The Implications of Ethics and Responsibility in Public Management

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Abstract
Public values are currently an essential aspect in the decision-making process in the public management sector. The "public value" theory plays an important role in the process of identifying managers on maintaining the competence of the organization in the eyes of the public. The essence is the acceptance of full responsibility by the leaders and the organizations they lead, for the good of the citizens and for the politicians who make public policies. The article brings forward the concept of responsibility in public management and its relationship with ethical principles. We will try to highlight and present how the policies anti-corruption, ethics codes improvements, increasing the application of norms regarding the principles of ethics and responsibility in Public Management has had a considerable impact both on the public administration sector and on society in general. As research we try to present the evolution of ethics and the fight against corruption in the Ministry of Interior Affairs and in the institutions subordinated to the Ministry of Interior Affairs, with applicability in all other state institutions.

Keywords: ethics, responsibility, corruption, public management.

JEL classification: M31.

1.   Introduction

Ensuring socially responsible public behavior requires a permanent reflection on the decisions that are taken and their effect from a moral point of view on citizens. Social responsibility in terms of public management means carefully weighing the actions that must be performed in terms of compliance with a set of values and standards defined at society standards, for their own good.

Across Europe, especially in northern Europe, has been a remarkable increase in interest in social ethics in the past three decades. Romania, although, it has begun to show an increase in the specialty volume in terms of ethics and, subsequently, the detailed development of principles and codes that are to be put into practice.

In this article we will try to highlight and present how the increasing application of the principles of ethics and responsibility in Public Management has had a considerable impact both on the public administration sector and on society in general.

When we say "ethics" we are referring to a multitude of aspects. This principle envelops a number of theoretical approaches, including principles-based ethics (deontology or ethics based on duty and consequences) and ethics based on character and relationships (virtue ethics, community ethics). It also includes multiple religious and cultural approaches (e.g. Buddhist ethics, Christian ethics, "African ethics" and "Asian ethics"). In the Western world, the main focus on modern ethics falls on actions of conduct or correct actions (for example, respect for the right of individuals to make their own choices; promoting the well-being of as many people as possible).In the southern and eastern EU countries, emphasis can be placed more often on the good and bad qualities of character (such as being respectful, fair or compassionate) and on

responsibilities related to relationships (solidarity with relatives or community, respectful of the elderly). However, national codes of professional ethics tend to pay more attention to principles of conduct, as this is the language of international professional ethics (Meynhardt, 2019).

In public administration institutions, civil servants are the ones who represent the deciding factor. The way in which they exercise their decision-making power differs, in their daily activity. Regardless of the activity they perform and the institution in which they carry out their activity, ethics and responsibility for the good governance are the basic factor in maintaining trust in state institutions. Ethics is the benchmark for implementing the practices and conduct of civil servants, so that citizens feel safe and that their interests are met and their legal process respected. Therefore, ethics is a key factor in the quality of governance. Ethics, however, must be applied as a daily activity and not represent a status quo of the representatives of the institutions.

By applying an ethical behavior, we do not refer only to the establishment and application of rules. Ethics means a true continuous process, which promotes and sustains the activity of the government and becomes a crucial element for improving the functionality and evolution of the governing process (Grigoruta, 2004/2005).

2. Literature review

"Ethics can only be an Instrument, only a means to an end, but it is a necessary means. The ethics of governance provides the preconditions for governing a good public sector policy. In this sense, it is more important than any policy because all policies depend on it "(Thomson, 1992). Since the last decade, many countries in the European Union are undergoing various stages of public administration reforms. The readjustment of the codes of ethics is in constant relation with the changes generated by reforms. Therefore, there are tensions rising between the traditional notions of public administration and its newly developed forms. We can exemplify, measures such as reducing rules and control, favor the making of mistakes and doing wrong work.

