individuals' tolerance of corruption and their experiences of corruption. The two amplify each other, as in a society where individuals are confronted with informal social norms related to extra payments, they will internalize and normalize these demands and come to see them as justifiable. This internalisation of the norm facilitates, in a vicious circle, informal payments or acts of corruption, thus amplifying the phenomenon. Through this study I will examine the intensity and specificity of the relationship between corruption tolerance and experiences of corruption in Romania, compared to other EU countries and the EU as a whole. Based on the results of the analysis, I will discuss the implications for a strategy to reduce public tolerance of corruption that will contribute to better control of this phenomenon in the future and to strengthen ethics and performance in public administration.

Methodology

For this analysis I used the publicly available database of Eurobarometer 523 (97.2) (European Commission 2022). Data collection was carried out in March - April 2022. The database is published in the GESIS - ZACAT archive and is available for secondary analysis for various purposes, including scientific and doctoral research. In this study, corruption was defined and operationalised for respondents as follows: "From now on, when we mention corruption, we mean it in a broad sense, including offering, giving, requesting and accepting bribes or kickbacks, valuable gifts or important favours, as well as any abuse of power for private gain. Please note, it is important that you consider the following answers based on your own experience."

Based on the variables available in the database, I conducted a secondary analysis to identify the main relationships between the phenomena of interest, namely corruption tolerance and corruption experience. I also considered the differentiation of these phenomena according to broad socio-demographic categories such as gender, age, formal education, material wealth, perceived social class and type of locality. My analysis empirically examines the bivariate relationships between these phenomena by means of contingency tables and Bravais Pearson (R) bivariate correlation coefficients, calculated comparing Romania and other EU countries, thus identifying the Romanian specificity in this field.

In the following I will present the variables available and used in the analysis. I will then estimate the associations between the variables of interest and present comparative data at European level.

For all analyses on the total EU27 sample, I weighted the database with the variable w92 which ensures the representativeness of the sample for the total EU27. For all country-level analyses, I weighted the database with the variable w1, which ensures representativeness at the national level. As a result of the weighting, the proportion of national samples in the total sample is shown in the table below. It should be noted that the w1 weighted sample sizes are different from the w92 weighted sample sizes, as reported below, and they ensure a nationally representative sample for each of the countries.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents by country in the total sample after weighting. Source: author's analysis of EB 97.2 data

Country	Data weighted by w1		Data weighted by w92	
	Frequency (number of respondents)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (number of respondents)	Percentage (%)
FR - France	1033	3.90	3883	14.65
BE - Belgium	1018	3.84	669	2.52
NL - The Netherlands	1003	3.79	1016	3.84
DE - Germany	1519	5.73	5008	18.90
IT - Italy	1017	3.84	3650	13.77
LU - Luxembourg	506	1.91	36	0.14
DK - Denmark	1057	3.99	337	1.27
IE - Ireland	1011	3.82	273	1.03
GR - Greece	1013	3.82	646	2.44
ES - Spain	1003	3.79	2838	10.71
PT - Portugal	1005	3.79	622	2.35
FI - Finland	1011	3.82	324	1.22
SE - Sweden	1061	4.00	591	2.23
AT - Austria	1011	3.82	530	2.00
CY - Cyprus (Republic)	504	1.90	51	0.19
CZ - Czech Republic	1033	3.90	620	2.34
EE - Estonia	1007	3.80	77	0.29
HU - Hungary	1016	3.83	577	2.18
LV - Latvia	1013	3.82	111	0.42
LT - Lithuania	1006	3.80	165	0.62
MT - Malta	553	2.09	31	0.12
PL - Poland	1009	3.81	2222	8.39
SK - Slovakia	1009	3.81	316	1.19
SI - Slovenia	1006	3.80	124	0.47
BG - Bulgaria	1040	3.92	412	1.55
RO - Romania	1037	3.91	1127	4.25
HR - Croatia	996	3.76	241	0.91
Total EU27	26497	100.00	26497	100.00

The Eurobarometer 97.2 survey includes variables that operationalise, through questionnaire questions, respondents' experiences of corruption (direct and indirect), perceptions of corruption (extent and trends), and their tolerance of corruption. The table below shows the variables, the questions included in the questionnaire, and the changes I made to the database to obtain the indicators used in the analysis.

Table 2. Variables, questions and indicators used in the secondary analysis of Eurobarometer 97.2

Variable	Questions in English	Questions in Romanian	Indicators modified by me and used in the analysis
Experience of informal payments in the health system	<p>(Filter question for QA2) QA1. Have you been to a public healthcare practitioner such as a GP (general practitioner) or a public healthcare institution such as a public hospital in the past 12 months? (Yes / No / Don't know)</p> <p>If yes: QA2. Apart from official fees did you have to give an extra payment or a valuable gift to a nurse or a doctor, or make a donation to the hospital? (Yes / No / Refusal / Don't know)</p>	<p>(Filtru pentru QA2) QA1. Ați vizitat vreun specialist în sănătate publică precum un medic generalist sau o instituție publică de sănătate precum un spital public în ultimele 12 luni? (Da / Nu / Nu știu)</p> <p>Dacă da: QA2. În afara tarifelor oficiale, a trebuit să achitați alte plăți sau să faceți un cadou valoros unei asistente sau unui doctor sau să faceți o donație spitalului?</p>	I used QA2REC as a binary variable: Yes = 1, No = 0, Refuse and Don't know were considered missing values
Tolerance of corruption	<p>QA4. Talking more generally, if you wanted to get something from the public administration or a public service, to what extent do you think it is acceptable to do any of the following? (Always acceptable / Sometimes Acceptable / Never acceptable / Refusal / Don't know)</p> <p>To give money To give a gift To do a favour</p>	<p>QA4. În general, dacă ați dori să obțineți ceva de la administrația publică sau de la un serviciu public, în ce măsură credeți că este acceptabil să faceți oricare dintre următoarele? (Întotdeauna acceptabil / Uneori acceptabil / Niciodată acceptabil)</p> <p>Sa oferiți bani Sa oferiți un cadou Să faceți un serviciu</p>	QA4_SUM. I calculated a corruption tolerance index as follows. Each of the three items was recoded into 1 = Always or sometimes acceptable, 0 = Never acceptable (the remaining values reported as missing values). The index sums the three values, thus having possible values between 0 and 3.
Perception of corruption - frequency	QA5 intro: From now on, when we mention corruption, we mean it in a broad sense, including offering, giving, requesting and accepting bribes or kickbacks, valuable gifts or important favours, as well as	QA5 intro: De acum înainte, când vom menționa corupția, vom avea în vedere un sens mai larg al cuvântului, care include a oferi, a da, a cere sau a accepta mită sau stimulente bănești, cadouri valoroase sau favoruri	I have recoded the item into QA5REC, with values from 1 to 5, on the same scale, for easier interpretation, as follows: 5=Very widespread / Fairly widespread / Fairly rare / Very

