

Does Governance Matter for Outward FDI? Evidence from the European Union Member States

Bogusława Dobrowolska https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3497-6223 Ph.D., University of Lodz, Lodz, Poland, e-mail: bogusława.dobrowolska@uni.lodz.pl

Tomasz Dorożyński https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3625-0354
Professor, University of Lodz, Lodz, Poland, e-mail: tomasz.dorozynski@uni.lodz.pl

Anetta Kuna-Marszałek https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5687-7272

Professor, University of Lodz, Lodz, Poland, e-mail: anetta.marszalek@uni.lodz.pl

Abstract

Our principal aim is to assess the role of governance companies' active internationalisation. We first measured and compared the degree of institutional quality among the 28 European Union Member States (EU-28) between 2004 and 2021 using the authorship synthetic index of governance quality (SIGQ) values. In the second step, we assessed outward foreign direct investment (OFDI) projects measured by their relative value to the GDP per capita in each member state. Finally, we correlated the overall quality of governance (GQ) and its six dimensions with OFDI in the EU-28 (including the UK). We employed numerous statistical tools, i.e., hierarchical cluster analysis, contingency analysis, synthetic index values, and descriptive statistics. We used the Worldwide Governance Index (WGI) to assess the GQ in the EU-28 for 2004-2021. The statistical analysis results revealed a positive relationship between the quality of governance and the OFDI. The most important of the partial variables was the rule of law, which reflects perceptions of the degree to which individuals and actors trust and adhere to social rules. Our research demonstrates that policymakers should consider the importance of institutional quality indicators in supporting domestic companies "to go abroad". The primary input delivered by the study to the current body of knowledge about OFDI involves identifying the relationship between GQ in all the EU-28 ("old" and "new") using the SIGQ index.



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Introduction

Internationalisation is one of the most critical processes in the contemporary global economy. It involves creating and developing various forms of transnational relations between enterprises, from relatively simple ones, such as exports, to much more advanced ones. The advanced ones include foreign direct investment (FDI), a common phenomenon of multinational enterprises (MNEs). Multinationals seek the optimal location in almost all politically and economically secure countries and regions worldwide. This is because foreign investors are primarily interested in a specific place to carry out their projects.

If we recognise that the internationalisation of indigenous companies benefits the economy of the capital's country of origin, we can create space for research into the determinants of companies' foreign activity in the form of FDI. The rationale for domestic companies' active internationalisation has a long history in economics and management research, including international economics and international business. In the last few years, the focus of research on FDI in Poland has also shifted towards outward investment projects. We still need to understand the factors that characterise the domestic economy that may favour or inhibit international entrepreneurial activity. Our study focuses on institutional factors that, according to our previous research, were statistically significant for investment location (Dobrowolska, Dorożyński, and Kuna-Marszałek 2023). This time, we examine the issue from the economic perspective of the capital's country of origin. Hence, we formulated the following research questions:

Can the quality of governance in home countries be a stimulant in making capital expansion abroad?

What is the role of governance in stimulating outward foreign direct investment (OFDI) from the perspective of the EU–28?

Which of the six dimensions of governance quality impacts FDI outward in the EU–28 the most?

Potential answers to these questions, as well as an in-depth study of the link between governance and OFDI, are beneficial for formulating effective industrial policies to accelerate the pace of foreign expansion of the EU companies, especially those from countries still classified as emerging markets, such as Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, and Romania (IMF 2023).

Hence, the principal goal of our study is to evaluate the quality of governance in the EU–28 and to examine the relationship between governance and FDI outward stock as a % of GDP. The central hypothesis states that a positive relationship exists between the quality of governance and the value of FDI outward stock as a % of GDP. We used various statistical methods to achieve our goal, i.e., hierarchical cluster analysis, contingency analysis, synthetic index values, and descriptive statistics. We employed the Worldwide Governance Index (WGI) to assess the GQ in the EU–28 for 2004–2021.