At the same time, imposing very frequent rules and controls negatively influences the act of work and governance: fear / caution is installed, and civil servants will constantly think about how to avoid the risk of violating the code of ethics. We could not assess which model is better or which can be regarded as middle course, but each country must apply and test the management of ethics in accordance with the approach of public administration as a whole. Regardless of the conduct objectives of one country, each seems to have a common goal, namely: compliance with the three "E" (economy, efficiency and effectiveness). We can easily add here a fourth "E", Ethics. Due to the changes that take place permanently in the European Union, an indispensable condition for a good public management is the ethical conduct. The success of reforms in public administration and general confidence in the government will depend on this aspect, all over the world, therefore also in Romania (Grigoruta, 2004/2005).

3. Methods applied for an Efficient Public Management

The codes of ethics in our country contain principles and rules of conduct and are framed according to the fields in which they are applicable, the roles and professional relations of civil servants. There is no code of ethics in which a good society is portrayed, although the perspective of a good society is often described in every code of ethics. Many of the national codes of ethics include the definition of the work performed by the public apparatus, as a social activity, performed for the benefit of the citizen, with regard of the principles of human rights and social justice. The implementation of broader standards and rules in codes of ethics reflects the trend that is taking place in practice for more detailed and standardized systems for

monitoring and evaluation in the public work sector, which is one of the characteristics of what we call Effective Public Management. When we refer to "Public Management" we refer to a number of characteristics of organizational management regarding public services. Some of the key features of public management can be summarized as follows (Dunleavy & Hood, 1994; Clarke, Gewirtz, & McLaughlin, 2000):

• pay attention to outputs and performance, rather than inputs;

• organizations are seen as chains of low-trust relationships, linked by contracts or contractual processes;

• large-scale breakdown of organizations and the use of competition to allow users to "exit" or "choose";

• decentralization of budgetary and personal authorities to line managers. (Meynhardt, 2019)

The focus on the improvement of procedures, the implementing of measures has intensified considerably on the basis of Romania's integration into the European Union. Starting with 2005, new procedures were established regarding a multitude of ethical and procedural codes in all important fields, together with the establishment of new institutions charged with the job to regulate these codes and the respective deviations that might occur. Emphasis was also placed on achieving improved outcomes for people and communities from a social point of view. Ethics focuses on human nature on individual moral, on those leaders who take opinions into account and take the right measures. In public sector jobs, this refers to professional autonomy and professional discretion in making decisions and to assure that these decisions are in accordance with their professional knowledge, experience and values, so that the end result is performed for the benefit of the citizen. If we refer to civil servants, they should not be mere technicians or bureaucrats who simply follow the rules. They must be professionals with the proper expertise who are dedicated to ethical practice. Civil servants have the right, power and duty to promote what they consider to be good and ethical in practice and to challenge and resist inhuman, degrading and unjust practices and policies.

Next, we can address issues related to, the claiming of rights by citizens, taxpayers. Work ethics in the public central apparatus refers to promoting and respecting the rights of consumers, so they make their own decisions and / or to work in a so-called partnership with civil servants. Fundamental ethical values in social work include respect for service users and their dignity and respect for their rights and choices - as opposed to viewing them as problems to be solved, goals to be achieved.

In this sense, the reaffirmation of the social justice mission and the inclusion of the political class in the concept of ethics are essential. Social justice is a core ethical value at the heart of social activity. This includes a commitment to correctly distribute work services for the benefit and good of society in accordance with the real needs of the citizen. It also involves questioning the power and interests of governments, public administration employers, state-owned companies and also civil servants, and what sometimes drives them to ignore or accept inequalities and oppression.

Last but not the least, a very important step in the organizational process of a country, we can mention the reconfiguring professional ethics process. Ethics is about the person (moral agent) and interpersonal relationships, as well as about abstract actions and principles. Much of recent literature on public sector ethics includes reference to work ethics and ethics of caring for the citizen and public money. Some theorists argue that a reform of professional ethics will focus on the moral qualities, commitments, and motivations of civil servants (Meynhardt, 2019).

When we refer to the processes at European level, according to the Sustainable Development Strategy in the European Union, the Theme "Peace, justice and strong

institutions" is included in the 17 points developed for the decade that has just begun on the proper development of the EU.

