

Motivation of the public employee in Romania in the context of the economic crisis

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Abstract. *Public servants motivation is a controversial issue of public management that faces a number of challenges in Romania, especially since Romania went from a socialist society to a society that only adopted the democratic institutional form rather than its individualistic essence in terms of performance evaluation of public sector employees. The value of a public administrative system does not necessarily consist in the material and financial means at its disposal, but especially in its human potential, so it is understandable that special attention should be given to motivate public servants. Thus, in this article we conducted a survey among civil servants in Romania with the objective to assess the employee motivation in central and local public administration. We also built a logit model to investigate the impact of the main factors affecting the chances of a Romanian public sector employee to become more motivated at work.*

Keywords: public management; motivation; logit model; survey.

JEL Classification: J45, H83.

REL Classification: 13C, 13K.

1. Introduction

One of the most controversial issues of public management is to motivate public servants. Often, they complain about the lack of interest of the administrative representatives in Romania regarding the motivation problem. In Romania there is still deeply rooted the idea that the salary is the main motivator.

In fact, in a study on how to increase the motivation of public servants in the 2nd district's City Hall in Bucharest (2006) it was concluded that the problems that the municipality is facing because of low wages are the poor service quality, the low level of productivity and performance, the corruption and the problems with especially young skilled recruitment and retention. In this particular case, motivation is achieved by promotion, by salary increase, bonuses and training opportunities available for the civil servants.

Thus, one of the main causes for failures in the administrative system in Romania is the scarcity of personnel policies that do not stimulate civil servants to get involved in achieving the objectives. They are primarily concerned with occasionally achieving their tasks at an acceptable level, and they do not understand their role within the administrative system. Thus the need for a change becomes obvious in the motivation system of civil servants.

Therefore, there are only a few forms of employee motivation (bonuses, promotion) in the administrative system in Romania, although there are several problems when implementing them.

The economic theory suggests that the payment linked to performance is the best way to determine the employees to work at the highest level. In reality, the payment linked to performance means that the performance, in principle, can be measured (Marsden, Belfield, 2006, Metawie, Gilman, 2005). However, performance measurement in the public sector is more complicated than in the private sector because:

- In the public sector the result is not always identifiable, as in the private sector. The quality of this result is an important element that must be taken into account.
- The same result may be due to different services or departments; it can be produced by a different set of inputs.
- The same department can produce different results and can participate in the production of different sets of results.
- The results can be complementary or substitutable.
- The departments can produce both positive and negative results.
- The results are not sold on the market or, where applicable, not at their market value.

The public administration science, consisting in the relationship between material incentives and performance, is usually based on the idea that individuals working in the public sector have special characteristics. Following Wise (2004), the civil servants are characterized by:

- Some individuals are predisposed to a particular set of motivations.
- Change in the intensity between different motivations to work is related to the employment sector and to personal characteristics.
- Contextual factors affect the intensity of different incentives to work.
- The individuals are complex; they have different and competitive incentives in terms of attitude towards work.

There is already an agreement that the material incentives do not always lead to an increased effort. There is a rapidly growing literature on the relations between motivation, material incentives and effort in the public sector, literature that grew out because of the movement to initiate reforms in most OECD countries in order to make the public sector more efficient and aims to measure the performance of public activities more accurate.

Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza (2000) analysed the determinants of job satisfaction in 21 countries. Their results showed, among other things, that workers in Denmark have the highest levels of satisfaction, while those in Hungary the lowest level; surprisingly is that Japanese workers have obtained the 3rd lowest level. It is worth noting that, in general, the level of job satisfaction is relatively high, the authors being surprised that the workers of Russia and Hungary are almost as satisfied as those in developed countries in Europe. Among the most important determinants of satisfaction emerged the good relations with management and an interesting job, but also a high salary or the employment independence.

Adrian Ritz (2009) measured organizational performance by studying the perception of internal efficiency in Switzerland. He empirically tested the effects of public sector motivation, organizational commitment and job satisfaction on performance on Swiss federal government, based on a survey of 13,500 employees.