	<p>any abuse of power for private gain. Please note, it is important that you consider the following answers based on your own experience</p> <p>QA5. How widespread do you think the problem of corruption is in (OUR COUNTRY)? 1=Very widespread / Fairly widespread / Fairly rare / Very rare / 5=There is no corruption in (our country) / Don't know</p>	<p><i>importante, precum și orice abuz de putere în folos personal. Rețineți că este important să vă gândiți la următoarele răspunsuri pe baza experienței dvs.</i></p> <p>QA5: Cât de răspândită credeți că este problema corupției în România? (1 = Foarte răspândită / Destul de răspândită / Destul de rară / Foarte rară / 5 = Nu există corupție în România / Nu știu)</p>	<p><i>rare / 1=There is no corruption in (our country) / Don't know</i></p>
Perception of corruption - trends	<p>QA6. In the past three years, would you say that the level of corruption in (OUR COUNTRY) has...? 1=Increased a lot / Increased a little / Stayed the Same / Decreased a little / Decreased a lot / 6=There is no corruption in (our country) / Don't know</p>	<p>QA6. Ați spune că în ultimii trei ani, nivelul corupției în România ...? (1 = A crescut în mod considerabil / A crescut în mod nesemnificativ / A rămas la fel / A diminuat în mod nesemnificativ / A diminuat în mod considerabil / 5= Nu există corupție în România / Nu știu)</p>	<p>I recoded QA6REC, with values from 1 to 6, on the same scale, for easier interpretation, as follows: 6=Increased a lot / Increased a little / Stayed the Same / Decreased a little / Decreased a lot / 1=There is no corruption in (our country) / Don't know</p>
Experience of corruption - indirect	<p>QA8. Do you personally know anyone who takes or has taken bribes? Yes / No / Refusal / Don't know</p>	<p>QA8. Cunoașteți personal pe cineva care ia sau a luat mită? Da / Nu / Refuz / Nu știu</p>	<p>I recoded QA8REC as a binary variable: Yes = 1, No = 0, Refuse and Don't know were considered missing values</p>
The experience of corruption - direct	<p>(Filter question for QA9b) QA91: Over the last 12 months, have you had any contact with any of the following in (OUR COUNTRY)? Police, customs Tax authorities The Courts (tribunals) Social security and welfare authorities Public prosecution service Politicians at national, regional or local level Political parties Officials awarding public tenders</p>	<p>(Filtru pentru QA49 b) În decursul ultimelor 12 luni, ați avut vreun contact cu oricare dintre următoarele în România? Poliție, vamă Autoritățile fiscale Curțile de justiție (tribunalele) Autoritățile din instituțiile de asigurări sociale și de asistență socială Serviciul public de urmărire penală Politicienii la nivel național, regional sau local Partidele politice Funcționarii care decid câștigătorii licitațiilor publice</p>	<p>I used the summative index available in the database, QA9bt, which summarizes all respondents' experiences, with values 0 = no experience, 1 = at least one experience. Since the item on experience of corruption in the health system in this battery, namely QA9.11, does not correlate perfectly with the item QA2 measuring experience of informal payments in hospitals (the two have a correlation coefficient of 0.329 at EU27 level), I calculated a new ExpCorup index with values 0</p>

Officials issuing building permits Officials issuing business permits The healthcare system The education sector Inspectors (health and safety, construction, labour, food quality, sanitary control and licensing) Private companies Banks and financial institutions None Refusal Don't know QA9b. Thinking about these contacts in the past 12 months has anyone in (OUR COUNTRY) asked you or expected you to give a gift, favour, or extra money for his or her services? (Same list of public services)	<i>Funcționarii care eliberează autorizații de construcție</i> <i>Funcționarii care eliberează autorizații comerciale</i> <i>Sistemul de sănătate</i> <i>Sectorul educațional</i> <i>Inspectorii (sănătate și siguranță, construcții, muncă, calitatea alimentelor, control sanitar și eliberare licențe/permise)</i> <i>Companiile private</i> <i>Instituțiile financiare și bancare</i> <i>Niciuna</i> <i>Refuz</i> <i>Nu știu</i> <i>Qa49b. Gândindu-vă la aceste contacte, în decursul ultimelor 12 luni v-a cerut cineva din România sau s-a așteptat să-i faceți un cadou, o favoare sau să-i dați bani suplimentari pentru serviciile sale?</i> <i>(Aceași listă a serviciilor publice)</i>	= no experience of corruption, 1 = reported experience of corruption in QA2 or QA9b.
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The socio-demographic variables I used are as follows:

- Respondent gender, recoded in the Feminine gender indicator with values 1 = Feminine gender, 0 = Masculine gender;
- Age of respondent, in completed years; Eurobarometer includes respondents aged 15 and over (with the consent of their parents or legal guardians);
- Size of Locality (1 = rural, 2 = small town, 3 = large city);
- AgeEduc: Age at the end of the last level of formal schooling, recoded by 6 levels; for pupils and students I took into account their current age;
- Student: a dichotomous variable measuring whether respondents are still pupils or students;
- Perceived material welfare: measured by the item “During the last twelve months, would you say you had difficulties to pay your bills at the end of the month...? 1=Most of the time / 2=From time to time / 3=Almost never or Never / Refusal”;
- Working class (recoded from self-defined social class): “Do you see yourself and your household belonging to...?” with values: 1 = working class / 0 = other social class. I dichotomized the original item in the database, “Self-defined social class”, which has more values (see below), because in my analysis only the difference between working class and other social classes was relevant in magnitude. (“Do you see yourself and your

household belonging to...? The working class of society / The lower middle class of society / The middle class of society / The upper middle class of society / The higher class of society / Other / None / Refusal /Don't know");

Descriptive analysis

In the tables below I present the descriptive values of the items I used in the analysis. These are useful for an overview of the indicators.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for items measuring experience, perception, and tolerance of corruption. Total sample EU 27, weighted for EU-wide representativeness. Source: author's analysis of EB 97.2 data.