Literature review

The literature provides various answers as to why a company expands abroad through FDI. According to the neoclassical school of thought, which assumes that markets are completely free, owners are only interested in maximising the value of their holdings. Thus, it does not matter where companies invest their capital in production facilities: at home or abroad (Dunning and Lundan 2008). However, reality shows that markets do not provide an optimal allocation of resources, so several additional circumstances that influence the decision on capital investment can be considered. Market imperfections are why the taxonomy of motives followed by enterprises involved in FDI is so rich (Belniak 2015; Cuervo-Cazzura and Narula 2015; Wach 2016; Zasadzki and Opalach 2021). The motives for foreign expansion can vary greatly depending on the industry in which a company operates, its structure, experience in operating in foreign markets, the strategy adopted, the level of maturity, the institutional quality in the home or host country, and how capital is invested (Gorynia 2007). Hence, it is hard to disagree with Cuervo-Cazzura and Narula (2015), who claim that FDI motives may not only be approached in a variety of ways but, first of all, "are always evolving, like strategies, because they are aspiration-driven, and when they fail to produce the desired outcome, require a revision in motivation, if not also in strategy."

The literature most often refers to Dunning's (1993) four motives for FDI: resource-seeking, market-seeking, efficiency-seeking, and strategic asset-seeking. The first two are most often evoked in the literature, particularly regarding international trade models that try to formalise the OLI paradigm and define them as vertical and horizontal FDI (Franco, Rentocchini, and Vittucci 2008). However, these FDI motives are believed to have changed with the growing importance of knowledge and cooperation between companies under increasing global economic integration (Danes et al. 2023).

The motives for conducting FDI also vary depending on whether capital comes from developed, emerging or developing countries (Arslan, Tarba, and Larimo 2015; Pananond 2015; Ahammad et al. 2017; Filippaios et al. 2019). These motives include institutions and good governance. For instance, according to Child and Marinova (2014) and Stoian and Mohr (2016), MNEs from emerging countries decide to invest abroad

to overcome institutional constraints in their home markets. Some researchers also point out that democratic governments can stimulate FDI while policy changes in authoritarian countries discourage it (Jin and Huang 2023).

Good governance is the foundation on which everything else in the economy evolves (UNDP 2011; OECD 2016); it covers all aspects of how a country is governed, including economic policies, the regulatory framework, and adherence to the rule of law. Thus, good governance is a process which ensures transparent operations and accountability of institutions, boosts institutional effectiveness, helps to foster the economic competitiveness of the country, and builds trust in the business community (Dobrowolska, Dorożyński, and Kuna-Marszałek 2023). That primarily relates to public administration and its capacity to provide public services (World Bank 1994; 1997; 2002; Lateef 2016).

As argued by many authors, governance is thus equated with institutional quality. For instance, according to Huther and Shah (1999), governance encompasses "all aspects of the exercise of authority through formal and informal institutions in the management of the resource endowment of a state". Similar conclusions were reached by Kaufmann, Kraay, and Zoido-Lobatón (1999), Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi (2003), and Zhuang, de Dios, and Lagman-Martin (2010). For example, Kaufmann, Kraay, and Zoido-Lobatón (1999) defined governance as "the traditions and institutions by which the authority in a country is exercised". Kaufmann and Kraay (2007) use the terms "governance", "institutions", and "institutional quality" interchangeably throughout their paper. On the other hand, some believe that this is the correct way to approach them (Alonso and Garcimartín 2018; Dobrowolska, Dorożyński, and Kuna-Marszałek 2021; 2023), and "governance indicators can be based on criteria related to institutional quality, adapting them to the different functions of the state" (Alonso and Garcimartín 2018).

The quality of institutions enhances productivity and economic stability by attracting and enhancing foreign investment (Hayat 2019). Many studies have demonstrated that solid institutions in host countries attract more FDI (Sabir, Rafique, and Abbas 2019; Belfqi, Qafas, and Jerry 2021; Khan, Weili, and Khan 2022). Researchers far less often investigate the impact of good governance on FDI outflows, yet the policies of the home country government can influence companies' decisions on where to locate their investments (Gaur, Ma, and Ding 2018; Luo, Tung 2018), mainly if the government owns and controls the company (Buckley et al. 2018). Such MNEs may take more risks when engaging in overseas operations.

