

ETHICS IN INSTITUTIONAL COMMUNICATION - BETWEEN REGULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Mihail ORZEAȚĂ¹

¹Prof. PhD, "Apollonia" University of Iași, Romania
Corresponding author: Mihail Orzeacă; e-mail: morzeata@yahoo.com

Abstract

Ethics in institutional communication is regulated according to the national and international norms - laws, conventions, regulations, instructions, provisions, orders, codes of conduct (codes of ethics), respectively and other official documents specific to each institution. Despite the existing regulatory framework and instruments to protect ethics in institutional communication, violations of their provisions are relatively frequent at both individual and institutional levels. This situation has led to a reduction in the trust of state populations in national and international institutions. Through this article I intend to synthesize the content of the relevant profile literature and to highlight the discrepancies between the regulations regarding ethics in institutional communication and the way of applying the normative framework. I will also expose the impact of the deviations from the legal norms on the behaviour and morale of the population. Finally, I will also present some proposals to improve compliance with ethical norms in institutional communication. Given the breadth of the topic, I will focus more on the relevant aspects of ethics in institutional communication in Romania.

Keywords: *codes of conduct, immoral behaviour, corruption, institutional ethics, ethics in communication.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Domestic and international events are falling upon us in successive waves of increasing magnitudes. The bad news about deception, corruption, bribery, reprehensible attitudes of some officials from public institutions and political leaders are multiplying in terms of numbers and magnitude of negative effects on the society. The actions and attitudes of some public figures surprise us unpleasantly and make us to reconsider our opinions about those public figures and, respectively, about some institutions. We learn with astonishment that some people who are responsible for protecting us physically, economically, financially, legally and for offering us security do not honour their status with the

required probity. Moreover, some public institution employees are part of this cavalcade of unwanted events as accomplices or even members of organized crime groups. (Digi 24, 2023; Europalibera, 2020; Ohanesian, 2016)

At the international level, some evil decision-makers exert their harmful influence on the communities they lead, engaging them in confrontations with other communities for resources, territories, influence or to avenge the failures of previous confrontations.

The unethical and aggressive style is increasingly used in interpersonal and inter-community relationships, a situation that undermines the trust of populations in the institutions of states and international organizations (Europalibera, 2020: "thugs have people infiltrating politics and the police.")

2. RELEVANT ASPECTS RELATED TO INSTITUTIONAL COMMUNICATION

Institutional communication is part of the public communication through which authorities and institutions: inform relevant publics (citizens, other state institutions, governmental and non-governmental organizations, mass media, etc.) about data of interest to them, establish a dialogue with relevant publics, respectively present and promote the services they provide. In other words, institutional communication is the social binder between public institutions and relevant publics, whose maintenance is the responsibility of public institutions. (Rădulescu, 2012)

Information of public interest represents data relating to or resulting from the activity of public authorities and institutions. Such data must be communicated, ex officio or upon request, to

citizens and other relevant publics (Legislatie, 2021; ANFP.GOV.RO, 2006).

Institutional communication has an internal component - the relationship with its own employees - and an external one - the dialogue with the publics outside the institution.

The relationship with our own employees is carried out according to specific regulations, harmonized with the national and international normative framework - internal regulations, provisions, instructions, orders, codes of ethics, integrity standards, ethics and communication guides, etc. The relationship with external publics is achieved through the public relations structure, based on the national and international legal framework.

From Ana Elena Ranta's perspective, institutional communication has two dimensions - legal and operational. The legal dimension consists of the regulated legal framework in which the institutions operate. The operational dimension includes the communication activity carried out by the institutions, in accordance with the legal framework, but which it is not mandatory. This dimension can have two levels: strategic and actional or tactical. (Ranta, 2014)

The main objective of institutional communication with the relevant audiences is to establish a climate of trust and mutual support. (Ghiolțan & Morar, 2021). The achievement of this objective is accomplished through effective communication that must be clear, concise, complete, imply respect for the audiences to which it is addressed, has to be concrete, fair and polite (Ghiolțan and Morar, 2021). The trust referred to by the authors translates into responsibility and mutual understanding on which an optimal atmosphere of collaboration is built. Associated with the main objective of institutional communication is the concern for obtaining and maintaining a positive image for the institution, an image that would attract citizens to a constructive dialogue. (Rădulescu, 2012;)

The institutions' dialogue with the citizens and other relevant publics requires the institutions to communicate their objectives and projects to them, and also to ensure free and unconditional access to information. On the other hand, citizens and other relevant publics are asked to contribute to the evaluation and improvement of projects

and decisions of institutions so as to serve common goals (Ghiolțan & Morar, 2021).

In order to have effective communication, institutions must develop a communication strategy, have a communication and public relations structure (Law 544/2001, art. 4) and frame it with professionals who have experience, responsibility and notoriety.

From what has been said so far, it can be deduced that the most important elements of institutional communication are: institutions, relevant publics, mass media and communication strategy.