Variable name and label	N	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Standard deviation
Health system: I was asked for an unofficial payment	19037	0.00	1.00	0.04	0.19
Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	26342	0.00	3.00	0.73	1.06
Corruption perception - extent	25518	1.00	5.00	3.88	0.82
Corruption perception - trends	24737	1.00	6.00	4.48	0.94
Do you know anyone who has given or taken bribes	26285	0.00	1.00	0.11	0.31
Experience with corruption	26497	0.00	1.00	0.09	0.29
Valid N (listwise)	17384				

Table 4. Descriptive statistics for items measuring socio-demographic variables. Total sample EU 27, weighted for EU-wide representativeness. Source: author's analysis of EB 97.2 data.

Variable name and label	N	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Standard deviation
Feminine gender	26493	0.00	1.00	0.52	0.50
Age	26497	0	98	49.64	18.81
Size of locality	26494	1	3	1.97	0.77
Age at which completed school	26101	0.00	5.00	2.51	0.91
Student	26497	0.00	1.00	0.09	0.29
Difficulties in paying invoices in the previous year	26226	1	3	2.61	0.62
Working Class	26134	0.00	1.00	0.24	0.43
Self-defined social class (5 levels)	26134	1	5	2.46	0.96
Valid N (listwise)	25505				

Tolerance of corruption in Romania compared to other EU27 countries

At the aggregate level, Romania's tolerance of corruption is the 5th highest in the EU27, according to EB 97.2. Even higher levels of tolerance are found in Hungary, Latvia, Greece and the Czech Republic (see table and map below).

Table 5. Distribution of respondents by country in the total sample after weighting. Source: author's analysis of EB 97.2 data

Country	HDI 2021	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score [0-3]	Corruption perception - extent [0-1]	Corruption perception - trends [0-1]	Know someone who has given or taken a bribe [0-1]	Corruption experience [0-1]	Health system - An informal payment was requested [0-1]
FR - France	0.903	0.58	3.81	4.55	0.09	0.06	0.03
BE - Belgium	0.937	0.76	3.59	4.30	0.14	0.17	0.04
NL - The Netherlands	0.941	0.86	3.51	4.65	0.10	0.07	0.01
DE - Germany	0.942	0.71	3.60	4.45	0.10	0.10	0.04
IT - Italy	0.895	0.64	4.20	4.51	0.07	0.10	0.03
LU - Luxembourg	0.93	0.47	3.29	4.23	0.14	0.10	0.06
DK - Denmark	0.948	0.49	2.79	4.21	0.08	0.05	0.03
IE - Ireland	0.945	0.42	3.74	4.37	0.04	0.04	0.01
GR - Greece	0.887	1.29	4.49	4.75	0.34	0.10	0.13
ES - Spain	0.905	0.49	4.33	4.71	0.10	0.04	0.01
PT - Portugal	0.866	0.46	4.28	4.68	0.08	0.03	0.01
FI - Finland	0.94	0.53	2.88	4.11	0.09	0.03	0.01
SE - Sweden	0.947	0.62	3.24	4.46	0.11	0.06	0.01
AT - Austria	0.916	0.95	3.62	4.39	0.13	0.17	0.08
CY - Cyprus (Republic)	0.896	0.68	4.41	5.07	0.13	0.03	0.01
CZ - Czech Republic	0.889	1.29	4.02	4.35	0.25	0.15	0.06
EE - Estonia	0.89	0.65	3.47	3.84	0.10	0.06	0.01
HU - Hungary	0.846	1.41	4.25	4.88	0.17	0.12	0.04
LV - Latvia	0.863	1.40	4.05	4.18	0.25	0.16	0.06
LT - Lithuania	0.875	0.97	4.05	3.95	0.25	0.13	0.07
MT - Malta	0.918	0.69	4.24	4.67	0.15	0.11	0.06
PL - Poland	0.876	0.57	3.63	4.01	0.06	0.07	0.02
SK - Slovakia	0.848	1.10	4.12	4.45	0.20	0.19	0.09
SI - Slovenia	0.918	0.55	4.24	5.02	0.23	0.12	0.03
BG - Bulgaria	0.795	1.08	4.37	4.82	0.24	0.18	0.06
RO - Romania	0.821	1.28	4.02	4.37	0.11	0.14	0.18
HR - Croatia	0.858	1.02	4.44	5.06	0.25	0.19	0.05
TOTAL EU27	N/A	0.73	3.88	4.48	0.11	0.09	0.04
Correlation with HDI 2021	N/A	-0.63	-0.64	-0.20	-0.44	-0.49	-0.50

Tolerance of corruption and perception of the extent of corruption correlate quite strongly with the HDI 2021 Human Development Index, with values of -0.63 and -0.64 respectively. The other indicators of perception and experiences of corruption also correlate negatively, but weakly, with the HDI 2021.

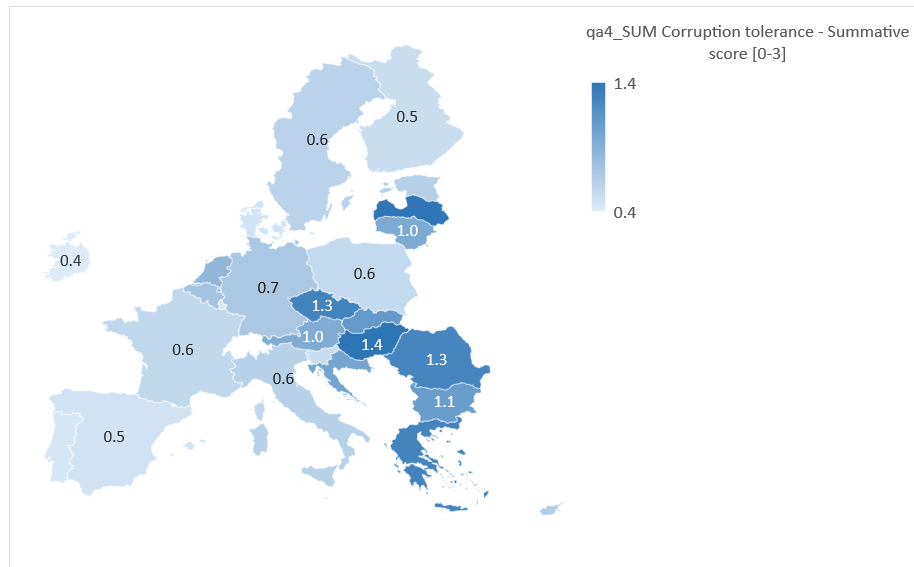


Figure 1. European map of corruption tolerance in the EU27. Source: author's analysis based on EB 97.2 data