In turn, Fon and Alon (2022) identified a link between China's OFDI of state-owned enterprises in Africa and the financial assistance that the Chinese government provides to African countries hosting Chinese investments in the form of loans or credit. The example of Chinese OFDI is relatively well described in the literature, and researchers agree that the decisions made by Chinese companies to engage in FDI are strongly

influenced by their domestic market institutions (Li et al. 2018; Ramamurti and Hillemann 2018; Christofi, Vrontis, and Makrides 2022). According to Lu, Liu, and Wright (2014), home country government support plays a more decisive role in determining prior experience when firms enter developing countries.

Stoian (2013) studied OFDI from 20 Central and Eastern European countries. The results showed the importance of home country institutional factors when examining the determinants of OFDI. She highlighted that including institutional variables increased the explanatory power of the models and that competition policy and general institutional reforms played a crucial role in explaining OFDI from CEE countries. Meanwhile, Stoian and Mohr (2016) showed that multinational firms from developing and emerging economies may engage in FDI to overcome competitive disadvantages arising from "home country institutional voids" related to underdeveloped capital markets, regulatory systems, contract enforcement mechanisms, and infrastructure. Institutional theory maintains that firms' strategies are embedded in the institutional context of their home country and are therefore influenced by the rules of the game, which are enforced by institutions themselves (Stoian 2013).

The quality of governance in the EU Member States

The first step in our study is to measure and compare the degree of governance quality among EU countries. Based on the results of studies that assessed GQ in the 28 EU Member States (EU–28) published in the WGI reports, we used hierarchical cluster analysis methodology¹ to identify countries that represent similar GQ. Using Ward's method², we obtained a dendrogram that shows the hierarchical structure of the components in the set (see Figure 1).

Hierarchical cluster analysis is used to identify homogenous groups of elements based on selected characteristics in a given set of data (Lasek 2002; James et al. 2014).

² Ward's method is one of the agglomeration methods used in hierarchical cluster analysis.

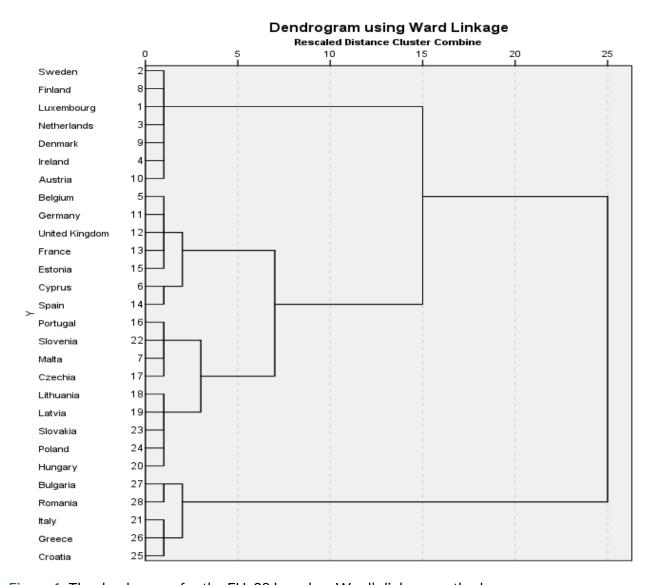


Figure 1. The dendrogram for the EU-28 based on Ward's linkage method

Source: own compilation using PS IMAGO.

Based on cluster analysis, we divided EU–28 into groups representing similar levels of GQ. They are as follows:

 $\textbf{Group 1}_{\text{gov}} \text{: Denmark, Netherlands, Austria, Ireland, Finland, Sweden, Luxembourg;}$

Group 2 $_{gov}$: Cyprus, Spain, Estonia, France, Belgium, Germany, United Kingdom;

Group 3_{gov}: Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal, Slovenia, Czechia, Malta;

Group 4_{gov}: Bulgaria, Romania, Greece, Italy, Croatia.