Work motivation in the public sector was described by two dimensions: commitment to public interest and attraction to public policy. He found that only the first dimension had a significant relationship with the performance. However, the orientation towards objectives turned to have the greatest influence on internal efficiency. Therefore, he concluded that in order to increase performance both of the following aspects are required: the workers to show their commitment to the public interest and a good public management.

Turkyilmaz, Akman, Coskun and Pastuszak (2011) tried to identify the factors that determine the level of satisfaction of public employees in order to create an effective management system in the public sector in Turkey (as a developing country). They found that merit payment and recognition, teamwork, training and personal development, working conditions, the degree of empowerment and participation in decision making process significantly influence job satisfaction of employees in the social security institution in Istanbul. Their study revealed that the training and personal development is the most important factor, the working conditions are the second most important factor and merit remuneration and recognition is the third.

2. The survey results among civil servants in Romania

The survey among civil servants in Romania was achieved through IMAS Marketing & Polls and was held in March 2012⁽¹⁾. The general objective of this investigation was to assess the motivation of employees in central and local public administration. Thus, the questionnaire was designed to address the civil servants working in the institutions of central and local government – ministries, prefectures, municipalities and the application method was the face-to-face interview with the respondent.

The sample included 355 individuals (Table 1), the choice of institutions being made randomly, so that interviews dispersion to be maximal (not all counties were included since the number of selected institutions is lower than the number of counties). The maximum sampling error was $\pm 5.2\%$.

Table 1. *The sample structure (observed)*

Institute type	Number of institutions included in the study	Total number of respondents	Respondents in leadership positions	Respondents with specialized functions and other functions	Average number of questionnaires / institution
Ministry	5	70	20	50	14
Prefecture	8	53	14	39	6
Town Hall	20	167	40	127	8
Village Hall	10	65	19	46	7
Total	43	355	93	262	8

Structure of respondents

80% of the respondents are permanent civil servants. The remaining are public managers (5.9%), contractual personnel (4.5%), high civil servants (2.8%), administrative staff (2.3%), junior civil servants (2%). The very small share of

junior civil servants in the total number of respondents can be explained by the small number of those officials in the system due to blocking positions in the public system (Figure 1).

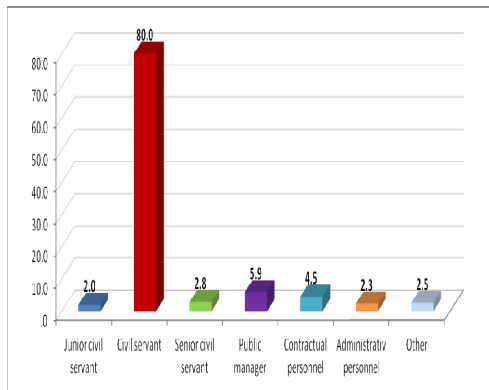


Figure 1. The structure of respondents depending on position

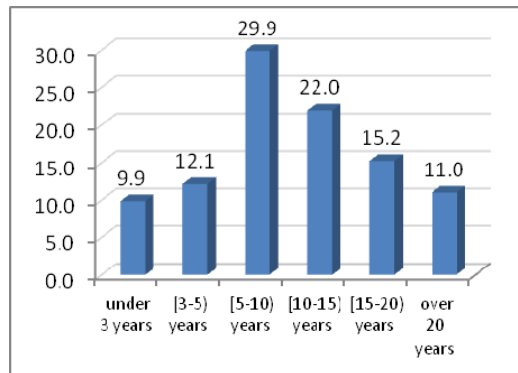


Figure 2. The structure of respondents based on seniority

Regarding the seniority, it was found that the largest share of respondents (29.9%) have 5 to 10 years of experience in the institution. Those with 10-15 years of seniority also represent a high share (22%), followed by those with 15-20 years of experience (15.2%) (Figure 2). This aspect shows that seniority gain for these categories is between 10-20% of the base salary, and this must be correlated with the fact that 37.8% of respondents sustained that this increase is actually provided by the institution where they work. The percentage of those who are less than three years in the institution (9.9%) is not negligible, as this shows that they have reached the institution even after the start of the restructuring program in public administration.