According to Eurostat, safety is a crucial aspect of people's lives. Insecurity is a common source of fear and worry, and negatively affects quality of life generally. Physical insecurity includes all the external factors that could potentially put an individual's physical integrity in danger. Criminal actions are one of the most obvious causes of insecurity. Analyses of physical insecurity usually combine two aspects: the subjective perception of insecurity and the objective lack of safety. Available time series on both objective and subjective measures of personal safety show a favorable trend in the EU over the last 10 years. A look at gender-related aspects, however, reveals that some important issues of concern remain.

The European Agenda on security sets out the main actions envisaged to ensure an effective EU response to terrorism and security threats in the European Union over the period 2015 to 2020. The Agenda identified three priorities: tackling terrorism and preventing radicalization, disrupting organized crime, and fighting cybercrime. Other areas of EU intervention include the fight against trafficking in human beings and firearms, and the fight against corruption, financial crime and counterfeiting crime.

Well-functioning justice systems are an important structural condition on which EU Member States base their sustainable growth and social stability policies. Whatever the model of the national justice system or the legal tradition in which it is anchored, quality, independence and efficiency are among the essential parameters of an 'effective justice system'. As there is no single agreed way of measuring the quality of justice systems, the budget actually spent on courts is used here as a proxy for the quality of the justice system.

Moreover, judges need to be able to make decisions without interference or pressure from governments, politicians or economic actors, to ensure individuals and businesses can fully enjoy their rights. The perceived independence of the justice system is used for monitoring this aspect.

Data for the EU show a generally favorable trend over the past decade in both areas: the financial resources spent on law courts have increased, although at a slower pace than gross domestic product (GDP), and the perceived independence of the justice system has improved. More than half of the EU population consider the justice system to be sufficiently independent. In 2019, 56% of EU inhabitants rated the independence of the courts and judges in their country as 'very good' or 'fairly good'.
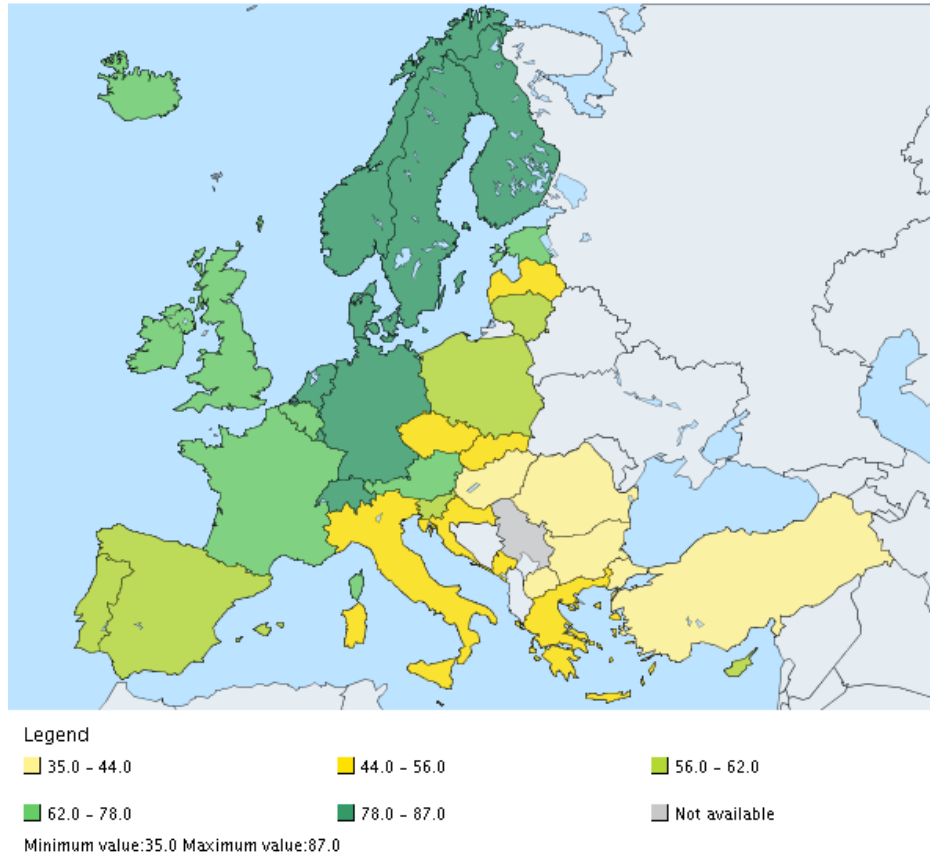
This is an increase of four percentage points compared with 2016. At the same time, the perception of 'very bad' or 'fairly bad' fell by three percentage points, from 36% to 33%. The most common reason for respondents rating the independence of their justice system as good was that the status and position of judges sufficiently guaranteed their independence. In contrast, interference or pressure from government and politicians were the main reasons for a bad rating of perceived independence of courts and judges. Effective justice systems are a prerequisite for the fight against corruption. Corruption generally comprises illegal activities, which are deliberately hidden and only come to light through scandals, investigations or prosecutions. Corruption inflicts financial damage by lowering investment levels, hampering the fair operation of the internal market and reducing public finances. It also causes social harm as organized crime groups use corruption to commit other serious crimes, such as trafficking in drugs and humans.