Although hierarchical cluster analysis helped us distinguish four groups of countries with comparable GQ, it failed to identify which group performs better than the others. Hence, we compared the GQ among the preselected groups of countries with Ward's

linkage method. To achieve this goal, we constructed a synthetic index of governance quality values (SIGQ) for each country based on data from 2004–2021. This measure is a sum of percentile ranks for the countries published by the WGI for six governance dimensions over the investigated period. The ranking of the EU–28 based on the SIGQ is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Ranking by the SIGQ of the EU-28, 2004-2021

Ranking	Country	SIGQ value
1	Finland	10,544.31
2	Luxembourg	10,392.65
3	Sweden	10,370.22
4	Denmark	10,335.80
5	Netherlands	10,154.60
6	Austria	10,022.84
7	Ireland	9,843.93
8	Germany	9,701.45
9	United Kingdom	9,463.23
10	Belgium	9,356.24
11	Malta	9,097.44
12	France	9,022.08
13	Estonia	8,984.90
14	Portugal	8,840.16
15	Slovenia	8,604.12
16	Czechia	8,536.47
17	Cyprus	8,470.27
18	Spain	8,229.51
19	Lithuania	8,174.19
20	Slovakia	7,920.46
21	Latvia	7,827.04
22	Poland	7,797.32
23	Hungary	7,757.90
24	Italy	7,423.57
25	Croatia	7,013.34

Ranking	Country	SIGQ value
26	Greece	6,979.88
27	Bulgaria	6,284.34
28	Romania	6,173.44

Source: own compilation using PS IMAGO.

Using the synthetic governance quality index, we calculated the index's mean value for the four groups of countries (see Figure 2).

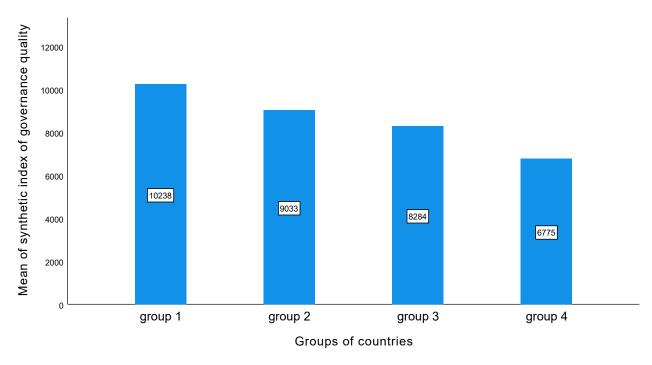


Figure 2. The mean value of the SIGQ for the EU-28, 2004-2021

Source: own compilation using PS IMAGO.

The ranking confirmed that the highest GQ was reported by countries from Group $1_{\rm gov}$, i.e. Finland, Sweden, Luxembourg, Denmark, Netherlands, Austria and Ireland. At the other extreme is Group $4_{\rm gov}$, with Bulgaria, Romania, Greece, Italy, and Croatia, where potential investors can expect the lowest level of governance quality.

We then extended our research to include partial rankings that showed the index values for six dimensions of governance quality (see Figure 3). Finland leads in three of the six partial rankings and is second in two. Sweden, Luxembourg and Denmark also perform relatively well. In almost all subcategories, the weakest performers are new Member States, Romania and Bulgaria, which joined the EU in 2007. Greece, which has membership experience of over 40 years, is also included. Significant differences exist between the countries, with the best and worst results almost double in the sub-ranking. This

applies to four of the following six sub-rankings: (1) political stability and absence of violence, (2) government effectiveness, (3) rule of law, and (4) control of corruption.