One of the first questions about their work place was related to the degree of satisfaction with their current job. Thus, approximately 88% of respondents affirmed that they were satisfied (66.8%) and very satisfied (20.8%). A very small percentage said that they are dissatisfied (8.5%) and 3.7% said they were very dissatisfied (Figure 3).

Of those who were satisfied with their work, over 70% would not change anything (they were asked if they would change the boss, colleagues, equipment, software and pay), with one exception: the salary – 83% would make a change in pay if they had the chance. Although the percentage of those who are dissatisfied is small, it should be noted that a fairly large proportion of them would neither

change the boss nor the colleagues; however, 88% of them would also change the salary.

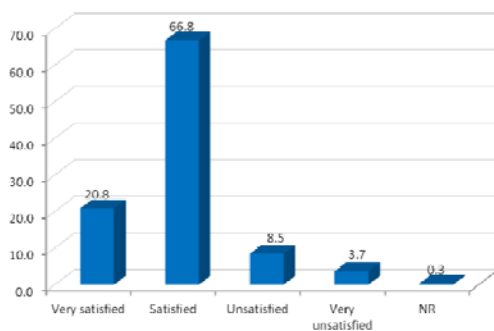


Figure 3. The extent to which public servant are satisfied with their current job

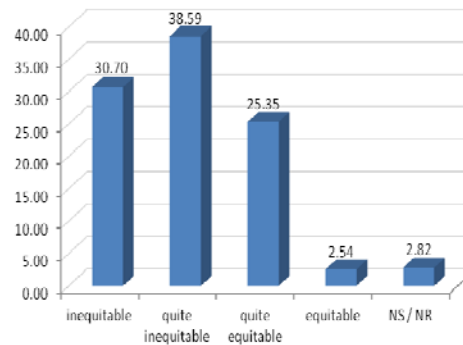


Figure 4. How equitable is considered the salary system introduced by Law No. 284/2010

The salary system

Asked how equitable they consider the salary system introduced by Law No. 284/2010, 38.6% of the civil servants interviewed consider that this system is quite unfair. In fact, 30.7% of them even said that this system is unfair. However, a quarter of respondents believe that the salary system introduced in 2010 is quite equitable (Figure 4).

In order to find the evolution of the civil servants wages' following the introduction of the salary system, they were asked what happened to their wages. 68.2% of the respondents sustain that their salaries were reduced. A very small percentage (3.4%) said that wages increased following the introduction of the single salary system. Almost a quarter of the respondents (22.8%) stated that their wages have not changed.

Regarding the position held by the respondents, 26% of them have leading position and 74% have executive positions. Correlating the position occupied with the question "How do you evaluate your performance at work compared to that of your colleagues'?" it showed that 36% of those with managerial positions and 26% of executive positions considers that their performance is higher than that of their colleagues. At the same time, 54% of those with managerial positions and 70% of those with executive function considered performing equally with their colleagues.

Restructuring public administration and corruption in public administration

In 2011, the restructuring of the personnel in public institutions was not that ample giving the fact that 65.9% of the respondents stated that there had been no restructuring in the institution in which they worked (Figure 5). This may be due to the fact that most staff restructuring took place in 2010, which was imposed by the standby agreement in 2009 with the IMF in order to reduce spending.

When asked “Have the political changes led to any changes in the personnel of your institution?” nearly half of the respondents (44%) believed that the political changes had not resulted in any change in the personnel of the Public Administration. 31.3% of the respondents reported that in their institution there have been political changes in personnel, but these changes were not significant.

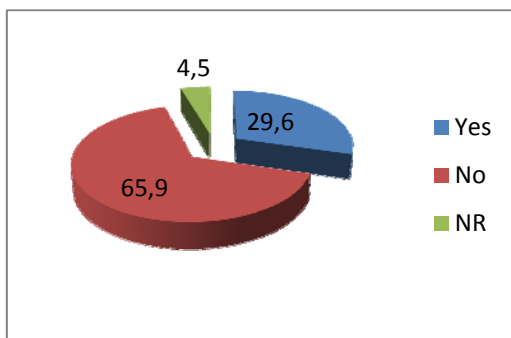


Figure 5. Personnel restructuring in the public institution (%)