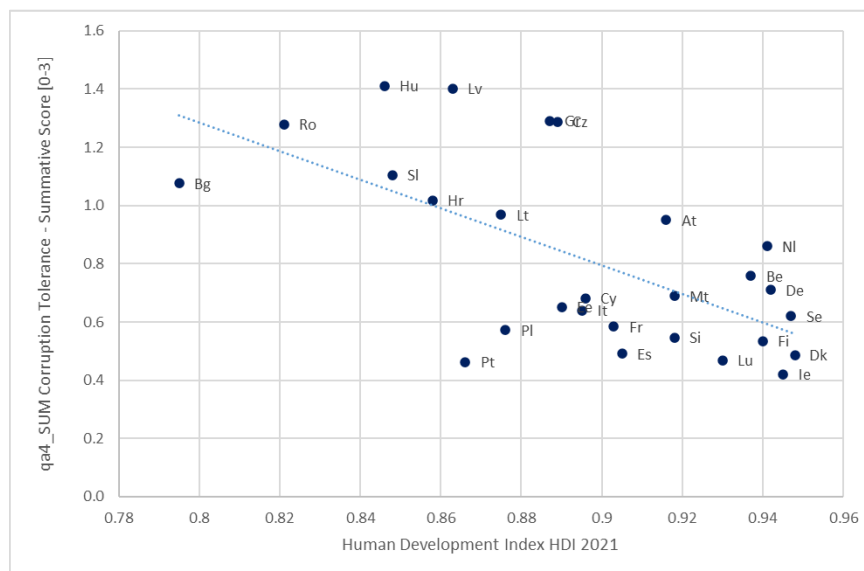


Figure 2. Tolerance of corruption by Human Development Index HDI 2021. Pearson correlation coefficient $R = -0.63$ Source: author's analysis on EB 97.2 data.

In terms of public perception of the extent of corruption, Romania ranks 15th out of 27 in descending order of values. Therefore, we can remark that the Romanian public has a below median perception of the extent of corruption, but a tolerance above the median.

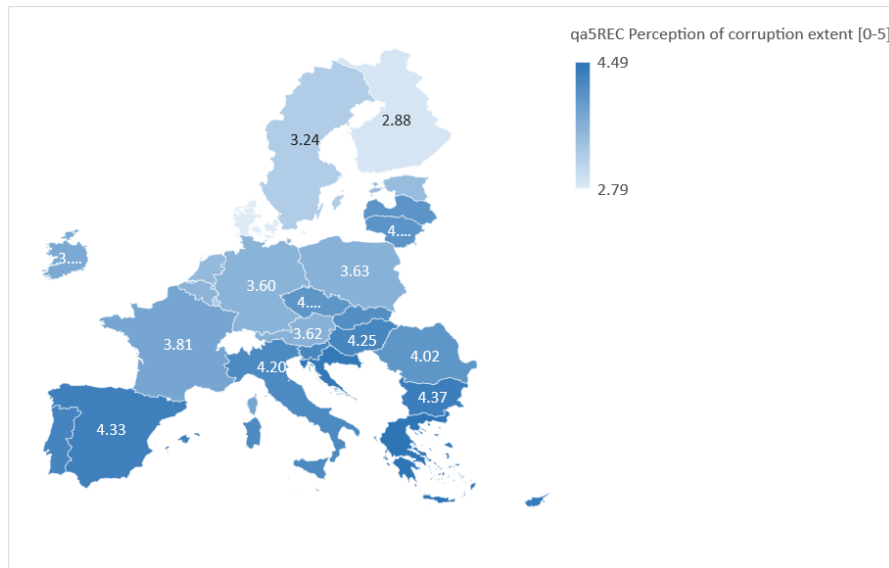


Figure 3. European map of public perception of the extent of corruption in the EU27. Source: author's analysis based on EB 97.2 data

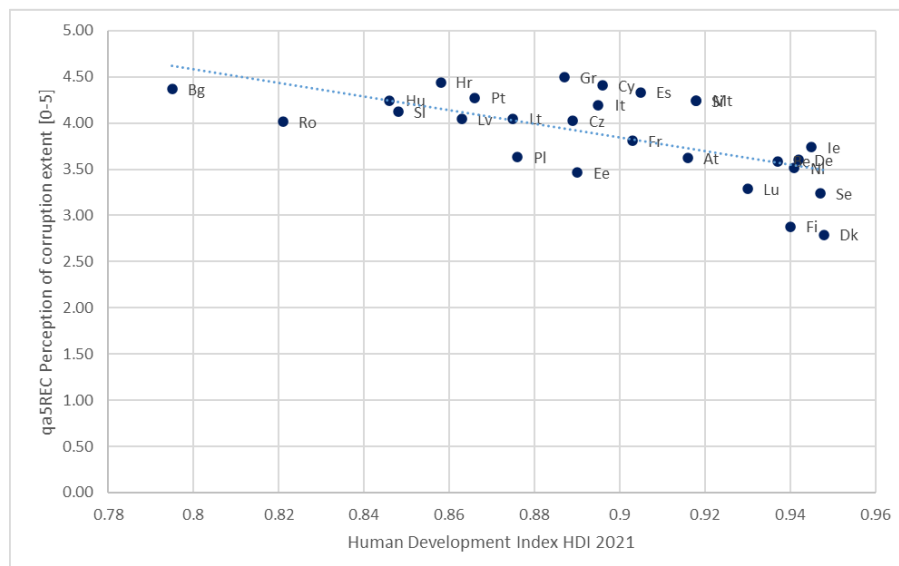


Figure 4. Public perception of the extent of corruption by Human Development Index HDI 2021. Pearson correlation coefficient $R = -0.63$ Source: author's analysis on EB 97.2 data.

This brief exploratory analysis suggests that public perception of corruption is no longer the main driver of public tolerance of corruption in Romania. It is possible that social attitudinal change has a greater inertia than changes in perception of the phenomenon, which raises the discussion of possible public policies and communication strategies to directly address tolerance of corruption.

Interestingly, in Romania, during the data collection period (21.03.2022 - 20.04.2022), public experience of corruption in the health system is the highest in the EU, followed by Greece and then, at a distance, Slovakia, Austria, and Lithuania. This is especially important in light of the correlation discussed below $R = 0.312$ between experience of corruption in the healthcare system and tolerance of corruption (summative factor), with the highest level among the European countries analysed. This raises the possibility that, in Romania, experiences in the medical system are the main source (and, implicitly, deterrent) of tolerance of corruption in general.