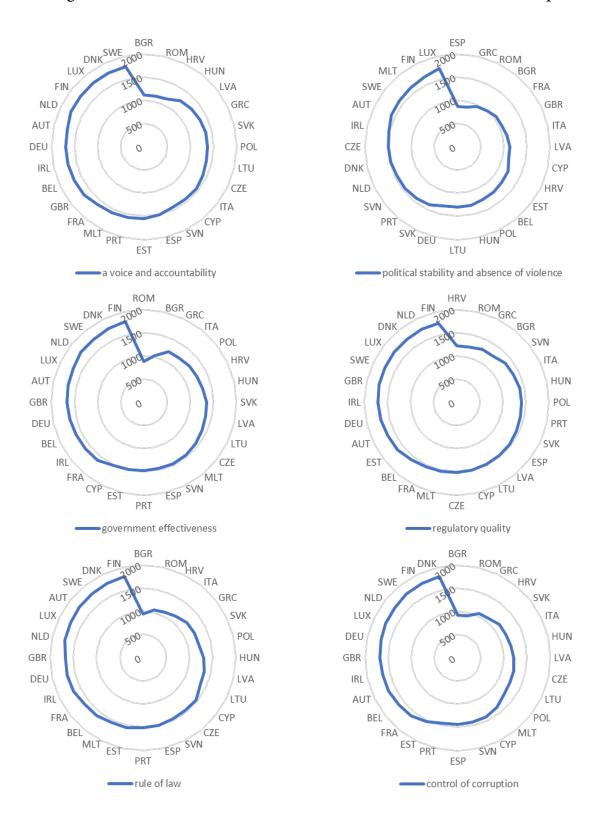


Figure 3. Individual rankings of the six dimensions of GQ in the EU-28, 2004-2021 Source: own compilation using PS IMAGO.

The OFDI from the EU-28 Member States

In the next stage, we looked into the OFDI from the EU–28. Based on the descriptive statistics in Table 2, we can conclude that OFDI stock as a % of GDP for the EU–28 at the end of 2021 is remarkably differentiated, highly skewed, and with high kurtosis. The 5% trimmed mean and M-estimators differ significantly from the mean, providing evidence of the absence of homogeneity in the examined population.

Table 2. Statistics describing OFDI stock as a % of GDP in the EU 2021

Descriptives	Statistics	Std. Error	
Mean	171.62	74.26	
95% Confidence Interval for Mean – Lower Bound	19.25		
95% Confidence Interval for Mean – Upper Bound	323.99		
5% Trimmed Mean	105.82		
Variance	154402.61		
Std. Deviation	392.94		
Minimum	0.95		
Maximum	1537.05		
Range	1536.10		
Interquartile Range	56.82		
Skewness	3.17	0.44	
Kurtosis	9.41	0.86	
Percentiles 25	14.63		
Percentiles 50	39.24		
Percentiles 75	70.32		
M-Estimators			
Huber's M-Estimator ^a	40.34		
Tukey's Biweight ^b	30.71		
Hampel's M-Estimator ^c	32.23		
Andrews' Wave ^d	30.72		

^a The weighting constant is 1.339.

Source: own compilation made in PS IMAGO.

We divided the EU-28 into four groups arranged in ascending order of OFDI stock as a % of GDP based on position measures such as quartiles. We transformed the OFDI

^b The weighting constant is 4.685.

^c The weighting constants are 1.700, 3.400, and 8.500.

^d The weighting constant is 1.340*pi.

stock as a % of the GDP variable measured on a numerical scale into an ordinal scale variable. As a result, we produced the following groups of countries:

Group \mathbf{1}_{\text{fdi}}: Cyprus, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Ireland, Belgium, Sweden;

Group 2_{fd}: Denmark, United Kingdom, France, Austria, Germany, Finland, Spain;

Group 3_{fai}: Estonia, Italy, Portugal, Hungary, Czechia, Lithuania, Latvia;

 $\textbf{Group 4}_{\text{\tiny fdi}}\!\!:$ Slovenia, Croatia, Greece, Slovakia, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania.

A detailed ranking of OFDI stock as a % of GDP (as of the end of 2021) is presented in Figure 4.

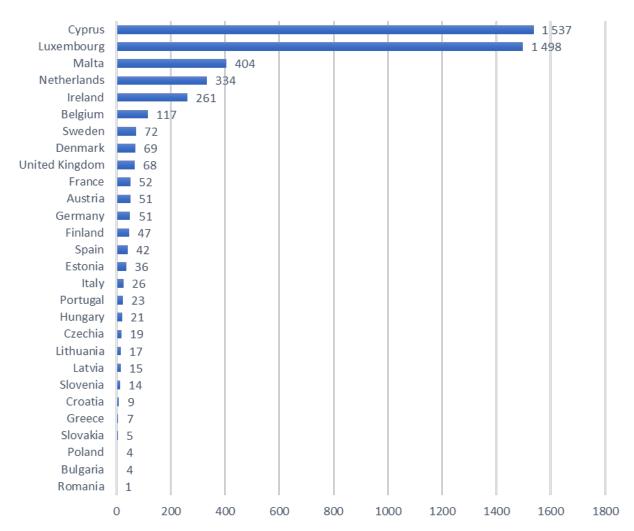


Figure 4. OFDI stock as a % of GDP as of the end of 2021

Source: own compilation based on UNCTADSTAT.