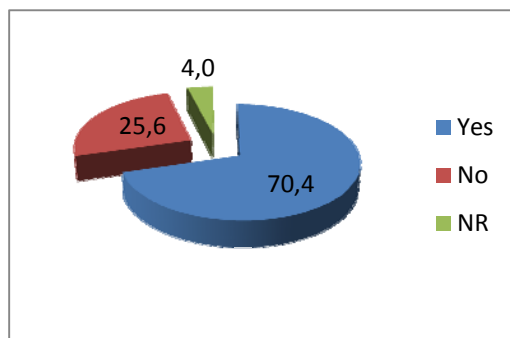


Figure 6. Corruption is a problem in the Public Administration in Romania (%)

70.4% of the respondents consider that one of the problems of the public administration in Romania is corruption, while 25.6% believe that this is not a problem specific to the public sector (Figure 6). Of the employees who believe that corruption is one of the problems of the public administration in Romania (i.e. 250 respondents), 89.2% believe that the wage system is one of the factors that favour it.

78.8% of the employees think that the public servants' morality is a factor that contributes to the corruption that exists in the Public Administration in Romania. The pressure exercised by the economic environment is a factor that favours the existing corruption in the public sector in Romania, according to a percentage of 63.6% of the respondents.

Another factor that favours corruption is the pressure exercised by the political system according to 72% of the respondents. Almost half of them believe that

people's behaviour is also a factor that favours the existing corruption in the Public Administration in Romania; yet 21.6% totally reject this causality.

Incentives in public institutions

49.3% of the respondents believe that training courses are the most frequent form of incentives provided by the public institutions, followed by payment increases based on seniority (37.2%). The prospect of promotion is used as a motivator, but this is referred to by only 12.4% of the respondents. Other forms of incentives are those granted for dangerous working conditions; the management's appreciation for the employees' efforts; equal increments for project teams. It was revealed, however, that 13.5% of the respondents claim that their institution does not provide incentives.

Extrinsic and intrinsic motivational factors

Respondents were also asked to evaluate the importance of several motivational factors that have been grouped into two broad categories. *Category A* consisted of extrinsic motivational factors, such as: job security, salary, the prospect of promotions, ensuring a proper logistics support (work phone, car, laptop, etc.), efficiency bonuses, diplomas, distinctions, comfort at work, competition within the institution, communication within the team and professional prestige status. The answers were summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. *The importance of extrinsic motivational factors (%)*

CATEGORY A	Very important	Important	Less important	Not important	N/A
a. Job security	76.1	21.1	1.7	0.8	0.3
b. Salary	81.1	17.7	0.6	0.3	0.3
c. Prospect of promotions	32.7	40.0	17.7	9.0	0.6
d. Ensuring a proper logistics support (work phone, car, laptop, etc.)	31.8	36.9	22.3	8.7	0.3
e. Efficiency bonuses, distinctions, diplomas	45.6	41.1	8.7	3.1	1.4
f. Comfort at work	51.0	41.4	6.8	0.6	0.3
g. Competition within the institution	23.9	48.7	20.6	5.1	1.7
h. Communication within the team you are part of	76.6	21.7	1.1	0.3	0.3
i. Status/professional prestige	64.5	29.6	4.5	0.8	0.6

It is revealed that salary (98.8% of the respondents believe that it is important or very important), communication within the team they are part of (98.3%), job stability (97.2%), the status and the professional prestige (94.1%), comfort at work (92.4%), but also bonuses, diplomas and distinctions (86.7%) are some of the most important extrinsic motivational factors.

The prospect of promotion (72.7%), the competition within the institution (72.6%) and ensuring a proper logistics support (work phone, car, laptop, etc.) (only 68.7%) are less appreciated.

Category B includes the following intrinsic factors, according to Table 3: job amenity, professional development, satisfaction of being useful to the community, participating in various activities within the institution, the freedom to take initiative at work, the feeling of accomplishment (personal accomplishment) at work, work-life balance, authority, job responsibility, job autonomy.