In the European Commission Communication from 2011, corruption was estimated to cost the EU economy EUR 120 billion per year, equivalent to about 1% of the Union's GDP at that time. Corruption can also undermine trust in democratic institutions and weaken the accountability of political leadership. Available data on corruption and trust in institutions show that the EU has remained among the least corrupt regions in the world. Trust levels in the

main EU institutions have nevertheless deteriorated since the early 2000s, although a turnaround was observed in the past few years (Eurostat, 2019).
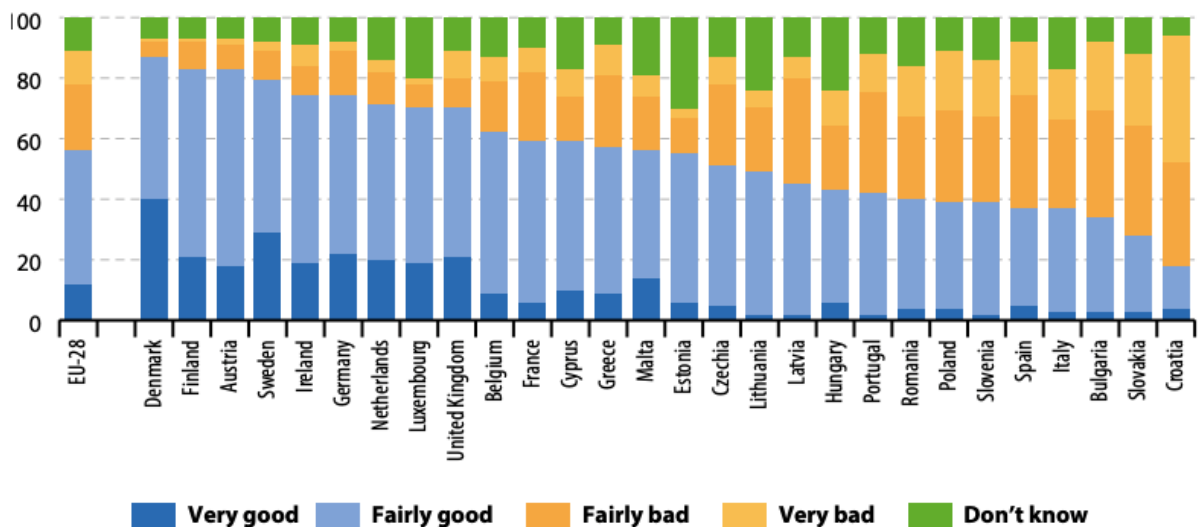

Figure 1. Corruption Perceptions Index
Source:https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/mapToolClosed.do?tab=map&init=1&plugin=1&language=en&pcode=sdg_16_50&toolbox=types