The relationship between GQ and OFDI

In the next stage of this study, we assessed the relationship between the GQ in the EU–28 between 2004 and 2021 and OFDI stock as a % of GDP as of the end of 2021. The correlation analysis started with drafting the correlation diagram for the variables (Figure 5).

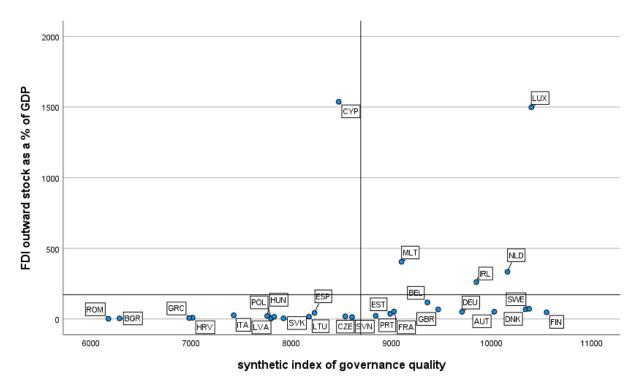


Figure 5. Correlation diagram for the SIGQ and FDI outward stock as a % of GDP Source: own compilation using PS IMAGO.

The correlation diagram verifies the conclusions drawn in the previous step, suggesting massive differentiation of the OFDI stock as a % of GDP among the EU–28, mainly due to the values of this variable for Cyprus, Malta, and Luxembourg. To understand this further, we will now assess how much the synthetic index of governance quality differs across the four groups of member states arranged in ascending order of OFDI as a % of GDP based on the measures of position such as quartiles (see Figure 6).

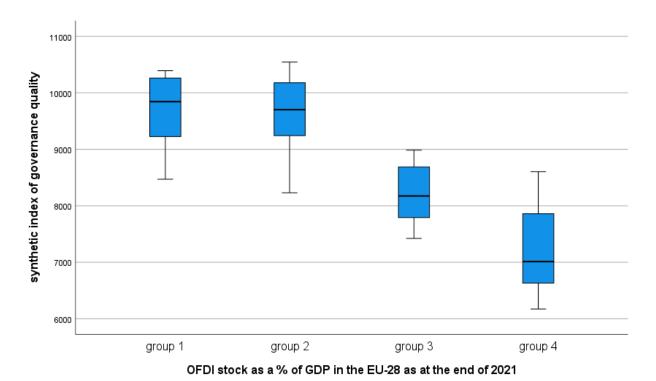
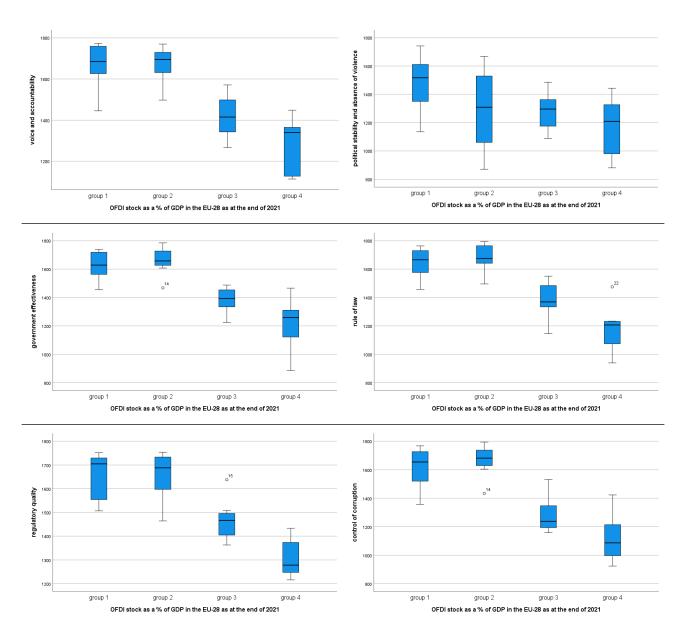


Figure 6. Box-whisker for the SIGQ in 4 groups of countries based on the OFDI stock as a % of GDP in the EU-28 as of the end of 2021

Source: own compilation using PS IMAGO.