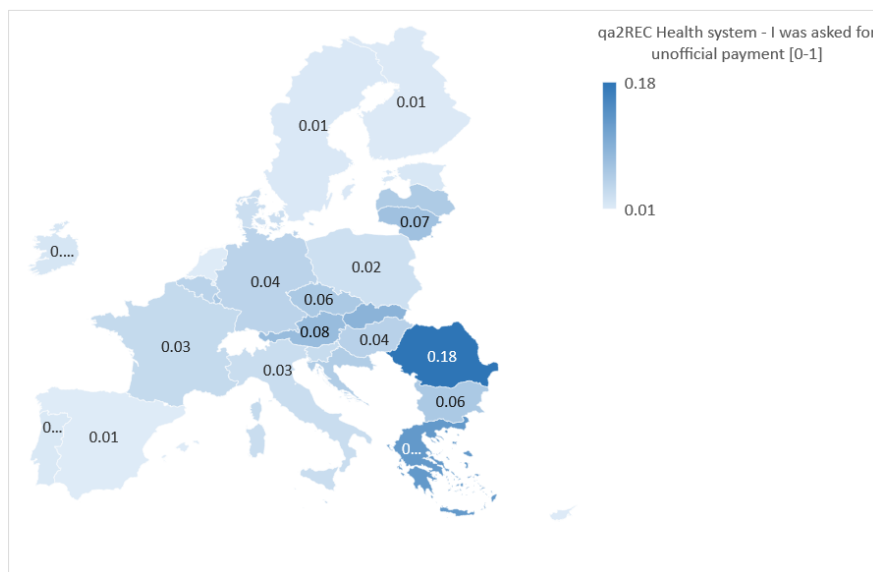


Figure 5. Map of the experience of corruption in the healthcare system in the EU27. Source: author's analysis based on EB 97.2 data

In contrast to the experience of corruption in the healthcare system, which is very common in Romania, the cumulative experience of corruption ranks us 8th in decreasing order of intensity within the EU27. Croatia, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Austria, Belgium, Latvia and the Czech Republic have higher values.

In terms of indirect experience of corruption, i.e. mediated by knowing other people who have given or taken bribes, Romania ranks 15th in the EU27, with the highest levels in Greece, Latvia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Lithuania and Bulgaria

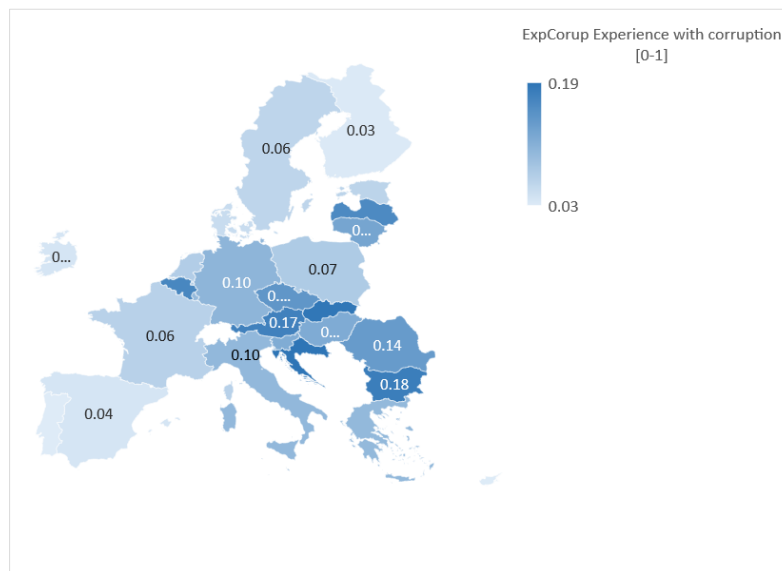


Figura 6. Map of the cumulative experience of corruption in the healthcare system in the EU27. Source: author's analysis based on EB 97.2 data

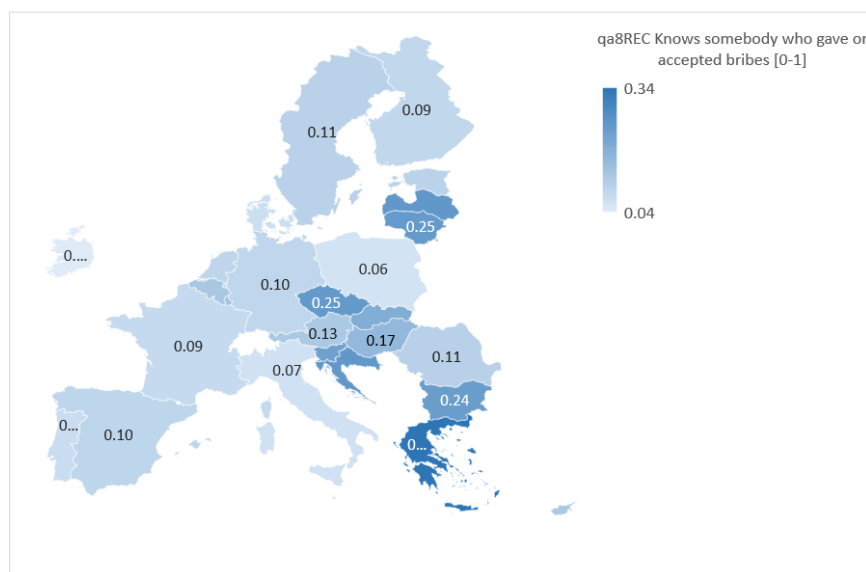


Figure 7. Map of indirect experience of corruption in the EU27. Source: author's analysis based on EB 97.2 data

Analysis of correlations between corruption tolerance and socio-demographic variables

Bivariate correlations give us a measure of the stratification within the population of tolerance of corruption across broad social groups. The table below summarises these bivariate relationships.

Table 6. Bravais Pearson R correlation coefficients between Corruption Tolerance - Summative Score (qa4_SUM) and socio-demographic variables for each EU27 country. National samples are weighted by w1 to be nationally representative. Statistically significant coefficients for $p = 0.01$ are marked with ** and statistically significant coefficients for $p = 0.05$ are marked with *. Source: author's analysis on EB 97.2 data

Country			Feminine gender	Age in years	Size of locality	Age at which school completed	Student	Welfare Difficulties in paying invoices in the previous year	Working Class
FR - France	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.036 .251 1023	-.237** .000 1023	.116** .000 1023	.058 .066 1018	.167** .000 1023	-.054 .088 1011	-.101** .001 1006
BE - Belgium	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.018 .573 1009	-.211** .000 1009	-.069* .029 1008	-.008 .811 951	.122** .000 1009	-.105** .001 1008	-.009 .770 1007
NL - The Netherlands	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.056 .079 1000	-.211** .000 1000	.031 .334 1000	-.141** .000 989	.215** .000 1000	-.038 .231 998	-.004 .893 984
DE - Germany	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.089** .000 1518	-.071** .006 1518	-.058* .025 1518	-.119** .000 1494	.003 .918 1518	-.137** .000 1502	.014 .592 1495
IT - Italy	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	-.053 .094	-.033 .298	-.025 .421	.011 .729	.008 .808	-.131** .000	-.042 .178