Figure 2. Perceived independence of the justice system, by country, 2019 (% of population)
Source: European Commission services (Eurostat online data code: sdg_16_40)

4. Methodology Research - Study on the evolution of ethics and the fight against corruption in Romania in the Ministry of Interior and the institutions subordinated to the Ministry of Interior

The applied research aims at analyzing the need to rethink, reorient and prioritize the efforts undertaken by our country in the field of corruption prevention. Moreover, given the current social context in which the prevention of corruption is a national priority, it is self-evident the institutional decision to identify and permanently adopt the most appropriate measures to directly address existing corruption vulnerabilities in the level of state institutions. The research approach involves analyzing the performance parameters, the activities carried out in the field of corruption prevention, the normative and conceptual framework, the methods and practices used, both from the perspective of staff directly involved in preventive activities, the main beneficiaries and representatives of different institutions. the agents and authorities of the ministry, as well as the representatives of the civil society, in this case the non-governmental organizations of reference for the design and development of a diverse range of projects in the field.

As we well know, the transition to a fair, equitable government and in a protective atmosphere is an elaborate process, carried out with quite small steps, which our country has started since the 90s, but especially from the moment Romania's accession to the European Union.

The periods we have taken into account is between the years 2012-2016, with conclusions made in 2018. These are the latest data on this issue in our country. During this interval, two samples were taken in the study: general population and Ministry of Interior Affairs (MAI) employees.

The research that formed the basis of the study was conducted through polls applied in the two intervals, among the two samples. Therefore, in the polls conducted in the mentioned period the following aspects were found:
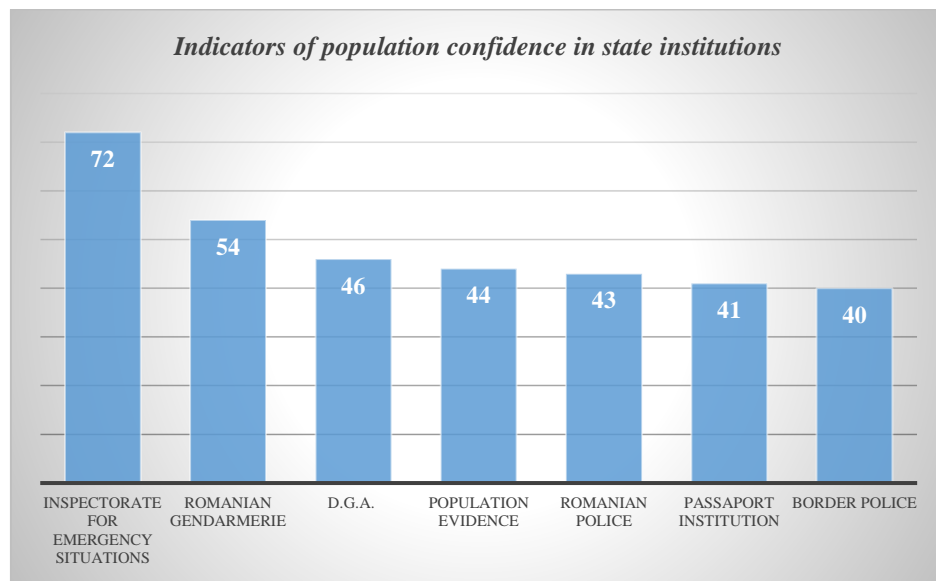
- the main topic of discussion in Romania was the phenomenon of corruption;

- this topic has taken the place of the main theme discussed in recent years, namely the lack of jobs;

- in 2015, corruption was the most serious problem facing Romania;

- the main factor that favored public perception was the media coverage;

- from the surveyed sample in 2015 51% of people considered that the most serious problem in Romania was corruption;

- the percentage had significantly increased from 20% in 2012 and 15% in 2014;

- the majority of the population considered that the direction in which the country was heading was wrong, from ethics point of view and that of corruption fighting measures (from 76% in 2014, to 63% in 2015);

- the opinion of Romanians towards their own situation, however, had a positive trend, 22% of the people who took part in the survey, considered that their life is better than the one they had in previous years.