The highest median values of the SIGQ among the EU–28 were reported for Group $1_{\rm fdi}$, which means that the most significant FDI outward stock as a % of GDP is characterised by countries offering the highest institutional quality to potential investors. The median values of the synthetic governance quality index are slightly lower in Group $2_{\rm fdi}$ compared to Group $1_{\rm fdi}$. The median values of the SIGQ are much lower in Group $3_{\rm fdi}$ and Group $4_{\rm fdi}$, bringing together countries reporting the lower levels of OFDI stock as a % of GDP and the SIGQ values.



[°] Number 22 - Slovenia, number 15 - Estonia, number 14 - Spain.

Figure 7. Box-whisker for six dimensions of governance quality in groups of countries distinguished based on OFDI stock as a % of GDP

Source: own compilation based on PS IMAGO.

In the next step, we verified the relevance of the six dimensions of GQ for OFDI, and the results are presented in Figure 7. The distribution of median values in all areas covered by the study is consistent with the distribution of the synthetic measure. Notably, however, the most significant differences were found in the three dimensions of GQ, i.e. rule of law, regulatory quality, and government effectiveness.

Table 3. Contingency matrix for groups of the EU-28 for GQ and OFDI stock as a % of GDP

	Groups of countries with similar quality of governance				
Groups of countries with similar levels of OFDI stock as a % of GDP	Group 1 _{gov} Denmark, Netherlands, Austria, Ireland, Finland, Sweden, Luxembourg	Group 2 _{gov} Cyprus, Spain, Estonia, France, Belgium, Germany, United Kingdom	Group 3 _{gov} Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal, Slovenia, Czechia, Malta	Group 4 _{gov} Bulgaria, Romania, Greece, Italy, Croatia	Total
Group 1 _{fdi} Cyprus, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Ireland, Belgium, Sweden	4	2	1	0	7
Group 2 _{fdi} Denmark, United Kingdom, France, Austria, Germany, Finland, Spain	3	4	0	0	7
Group 3 _{fdi} Estonia, Italy, Portugal, Hungary, Czechia, Lithuania, Latvia	0	1	5	1	7
Group 4 _{fdi} Slovenia, Croatia, Greece, Slovakia, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania	0	0	3	4	7

Source: own compilation is done using PS IMAGO.

We grouped the countries in ascending order of FDI as a % of GDP based on quartiles, as well as governance quality. This allowed us to construct a contingency matrix table (Table 3). By examining the data from Table 3, it can be assumed that countries with higher GQ tend to record a higher share of OFDI in relation to GDP, as exemplified in our study by the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Sweden, and Ireland.

Table 4. Contingency coefficients between six dimensions of governance and FDI outward stock as a % of GDP in the EU-28

Dimensions of governance		Contingency coefficient
1	Voice and accountability	0.656
2	Political stability and absence of violence	0.548
3	Government effectiveness	0.656
4	Regulatory quality	0.657

Dimensions of governance		Contingency coefficient
5	Rule of law	0.707
6	Control of corruption	0.666
Six	k dimensions of governance / overall value (SIGQ)	0.704

Source: own compilation is done using PS IMAGO.

We used the contingency coefficient to assess the strength of the correlation between GQ and OFDI stock as a % of GDP (Table 4). Its value for the six dimensions of governance quality for the EU–28 was 0.704, which shows a significant, positive³ correlation between GQ and OFDI stock as a % of GDP. By ensuring an appropriate quality of governance, the EU–28 increase OFDI as a % of GDP. The contingency coefficients between the six dimensions of governance and OFDI as a % of GDP suggest that the rule of law has, relatively speaking, the most significant impact on OFDI.