Country			Feminine gender	Age in years	Size of locality	Age at which school completed	Student	Welfare Difficulties in paying invoices in the previous year	Working Class
N			1014	1014	1014	1002	1014	996	1005
LU - Luxembourg	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson	.013	-.132**	-.156**	.031	.116**	-.133**	.041
		Correlation	.774	.003	.000	.499	.009	.003	.362
		Sig. (2-tailed)	N	502	502	489	502	494	494
DK - Denmark	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson	.038	-.174**	-.002	.047	.138**	-.083**	.026
		Correlation	.219	.000	.943	.137	.000	.007	.407
		Sig. (2-tailed)	N	1052	1052	1021	1052	1050	1045
IE - Ireland	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson	.035	-.064*	.044	-.007	.025	-.017	.034
		Correlation	.266	.043	.167	.816	.429	.609	.292
		Sig. (2-tailed)	N	997	997	983	997	950	986
GR - Greece	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson	.106**	.109**	-.137**	-.045	-.109**	-.009	.012
		Correlation	.001	.001	.000	.150	.001	.787	.698
		Sig. (2-tailed)	N	1009	1009	1009	1009	1007	991
ES -Spain	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson	.010	-.055	.048	-.036	.100**	-.006	.006
		Correlation	.753	.081	.128	.254	.002	.862	.849
		Sig. (2-tailed)	N	997	997	992	997	984	990

Country			Feminine gender	Age in years	Size of locality	Age at which school completed	Student	Welfare Difficulties in paying invoices in the previous year	Working Class
PT - Portugal	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation	-.035	.039	-.157**	.049	-.069*	-.279**	.009
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.275	.222	.000	.128	.029	.000	.790
		N	990	990	990	978	990	986	968
FI - Finland	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation	-.030	-.222**	-.006	-.144**	.140**	-.121**	.095**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.349	.000	.860	.000	.000	.000	.003
		N	998	1001	1001	934	1001	999	976
SE - Sweden	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation	-.035	-.225**	-.073*	-.089**	.166**	-.074*	.072*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.260	.000	.017	.004	.000	.017	.020
		N	1052	1057	1057	1011	1057	1057	1050
AT - Austria	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation	-.010	.011	.004	.068*	-.117**	-.110**	.053
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.741	.723	.909	.031	.000	.001	.101
		N	1004	1004	1004	989	1004	962	966
CY - Cyprus (Republic)	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation	.017	-.151**	.084	.145**	-.057	.055	.221**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.704	.001	.063	.001	.202	.233	.000
		N	494	494	494	489	494	478	494
CZ - Czech Republic		Pearson Correlation	.017	-.078*	.063*	-.041	.030	-.043	-.026

Country			Feminine gender	Age in years	Size of locality	Age at which school completed	Student	Welfare Difficulties in paying invoices in the previous year	Working Class
	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Sig. (2-tailed) N	.586 1028	.013 1028	.044 1028	.191 997	.331 1028	.168 1023	.398 1026
EE - Estonia	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.030 .338 993	-.073* .021 993	.065* .040 990	-.064* .046 979	.045 .156 993	-.086** .007 981	.020 .534 924
HU - Hungary	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.059 .061 1010	-.003 .914 1010	.065* .040 1010	.040 .203 1009	-.015 .630 1010	.012 .709 1002	-.064* .043 1003
LV - Latvia	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.035 .260 1009	-.099** .002 1009	.050 .114 1009	.038 .233 966	.101** .001 1009	-.061 .052 1009	-.083** .009 996
LT - Lithuania	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.010 .761 998	.101** .001 998	-.041 .193 998	-.038 .234 971	-.091** .004 998	-.076* .016 997	-.050 .118 975
MT - Malta	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.057 .181 547	-.137** .001 547	.046 .284 547	.123** .004 531	.101* .018 547	-.076 .074 547	-.008 .849 541

Country			Feminine gender	Age in years	Size of locality	Age at which school completed	Student	Welfare Difficulties in paying invoices in the previous year	Working Class
PL - Poland	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation	.000	-.112**	-.058	.032	-.021	-.031	-.147**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.989	.000	.065	.309	.504	.321	.000
		N	1000	1000	1000	981	1000	995	993
SK - Slovakia	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation	.000	.012	.121**	.020	.080*	-.144**	-.009
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.996	.715	.000	.536	.012	.000	.769
		N	989	989	989	987	989	986	971
SI - Slovenia	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation	-.014	-.109**	-.060	-.034	.096**	-.054	-.044
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.664	.001	.055	.295	.002	.090	.162
		N	1004	1004	1004	968	1004	1002	993
BG - Bulgaria	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation	-.015	-.016	-.059	-.079*	-.050	.008	.059
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.630	.609	.059	.015	.112	.793	.066
		N	1022	1022	1022	969	1022	1003	965
RO - Romania	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation	.020	-.113**	-.122**	-.113**	.062*	-.165**	-.216**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.512	.000	.000	.000	.045	.000	.000
		N	1030	1030	1029	1023	1030	1030	1018
HR - Croatia		Pearson Correlation	.076*	-.037	.012	-.036	-.004	-.106**	-.136**

Country			Feminine gender	Age in years	Size of locality	Age at which school completed	Student	Welfare Difficulties in paying invoices in the previous year	Working Class
	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Sig. (2-tailed) N	.017 993	.244 993	.704 993	.268 970	.904 993	.001 993	.000 993
Total EU 27 (weighted by w92)	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.005	-.097**	-.001	-.028**	.049**	-.096**	-.060**
			.434	.000	.911	.000	.000	.000	.000
			26338	26342	26338	25949	26342	26077	25992

Gender does not differentiate corruption tolerance, neither in most EU countries nor for the EU population as a whole, with coefficients being statistically insignificant or very small, except in Greece, where women seem to have on average a slightly higher corruption tolerance than men. In Romania there is no gender difference.

Age is negatively associated with tolerance of corruption in several European countries and is also a significant predictor in the total sample. Thus, older people have a lower tolerance on average. This relationship is also valid in Romania. Negative relationships in Romania but also in other countries are found between corruption tolerance and *size of locality, formal education* (measured as age at completion of studies), *perceived material welfare and self-identification with the working class*. The latter two are the strongest predictors, at the level of bivariate relationships, for Romania. For the total sample, the strongest predictors are age and perceived material welfare.

Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and Portugal also have strong relationships between tolerance of corruption and perceived material welfare, more intense than Romania. Romania stands out as having the strongest negative association between self-identification with the working class and tolerance of corruption.

Table 7. Bravais Pearson R correlation coefficients between Corruption Tolerance - Summative Score (qa4_SUM) and corruption perception and experience variables for each EU27 country. National samples are weighted by w1 to be nationally representative. Statistically significant coefficients for $p = 0.01$ are marked with ** and statistically significant coefficients for $p = 0.05$ are marked with *. Source: author's analysis on EB 97.2 data

Country			Corruption perception - extent	Corruption perception - trends	Do you know anyone who has given or taken bribes	Experience of corruption	Health system - I was asked for an unofficial payment
FR - France	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation	.078*	.068*	.054	.127**	.089**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.015	.042	.082	.000	.009
		N	964	899	1020	1023	849
BE - Belgium	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation	.208**	.182**	.027	.170**	.155**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.397	.000	.000
		N	997	981	1009	1009	817
NL - The Netherlands	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation	.179**	.093**	-.007	.144**	.028
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.004	.830	.000	.444
		N	996	975	1000	1000	754
DE - Germany	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation	.021	.065*	-.019	.106**	.071*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.428	.015	.452	.000	.016
		N	1440	1385	1516	1518	1172

Country			Corruption perception - extent	Corruption perception - trends	Do you know anyone who has given or taken bribes	Experience of corruption	Health system - I was asked for an unofficial payment
IT - Italy	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation	-.031	-.038	.164**	.258**	.260**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.329	.239	.000	.000	.000
		N	997	970	1002	1014	655
LU - Luxembourg	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation	.152**	.074	.185**	.053	.042
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.127	.000	.238	.406
		N	468	427	495	502	395
DK - Denmark	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation	.093**	.018	.004	.132**	.119**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.561	.895	.000	.000
		N	1045	1016	1051	1052	866
IE - Ireland	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation	-.010	.081*	.010	.153**	.159**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.768	.015	.763	.000	.000
		N	930	908	991	997	664
GR - Greece	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation	-.111**	-.059	.110**	.174**	.183**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.062	.000	.000	.000
		N	998	987	1008	1009	547
ES -Spain	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation	.030	.020	.015	.110**	.088*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.345	.540	.639	.000	.015
		N	976	960	982	997	771
PT - Portugal	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation	-.063	-.166**	-.001	.151**	.135**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.051	.000	.970	.000	.000
		N	954	906	986	990	691
FI - Finland	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation	.193**	.037	.023	.163**	.118**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.267	.478	.000	.002
		N	974	920	994	1001	722
SE - Sweden	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation	.122**	.011	-.041	.109**	.080*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.736	.188	.000	.027
		N	1053	1031	1055	1057	764
AT - Austria	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.048	.008	.117**	.305**	.123**
			.138	.810	.000	.000	.002

Country			Corruption perception - extent	Corruption perception - trends	Do you know anyone who has given or taken bribes	Experience of corruption	Health system - I was asked for an unofficial payment
N			955	946	960	1004	646
CY - Cyprus (Republic)	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation	.067	.131**	.047	.028	.033
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.142	.004	.293	.539	.557
		N	489	483	494	494	321
CZ - Czech Republic	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation	.049	-.028	.066*	.134**	.087*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.122	.367	.034	.000	.011
		N	1009	1011	1021	1028	855
EE - Estonia	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation	.153**	.161**	.177**	.171**	.132**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
		N	873	815	970	993	773
HU - Hungary	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation	-.009	.009	.142**	.174**	.195**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.771	.767	.000	.000	.000
		N	991	980	1003	1010	632
LV - Latvia	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation	.075*	.077*	.165**	.182**	.153**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.020	.018	.000	.000	.000
		N	971	927	1003	1009	807
LT - Lithuania	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation	.076*	.128**	.207**	.241**	.211**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.018	.000	.000	.000	.000
		N	966	956	975	998	738
MT - Malta	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation	.036	.028	.188**	.199**	.148**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.419	.526	.000	.000	.004
		N	499	511	539	547	376
PL - Poland	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation	.003	.077*	.026	.058	.052
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.916	.018	.412	.066	.207
		N	946	952	997	1000	598
SK - Slovakia	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation	.011	-.022	.160**	.086**	.108**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.746	.505	.000	.007	.003
		N	955	945	971	989	754
SI - Slovenia		Pearson Correlation	-.033	-.062	-.020	.122**	.184**

Country			Corruption perception - extent	Corruption perception - trends	Do you know anyone who has given or taken bribes	Experience of corruption	Health system - I was asked for an unofficial payment
	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Sig. (2-tailed) N	.302 986	.055 970	.525 998	.000 1004	.000 731
BG - Bulgaria	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.060 .061 967	.009 .775 909	.175** .000 976	.142** .000 1022	.184** .000 744
RO - Romania	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.223** .000 987	-.210** .000 968	.038 .228 1009	.184** .000 1030	.312** .000 472
HR - Croatia	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.088** .006 989	-.026 .418 987	.037 .246 957	.233** .000 993	.235** .000 669
Total EU27 (weighted with w92)	Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.037** .000 25386	.021** .001 24623	.084** .000 26132	.167** .000 26342	.154** .000 18942

We can thus notice, both in the sample as a whole and in Romania, that direct experience of corruption is a strong predictor of tolerance of corruption, supporting the findings of previous studies. However, *Romania has a remarkable specificity in this case as well, i.e. direct experience of corruption in the healthcare system is very strongly associated with tolerance of corruption as a whole*, the coefficient (0.312) being the highest among all EU countries. High coefficients are also found in Italy (0.260), Lithuania (0.211) and Croatia (0.235).

In Romania, *indirect experience of corruption is not a statistically significant predictor for tolerance of corruption*. At the European level it is an associated and statistically significant factor, although the strength of the association is not very strong ($R = 0.084$).

Another specificity of Romania is the strong negative association between tolerance of corruption and the perception of the prevalence and growth of corruption. While at the level of the whole EU sample I have a very weak positive relationship (0.037), and at the level of the states these relationships are either positive or statistically insignificant, as a rule, Romania has strong negative correlations of -0.223 between tolerance and perception of prevalence and -0.210 between tolerance and perception of an increase. The other three European countries with statistically significant but less intense negative relationships are

Greece (only for magnitude), Portugal (only for trend) and Croatia (only for magnitude). I therefore identify in Romania a very interesting negative feedback phenomenon, where public tolerance decreases in relation to corruption perception, rather than increasing through individuals' adjustment to a social practice. This phenomenon offers an opportunity for negative feedback and an avoidance of amplification of corruption.