The media must be seen as a partner, not as an adversary, and dealing with it must be based on truth and mutual trust. Otherwise, the media may become a feared adversary if it has suspicions about the way in which dialogue with it is conducted and if journalists believe that the institution is hiding aspects of its work that are unfavourable to it.

According to their codes of ethics, journalists must correctly and timely inform the public opinion about the activity of authorities and institutions. Trifonova Price reveals an undeniable truth in the Romanian and Bulgarian media: journalists appreciate Western the values of journalism but do not apply them and practice partisan journalism to serve the goals and interests of their employers (Trifonova Price, 2021) On the other hand, in recent years, more and more journalists prefer to approach the field of institutional communication from a sensationalist perspective and to focus more attention on the negative aspects of the activity of authorities and institutions: communication errors, scandals, decisions insufficiently based on available resources and community requirements, ethical deviations of institutions, decision-makers and officials, etc. (Ghiolțan and Morar, 2021) To this range of undesirable aspects of the activity of some journalists, Raluca Muresan adds "disguised advertising, paying journalists, blackmail, etc." (Mureșan, 2021) and Măgrădean Vasile states that mass media that correctly informs public opinion "does not sell" (Luca, 2009). In this situation, public opinion is caught up in an amalgam of real and sensational news and often fails to discern what is important from what is non-essential.

3. THE NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK, REGARDING ETHICS IN INSTITUTIONAL COMMUNICATION

The national legal framework is harmonized with the international one and it is the way in which citizens and other relevant publics are informed about their rights. This framework also signifies the legal regulation of communication between public authorities and institutions with relevant publics in society.

In essence, the national and international normative framework includes laws, conventions, instructions, provisions and decisions establishing the principles, methods and instruments by which institutions must communicate with citizens and other relevant publics.

For a better understanding of the mechanism of action of normative acts on institutional communication, we made an analysis of them and distributed them by areas of interest as follows:

- **normative acts regulating the free and unhindered access of relevant publics to information of public interest:**

Law 544 of 2001 on free access to information of public interest, amended and updated by laws 371 of 2006 and 380 of 2006;

- Government Decision. no. 123 of 2002 approving the methodological norms for the application of Law 544 of 2001;

- **normative acts regulating decision-making transparency in public administration:**

Law 52 of 2003 on decision-making transparency, amended and updated by laws 242 of 2010 and 281 of 2013;

- Law 161 of 2003 on ensuring transparency in the exercise of public dignities, public functions and in the business environment, preventing and sanctioning corruption;

- Government Decision. no. 775/2005 approving the Regulation on procedures for developing, monitoring and evaluating public policies at central level;

- Government Decision 878/2005, issued for the adoption of the Aarhus Convention, on access to information, public participation in decision-making, access to justice and solving environmental problems;

- Government Decision no. 870/2006 approving the Strategy for improving the system of elaboration, coordination and planning of public policies at the level of central and local administrations;

- Law nr. 176 of 1 September 2010 on integrity in the exercise of public functions and dignities.

- **normative acts regulating the protection of personal data:**

- Law 190 of 2018 on measures to implement EU Regulation 2016/679 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data, the free movement of such data and the repeal of Directive 95/46 EC.

- **normative acts regulating the protection of classified data:**

Law 182 of 2002 on the protection of information of public interest;

- Government Decision. 585 of 2002 regarding the approval of the National Standards for the protection of classified data in Romania;

- Government Decision. no. 781 of 2002 on the protection of secret service data.

- **normative acts regulating the reuse of information from public institutions:**

- Law 109 of 2007 on the reuse of information from public institutions;

- Laws 213 of 2008 and 299 of 2015 amending and updating Law 109 of 2007.

3.1. Principles of institutional communication with citizens and other relevant publics:

- free and unrestricted access to any information of public interest;

- access to information of public interest shall be made ex officio or upon request;

- institutional communication must be transparent and unconditional;

- the dissemination of public information must be done without discrimination and in the simplest possible manner so that it can be properly received by the relevant publics;

Public communication must be continuous, efficient, operative, flexible and accountable.

The communication of information of public interest is done both unidirectionally, by displaying them at the headquarters of the institutions, press releases and statements, editing a newsletter, etc., and bidirectionally through dialogue with citizens and relevant

publics within meetings on different topics, press conferences, interviews, audiences, etc.

The means of communication used to disseminate information of public interest are diverse, from the classic ones – display at the headquarters of institutions, publication in the Official Gazette of Romania, publication in local newspapers and/or own publications – and up to electronic ones – website, email, blogs and social communication platforms.

4. RELEVANT ASPECTS REGARDING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Based on the normative acts elaborated and adopted by the legislative and executive bodies of states, the institutions have developed specific instruments through which they have created the necessary framework for a proper functioning of communication with their employees, citizens and other relevant publics. This framework consists of: organization and functioning regulations, communication strategies, codes of ethics, guidelines for preventing integrity incidents, procedures and standards to be observed in institutional communication, etc.

The internal regulations of the institutions, regarding communication, are regularly updated in order to reflect the changes in the national and international normative framework, the evolution of the methods and means of communication they use and the specific aspects of communication in their geographical area of jurisdiction.