Table 3. *The importance of intrinsic motivational factors (%)*

CATEGORY B	Very important	Important	Less important	Not important	N/A
1. Job amenity	66.2	30.1	2.8	0.3	0.6
2. Professional development	67.9	29.0	2.3	0.6	0.3
3. Satisfaction of being useful to the community	66.2	31.3	2.0	0.3	0.3
4. Participating in various activities within the institution	37.5	49.6	10.1	2.3	0.6
5. Freedom to take initiative at work	51.8	43.4	3.9	0.8	0.0
6. Feeling of accomplishment (personal accomplishment) at work	63.7	33.8	2.3	0.3	0.0
7. Work-life balance	73.8	23.7	1.7	0.6	0.3
8. Authority, job responsibility	61.1	34.1	3.7	0.8	0.3
9. Job autonomy	52.1	41.7	5.1	0.6	0.6

In this case, some of the most important intrinsic motivational factors are the satisfaction of being useful to the community, the accomplishment (personal accomplishment) at work and the work-life balance (97.5% of the respondents think they are important or very important).

In addition, professional development (96.9%), job amenity (96.3%), the freedom to take initiative at work, authority and job responsibility (95.2%), as well as job autonomy (93.8%) are important.

According to these answers it turns out that the extrinsic factors are the most motivating ones for 69.9% of the public servants, whereas 27.9% of them are more motivated by intrinsic factors. Thus, extrinsic motivation, which is based on an individual-organization relationship, is more dominant as it is meant to meet the employee's expectations regarding the reactions that the organization has towards him/her in relation to his/her efforts, behaviour and results. The intrinsic motivation which focuses on the individual, as it is a relation between the expectations, perceptions and feelings of the individual on the one hand, and the actual content of his/her work and behaviour on the other hand, is chosen by fewer respondents.

Regarding the evolution of motivation at work it seems that it remained the same compared to the previous year, for 66.8% of the respondents. Motivation decreased for 18% of the public servants, while for only 13.5% of them it increased.

When asked what would motivate them at work, 0.8% of the employees said they were sufficiently motivated and did not need additional incentives. The most important motivational factor for the employees in the Public Administration is increasing the level of their colleagues' commitment to their activities at work (23.9%) – Figure 7, followed closely by the atmosphere at work (22.5%). On the third place in the hierarchy of motivational factors is the appreciation of the direct superior (17.2%) followed by investing the employees with more authority and confidence (16.3%). Contrary to expectations, salary increases are considered the most important motivational factor by only 9% of the employees in the public sector.

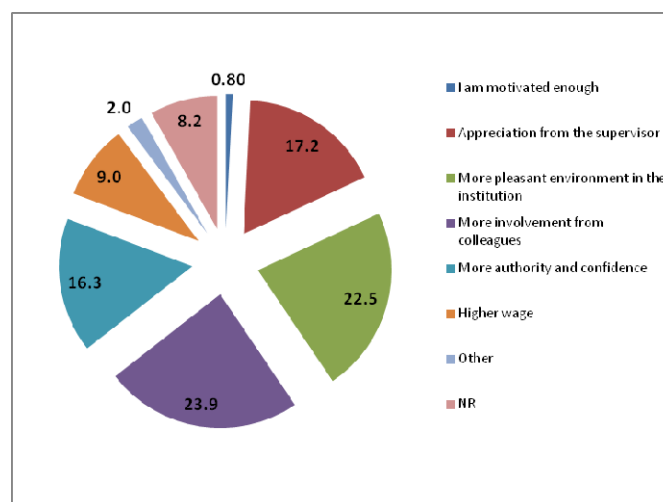


Figure 7. *The main motivational factors (%)*

By correlating the position held by the respondents with various aspects related to their workplace, several interesting situations have been revealed.

For example, regardless of the position held, more than half of the respondents stated they had not looked for another job in the last six months (none of the junior civil servants, 80% of the permanent civil servants, 67% of the senior officials and 55% of the public managers).

Regarding the issues of dissatisfaction, again it appears that no matter of the position held, the respondents are dissatisfied with their salaries, while the other

items mentioned in the questionnaire (colleagues' and superiors' attitude, lack of promotion opportunities, working conditions) are not considered as unsatisfactory. The category of the public managers is the exception to this situation as only 36% of them are dissatisfied with their payment conditions.