An exploration of associations in the Romanian population

In order to better understand the association of corruption tolerance with the most strongly correlated socio-demographic types and experiences and perceptions of corruption, I will present below contingency tables, which I have calculated only for the Romanian population.

In terms of the variation of corruption tolerance with age, I note that in Romania, as well, *young people (15-24) are more tolerant than all other age groups (25-65+)*. This is a relationship already observed globally in other similar studies. Interestingly, there are no visible differences between the adult and elderly population, with young people diverging from the dominant pattern. It is therefore necessary to understand the sources of this higher tolerance among young people in order to address it directly. It may, for example, involve their lack of experience in interacting with the public administrative system, which makes them more likely to resort to perceived shortcuts. It may also be cultural inertia, with young people less exposed to direct interaction with the system but retaining the experiences communicated by adults over the years. Such possible influences would be worth exploring in future studies, using both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Table 8. Contingency table between age recoded into 6 categories and corruption tolerance - sum score, for the Romanian population. Source: author's analysis on EB 97.2 data

		Age categories						Total
		15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	
Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	0	24%	43%	44%	46%	42%	45%	42%
	1	13%	16%	15%	14%	13%	19%	15%
	2	28%	15%	13%	15%	18%	15%	17%
	3	36%	26%	28%	25%	27%	21%	26%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi Square test = 0.001 (association is statistically significant at $p=0.01$)

Gender differences are not statistically significant, with women and men having, on average, a similar tolerance of corruption in Romania.

Table 9. Contingency table between gender and corruption tolerance - sum score, for the population of Romania. Source: author's analysis on EB 97.2 data

		Masculine	Feminine	Total
Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	0	43%	40%	42%
	1	14%	17%	15%
	2	17%	16%	17%
	3	26%	27%	26%
Total		100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi Square test = 0.348 (association not statistically significant at $p=0.05$)

In terms of associating corruption tolerance with self-defined social class, I find that identification with the working class leads to much lower corruption tolerance than all other identifications. This observation is interesting and opens the possibility of exploring, through future studies, the working class-specific experiences that generate such a clear differentiation.

Table 10. Contingency table between self-defined social class and corruption tolerance - sum score, for the population of Romania. Source: author's analysis on EB 97.2 data

		Social Class Self-defined social class (5 levels)					Total
		Working class	Middle class - lower level	Middle class	Middle class - top level	Upper class	
Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	0	62%	36%	38%	27%	30%	42%
	1	17%	14%	15%	16%	10%	15%
	2	7%	23%	19%	17%	20%	17%
	3	15%	27%	28%	40%	40%	26%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi Square test = 0.000 (association is statistically significant at $p=0.01$)

In terms of the relevance of locality type, I observe a non-linear relationship. Specifically, both the not-at-all tolerant and the very tolerant live in higher proportions in the villages than in the cities. There is therefore a polarisation of attitudes in rural versus urban areas.

Table 11. Contingency table between locality size and corruption tolerance - sum score, for the population of Romania. Source: author's analysis on EB 97.2 data

		Size of locality			Total
		Commune (rural locality)	Small or medium town	Big city	
Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	0	37%	49%	43%	41%
	1	14%	12%	19%	15%
	2	14%	19%	20%	17%
	3	35%	21%	18%	26%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi Square test = 0.000 (association is statistically significant at $p=0.01$)

I also observe a significant association with respondents' perceived material welfare. More prosperous people are less tolerant of corruption, while people with lower wealth are, on average, more tolerant. It is possible that the state of economic stress and precariousness creates a subjective sense of need for informal payments to resolve certain administrative situations within tight deadlines or to avoid higher formal payments.

Table 12. Contingency table between perceived material welfare and tolerance of corruption - sum score, for the population of Romania. Source: author's analysis on EB 97.2 data

		Difficulties in paying invoices in the previous year			Total
		Often	Sometimes	(Almost) never	
Tolerance of corruption - Sum score	0	33%	35%	49%	42%
	1	15%	13%	17%	15%
	2	22%	18%	14%	17%
	3	30%	33%	19%	26%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi Square test = 0.000 (association is statistically significant at $p=0.01$)

Conclusions

The secondary analysis on the tolerance of corruption in the European Union and, specifically, in Romania has revealed some interesting and original conclusions compared to the state of the literature. The EB 97.2 data, collected in 2022, support the findings of previous studies on higher tolerance of corruption among young people. In the case of Romania, I noted a clear differentiation of the generation 15-24 years old from the other generations, which share a similar, lower level of tolerance. This specificity of young people, robustly documented both over time and cross-culturally, is an important factor to be considered in the development of anti-corruption policies, as well as an interesting topic for future in-depth studies that could elucidate the sources of the phenomenon.

At the level of the overall EU27 population, tolerance of corruption is positively and most strongly associated with the experience of corruption in the healthcare system, followed by the cumulative experience of corruption, the mediated experience of corruption and, with a small coefficient in intensity, with the perception of the extent of

corruption. Romania stands out with a different pattern of associations. *The experience of corruption in the healthcare system has the highest correlation coefficient with the tolerance of corruption in Romania among EU27 countries, and the level of this experience is also the highest in Romania.* These two findings suggest a strong link between the two phenomena, indicating an increased relevance of the experience of corruption in the healthcare system for controlling public tolerance of corruption.

In Romania, self-identification with the working class as a socio-demographic predictor of reduced tolerance of corruption is also very relevant compared to other countries. People who subjectively identify with the middle or upper classes are likely to be more tolerant of what they perceive as bureaucratic shortcuts to deserved privileged treatment than citizens who subjectively identify with the working class and perceive more of the personal and societal costs of corruption.

Another distinctive element is that indirect experience of corruption does not lead to increased tolerance of corruption in Romania. *Overall, the previously documented positive associations between experience of corruption, perception of corruption, and tolerance of corruption are confirmed.* It is remarkable, in the case of Romania, also the negative association between corruption tolerance and the perception of the prevalence and evolution of corruption, which is atypical in the context of other EU countries, indicating a possible adjustment loop in which citizens react negatively to the perception of high corruption - also due to the very intense anti-corruption public and communication policies in recent years. Future studies, based on qualitative methods, could probe in-depth into the social processes that generate these connections.

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