Therefore, one of the most visible problems of Romania and the basic element that creates dysfunctions in the smooth running of domestic public institutions, was represented by corruption, an aspect underlined both by the opinion of the population and by the employees of M.A.I. comparing with 2014, a significant increase in awareness of the level of corruption in our country (29 percentage points), an increase that could be generated by the context: media coverage and bringing to the fore on television channels the multiple cases of corruption among ministers, mayors, civil servants.

At the same time, in 2015, compared to 2014, there was a general decrease in population confidence in M.A.I. All this in the context in the majority of the consulted population (over

95%) knew the importance of the ministry's fields of activity (fighting crime, ensuring public order, fighting corruption, intervening in emergencies, rapid intervention at citizens' requests and providing quality public services). The institution with the highest level of trust was represented by the Inspectorate for Emergency Situations (72%), followed by the Romanian Gendarmerie (54%), D.G.A. (46%), Population Records (44%) Romanian Police - 43% Passport Structures - 41% and Border Police - 40%.

There was also a tendency to improve the way in which the situation of corruption was perceived at the level of institutions, in 2015, where a small number of respondents (10%) stated that the level of corruption increased (the reduction was considerable, 20%, compared to 2014), also finding an increase of 8 percentage points among the population who claimed that the level of corruption has decreased.

Indicators of population confidence in state institutions

| INSPECTORATE FOR EMERGENCY SITUATIONS | ROMANIAN GENDARMERIE | D.G.A. | POPULATION EVIDENCE | ROMANIAN POLICE | PASSAPORT INSTITUTION | BORDER POLICE |
| 72 | 54 | 46 | 44 | 43 | 41 | 40 |

Figure 3. Indicators of population confidence in state institutions (in percentage)
Source: Made by the authors during the research

The three determining factors in increasing the phenomenon of corruption, very important and for which an intervention is required quickly, are represented by the generalization of behaviors such as "file", "intervention", "relationship". Until now, aspects that were the basis for not resolving these types of phenomena consisted in the insufficiency of employees' financial and social rights, pressures and political influence in adopting any decision at the MAI institutions / structures and all Government institutions in general ("Study comparison on the phenomenon of corruption in the Ministry of Internal Affairs (General Anticorruption Directorate, Anticorruption Studies and Projections Service).

Through opinion polls, we can see at the end of 2016 an improvement in the perception and trust of citizens in state institutions, in carrying out the activity in accordance with the strategy and codes of conduct. Therefore, it was found:

- the actions and efforts made in order to prevent corruption, together with a unitary institutional approach, during the period subject to opinion polls, 2012-2016, produced relevant quantifiable effects;

- all the new measures and the efforts made in preventive plan brought a change of attitude, therefore within the MAI it was observed the reduction of corruption cases, carried out by the employees of the institution;

- the statistical indicators underlined the fact that the number of facts of lack of integrity at national level was a linear one until 2016, when an obvious decrease started, continued in 2017;