In terms of the extrinsic or intrinsic factors that motivate them, there is a slight difference when these answers are correlated with the position held by the respondents. Thus, about 71% of the junior civil servants feel more motivated by intrinsic factors. In contrast, permanent civil servants (74%), public managers (55%) and high officials (67%) feel more motivated primarily by extrinsic factors.

Regarding their future plans, about 50% of the junior civil servants see themselves still working in public administration in five year-time. 40% of the permanent civil servants see themselves having the same position in five year-time, and the rest of them think they will get promoted, retire or work in the private sector. One third of the public managers think that in five year-time they will still work in administration but in a higher position, whereas another third of them think they will work in the private sector.

3. Econometric results

In order to investigate the magnitude of the main factors that affect the odds of a Romanian public sector employee to become more motivated at work, we decided to build a logit model which is a regression model for binary outcomes that allows exploring how each explanatory variable affects the probability of an event occurring (Long, Freese, 2006).

According to Shumway (2001) the logit model is a single-period classification model which uses maximum likelihood estimation to provide the conditional probability of a respondent belonging to a certain category given the values of the independent variables. The logit model describes the relationship between a dichotomous variable Y , that takes values 1 or 0 and k explanatory variables x_1, x_2, \dots, x_k . The logit regression model is defined as follows:

$$p_i = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-(\beta_0 + \sum_{j=1}^k \beta_j x_{i,j})}}$$

When applying the logit-transformation to the above equation, we get a linear relationship between $\text{logit}(p_i)$ and the explanatory variables:

$$\text{logit}(p_i) = \log\left(\frac{p_i}{1-p_i}\right) = \beta_0 + \sum_{j=1}^k \beta_j x_{i,j}$$

This equation is also called the logit form of the model, where $\text{logit}(p_i)$ is the log odds of the event to occur for the given values $x_{i,1}, x_{i,2}, \dots, x_{i,k}$ of the explanatory variables.

In our study we have chosen as dependent variable the binary variable corresponding to the employees' perception about their degree of motivation at work. For that we used the variable entitled motivation, which takes the value 1 in case the employees felt more motivated than before and 0 in case their motivation had not increased as compared to the previous year.

Several explanatory variables were chosen as motivational factors, such as: the employees respond to how interesting they consider their job to be (*IQ6A*), their opinion regarding the need for a more transparent internal set of rules in their organization (*IQ21A*), their seniority (*Q40ANI*) and their monthly net wages (*Q44*). The results of the logit estimation are presented in Figure 8, while the percentage changes in odds are presented in Figure 9.

Logistic regression	Number of obs	=	341
	LR chi2(4)	=	22.11
	Prob > chi2	=	0.0002
Log likelihood = -127.50816	Pseudo R2	=	0.0798

motivation	Coef.	Std. Err.	z	P> z	[95% Conf. Interval]	
_IQ6A_2	-1.222499	.4623356	-2.64	0.008	-2.12866	-.3163377
_IQ21A_1	.8504305	.447936	1.90	0.058	-.0275079	1.728369
Q40ANI	-.0640909	.0259159	-2.47	0.013	-.1148851	-.0132967
Q44	.2049249	.102193	2.01	0.045	.0046303	.4052195
_cons	-1.784746	.473014	-3.77	0.000	-2.711836	-.8576553

Figure 8. Results of the logit estimation

Although the McKelvey & Zavoina's R-squared value is only 20%, the level of 0.71 of the goodness of fit Test (H-L Statistics) confirms the validity of the model. Moreover, the Akaike and Schwartz information criterion values are small and the coefficients signs of the explanatory variables are according to the economic theory.

Odds of: 1 vs 0

motivation	b	z	P> z	%	%StdX	SDoFX
_I_Q6A_2	-1.22250	-2.644	0.008	-70.6	-42.4	0.4518
_I_Q21A_1	0.85043	1.899	0.058	134.1	30.3	0.3115
Q40ANI	-0.06409	-2.473	0.013	-6.2	-44.4	9.1618
Q44	0.20492	2.005	0.045	22.7	37.6	1.5593

Figure 9. Percentage change in odds

In case the respondents change their perception from partially agreeing to partially disagreeing with the fact that their job is interesting as compared to those strongly believing that their work is truly interesting, the odds of becoming more motivated are expected to reduce by 70.6%, holding all other variables constant.