Conclusions

The principal goal of the article was to evaluate the quality of governance in the EU–28 and to examine the relationship between governance and OFDI stock as a % of GDP. From our research, the following conclusions can be obtained:

- 1. The overall quality of governance, as measured by the WGI and its six key components, differs significantly across the EU Member States. At the same time, it was found that the analysed countries can be grouped into groups, indicating a similar quality of governance.
- 2. We used hierarchical cluster analysis to split the EU–28 into four groups with similar characteristics, i.e. political stability, rule of law, and corruption control. Finland, Sweden, Luxembourg, Denmark, Netherlands, Austria, and Ireland comprise the best group. Finland is, without a doubt, the leader. In turn, the weakest performers tended to be Romania and Bulgaria, which joined the EU in 2007, as well as Greece, which has been a member of the EU for more than four decades.
- 3. The statistical analysis revealed a positive correlation between governance quality and the OFDI. The rule of law is the most essential of the partial variables, as it captures perceptions of the extent to which agents have confidence in and abide by societal rules.

Direction of the relationship was assessed based on the distribution of data in the contingency table (Table 4) and the ranking of variables describing quality of governance in the EU Member States (Figures 2 and 3).

4. The other correlation results support the idea that all factors determining the governance quality positively impact OFDI projects.

Our study has some limitations. No distinction was made between different entry modes of OFDI or specific motivations that drive OFDI. Such an investigation would be interesting, especially in the context of EU countries, which differ regarding economic and social development and membership experience. Future studies could be oriented towards investigating differences in the quality of governance and OFDI between developed and emerging economies. Central and Eastern European countries are an exciting research group, as they have carried out many reforms over the last three decades that have considerably affected their institutional environment. Moreover, MNEs from these countries differ from those in other regions because they have different motives and starting points for the internationalisation process.

The study has specific implications for research and practice. Given the positive relationship between GQ and OFDI, policymakers should consider the importance of institutional quality indicators in supporting domestic companies "to go abroad". A good governance profile of the home country encourages local businesses to invest internationally in the most sophisticated way, e.g., in greenfield projects. Thus, governments should implement institutional reforms to implement OFDI investment incentive schemes. Our research demonstrates that government policies should also focus on improving specific dimensions of governance quality, such as the rule of law. The results show that this dimension of governance has been the most relevant for OFDI in the EU–28.

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Czy jakość rządzenia w kraju pochodzenia kapitału wpływa na zagraniczne inwestycje bezpośrednie? Badanie porównawcze państw członkowskich UE

Głównym celem badania jest wpływ jakości rządzenia na aktywną internacjonalizację przedsiębiorstw w Unii Europejskiej. Najpierw zmierzyliśmy i porównaliśmy poziom jakości instytucjonalnej w państwach członkowskich UE w latach 2004-2021, wykorzystując autorski syntetyczny indeks jakości rządzenia (SIGQ). Następnie porównaliśmy wartość zagranicznych inwestycji bezpośrednich wychodzących (OFDI) w relacji do PKB na mieszkańca w każdym państwie członkowskim UE. Na koniec skorelowaliśmy ogólną jakość rządzenia (GQ) i jej sześć wymiarów z OFDI w państwach członkowskich UE-28 (w tym w Wielkiej Brytanii). Zastosowaliśmy metody statystyczne, m.in. hierarchiczną analizę skupień, analizę kontyngencji, syntetyczne wartości indeksu i statystyki opisowe. Wyniki analizy statystycznej potwierdziły pozytywny związek między jakością rządzenia a OFDI. Najważniejszą ze zmiennych cząstkowych okazał się współczynnik określający rządy prawa (rule of law), to znaczy postrzeganie stopnia, w jakim jednostki i podmioty przestrzegają zasad społecznych w danym kraju. Nasze badania pokazują, że decydenci polityczni powinni rozważyć znaczenie wskaźników jakości instytucjonalnej we wspieraniu krajowych firm w wychodzeniu za granicę. Głównym wkładem w obecny stan wiedzy na temat OFDI jest próba zidentyfikowania ich związku z GQ we wszystkich państwach członkowskich Unii Europejskiej ("starych" i "nowych") przy użyciu indeksu SIGQ.

Słowa kluczowe: jakość rządzenia, umiędzynarodowienie, zagraniczne inwestycje bezpośrednie, państwa członkowskie UE