- for the whole year 2017, there was an improvement registered by the substantial decrease, with 38.9% of the number of facts lacking integrity (Evaluation of the corruption prevention activity carried out at the level of the Ministry of Internal Affairs during 2012-2016).
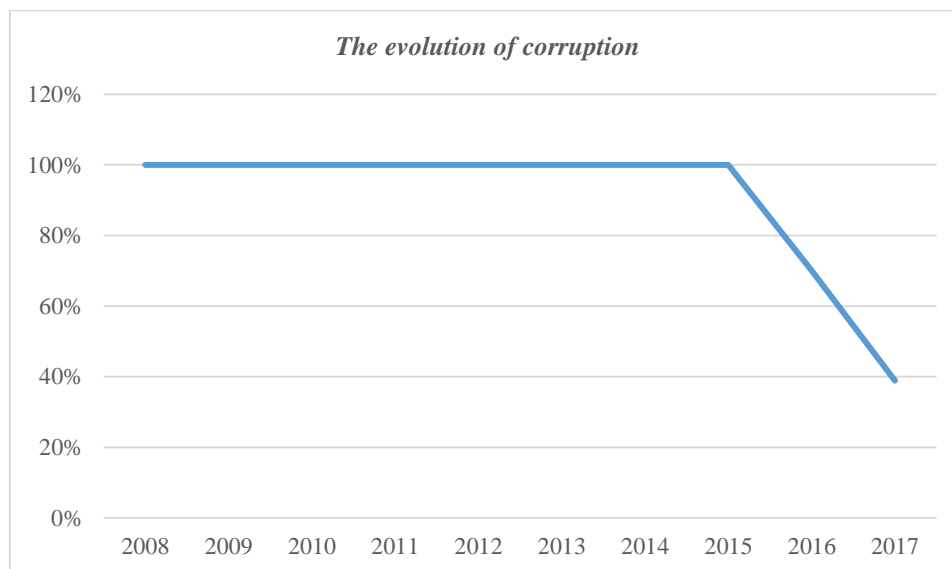
Figure 4. The evolution of corruption (in percentage)
Source: Made by the author during the research

Therefore, regarding the research part, the preventive efforts have produced a change of attitude so that at the level of government institutions there is a decrease in the number of employees involved in acts of corruption. The institutional approach and the efforts undertaken in the field of corruption prevention activities carried out during the period under analysis, 2012-2016, produced relevant quantifiable effects. During this period, the statistical indicators show that the evolution of the number of integrity incidents registered at national level was linear until 2016, when an obvious decrease began, continued in 2017. At present, there is a positive trend recorded by the significant decrease, with 38.9% of the number of integrity incidents during 2017.

Conclusions

The presented article aimed to emphasize the application of the principles of ethics and responsibility in public management. By developing aspects related to ethics, in this context, it is found that the imposition and maintenance of standards in the public sector is achieved through a series of features and elements, which can be called "ethics infrastructure". Here we can frame the accumulation of rules, codes, measures and personnel at the forefront that give the content of the ethics infrastructure. Therefore, in Romania, from the presented perspectives, by applying the measures of social responsibility in the work technique from the central public apparatus, it is tried to highlight the following aspects:

- establishing aspects related to changes in the public sector environment, which may influence the ethics and conduct of civil servants;

- establishing and improving the features of the ethical infrastructure, the role and the strategy through which they work, in order to bring favorable conditions to an ethical conduct;

- establishing the strategy and the management manual of ethics in public administration;
- identifying the aspects that block the good progress of initiatives of this type and solving them;
- the development of a mechanism based on the implementation of principles based on concrete results and not only on the application of strict rules.

Also, a very important factor in maintaining public peace and good governance is based on the "main character" in public administration, the politician, who is, in fact, the interface of the institution. Most of the time, these two very different categories, civil servants and political leaders of public institutions, are confused by the eyes of the public, which always tend to overlap them. Therefore, many attempts to resolve situations of deviation from ethics refer to all types of government officials. A solution to the separation of roles and the identification of real issues related to the ethics infrastructure in public management can be, for example, the establishment of a Public Sector Standards Committee (called the Nolan Committee), which has the role of differentiating between civil servants and politicians. in order to establish ethical standards at all levels of government activity, separately (Grigoruta, 2004/2005).

Why is ethics important in the public sector? The answer to this question lies in respect for integrity by politicians and civil servants alike. The integrity of these two categories that collaborate permanently is the essential component of a democratic society.

In the case of Romania, the continuation of the measures proposed and applied in the last decade, together with the constant identification of possible deviations that undermine the management of ethics and conduct in public administration, can confer over time the quality of governance and, implicitly, increase citizen welfare.

The research aimed at analyzing the need to rethink, reorient and prioritize the efforts made by the authorities in the field of corruption prevention. Moreover, given the current social context in which the prevention of corruption is a national priority, it is self-evident the institutional decision to identify and permanently adopt the most appropriate measures to directly address existing corruption vulnerabilities in the level of central public administration.

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