However, in case of a change in the expectations of those respondents wishing for a more transparent internal set of rules as compared to those considering that there is no need for a more transparent internal set of rules, the odds of becoming more motivated are expected to become 2.34 times higher, holding all other variables constant.

Moreover, for an increase in the monthly wage of a public sector employee in Romania, the odds of being more motivated at work increase with 37.6%, holding all other variables constant.

Surprisingly, the odds of becoming more motivated are expected to decrease 6.2 times with a one-year increase in the respondents' seniority in the public sector in Romania, holding all other variables constant.

A higher degree of transparency in the work regulations will have the most beneficial impact on public service employees' motivation, while the increase in seniority followed by the impression of executing uninteresting tasks will have the most negative effects.

4. Conclusions and proposals for improving the motivation of civil servants

Romania's Integration in the European Union requires, among other things, a comprehensive process of modernization of the public administration sector. Romanian social compatibility and economic space within the community require a more active role of the government at central and local levels, in coordination with the catching-up efforts for achieving a normal level of development. Moreover, the financial support for Romania that is granted via Structural and Cohesion Funds is conditioned by the existence of local private, public and

personal partnerships. Thus, given that private sector has developed at an accelerated pace in the last 20 years in Romania, it falls under its mission to promote and strengthen the coalition of local partnership structures for accessing the EU regional development funds.

Public sector modernization is needed also because of the restructuring process started as an initiative of the Romania's agreements with the IMF, by obtaining significant budget savings, due to more efficient use of resources in the public administration.

Of course, all these radical transformations in the public sector apparatus cannot be achieved without proper worker motivation. So, modernizing the public sector requires more than anything else a highly engaged public servant with initiative and an open-minded approach regarding the citizens' needs.

Tackling the public sector modernization in Romania will have to take into consideration several viewpoints: the civil servants', the citizens', the entrepreneurs' and the reform initiators' (government or political parties). From this perspective, the research team understands that the survey's horizon is somewhat limited and subjective, but, on the other hand, they determined that their scientific approach represents a top priority step in establishing the fundamentals of the Romanian public sector reform strategy. In this respect, we believe that research should continue to investigate public and businesses, with the conclusions that the three surveys (including the present) representatives of political power to get a coherent view them. Therefore, we conclude that more research effort should be put in this direction emphasizing on public and private sectors opinion investigation which will, in turn, better pin point to the right conclusions for each of the three separate surveys and then presenting them to the right political decision makers. Until then, the authors propose a set of measures meant to improving the current state of affairs that may contribute to an open dialogue between all the major players in the reform process:

- A better balance between wages and work effort in the public sector is self-evident. From this perspective, the recent initiatives taken by political parties to increase wages are more than welcomed. Yet, still, the process must be accompanied by an assessment of the economic principles of staffing at all levels of governmental institutions, so one does not miss the deficit target, and can still maintain the functional requirements in the public administration, but in the same time has to keep motivational levels up by not creating parallel structures that are superfluous.
- The incentives and motivational tools will effectively combine extrinsic factors (premiums, bonuses, non-monetary benefits, etc.) with intrinsic ones

(satisfaction and professional fulfilment, good relationships with the local community, good name, and so on) so that they act at both the general and selective layers in order to encourage positive competition among civil servants.

- Encourage a positive attitude for all civil servants at all hierarchical levels to match the economic and social status of the population and at the same time promoting a public awareness boost regarding the increase in the quality of the public services and public goods.
- The problem of corruption is a major blocking factor in the initiatives of public sector modernization. However, solving the problem is not just about improving the professional profiling of public servants. The public attitude is crucial in reducing the proportions of this phenomenon that threatens the very existence of progress in Romanian society.

Only through directional action steps given by key interest groups of the Romanian society can a real reform of the public administration sector with real and sustainable benefits for all citizens take place.

Note

- ⁽¹⁾ Survey conducted within the PN 09-420303 – Motivation policies and performance of human resources in public administration.

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