The national and international normative framework, oriented towards efficiency and progress in the communication activity of public authorities and institutions, is an important step in implementing an ethical conduct of public servants and in attracting citizens to the decision-making process that concerns them and the communities they belong to. This first step was naturally followed by the elaboration and adoption of instruments specific to each public authority and institution. These tools aim to ensure efficient and responsible work at the service of citizens and other relevant publics.

Improving the relations of authorities and institutions with citizens and other relevant publics is achieved by improving the communication process, both in terms of methods and tools used and the content of communication.

Institutional communication is a process that is constantly being renewed in order to keep pace with the evolution of the society and the requirements of relevant audiences. In order to achieve its objectives, public relations – the structure through which institutional communication is carried out – must be well documented with the activities of the institution it represents and with the requirements of the target audiences, to permanently monitor and evaluate the implementation of communication strategies, respectively the effects of these strategies on the target audiences and the reaction of those audiences.

In the field of internal communication, public relations should monitor the circulation of information, the process of onboarding new employees and the management of possible conflicts and/or dysfunctions.

Basically, institutional communication achieves the adaptation of institutions to the geographical, social, political and economic environment in which they are located.

4.1. Deficiencies in institutional communication in Romania

Respecting the principles of institutional communication means not only an ethical attitude on the part of public servants, but also an important contribution to achieving good governance at local and national level.

Despite a national regulatory framework harmonized with the international one and the existence of instruments for internal regulation of institutional communication, there are still functional and behavioural deficiencies of institutions and their employees.

The most important deficiencies, highlighted by individual researchers, domestic non-governmental organizations and international governmental and non-governmental organizations, respectively by central state institutions that have the right to control local authorities and institutions are: inappropriate attitudes and standards contained in internal

regulations of public institutions, manifested by some public servants and non-compliance with provisions normative acts by some authorities and institutions.

These general deficiencies can be detailed as follows:

- in some institutions and authorities decision-making transparency is insufficient because some decisions of public interest are not published in full or even not published at all; (MAI.GOV, 2023; Bear, 2014)

Access to information of public interest is not always free and unconditional because:

- public information displayed and posted on the website of public institutions and authorities is not always updated; (MAI.GOV, 2023)

- the answer to requests for information from citizens is sometimes received after the legal deadline (10÷30 days) or even not received at all, especially if they are individual requests; (Pro-Democracy Association and Transparency International Romania, 2007, p. 100: the average rate of responses to requests to ensure public information was, at national level, 77.3%, but only 76.8% of them can be considered complete; some public institutions, especially local ones, provided answers after the legal deadline of 30 days; answers for legal entities were provided in a percentage of 82.8% and for individuals in a percentage of 70%);

- in multilingual communities information is not published according to the law; (Cziprián-Kovács, 2020)

- the use of online communication (internet, email, blog, website, social communication platforms, etc.) is impossible in localities that are not connected to the electricity supply network and in localities where there is no internet coverage; (Sandor et al, 2020; Groza, 2023: "The insufficient development of electronic public services in Romania is largely due to gaps in internet connection between urban and rural areas.")

- the relationship of institutions and authorities with relevant publics is not always correct and responsible due to incompetent officials, behavioural and corrupt officials; (MAI-DGA, 2020: "In 2019, DNA indicted 501 defendants (ministers, Members of the Romanian

Parliament, Members of the European Parliament, State Secretaries, mayors, deputy mayors, lawyers, police officers, local authorities, directors of public institutions and national companies, teachers, hospital managers and doctors, etc.), and the courts convicted 422 defendants definitively.");

- the non-transparent and sometimes even abusive behaviour of public authorities towards citizens. (Moraru et al, 2011)

4.2. Causes of deficiencies in institutional communication

The non-observance of the national and international regulatory framework, respectively of the internal instruments of the authorities and institutions has multiple causes, of which the most important are the following:

- the lack of integrity of high-ranking officials: "Over the years, Romania has been plagued by high-level corruption scandals. According to Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer - European Union 2021, 80% of respondents in Romania believe corruption at government level is a big problem, 66% of respondents believe their government is doing wrong in fighting corruption and 45% believe corruption has increased in the last 12 months." (RM.COE. INT, 2023; Integritate, 2020: "Between 2008 and December 2019, the National Integrity Agency found the violation of the legal regime regarding the integrity framework as follows: 1954 cases of incompatibilities; 668 cases of administrative conflicts of interest; 160 cases of finding unjustified differences between acquired wealth and earned income.");

- interventions of some politicians to favour some decisions to the detriment of others: "Pressures and political influence in adopting decisions in public administration is one of the factors considered responsible for the manifestation of corruption." (MAI-DGA, 2020, p. 120)

- some legal provisions favour the non-integrity behaviour of some officials, magistrates and public servants: "the statute of limitations (of the facts) proved to be one of the biggest barriers in investigating large cases of corruption and bribery"; (Alistar et al, 2020)

- the unethical behaviour of some civil servants, motivated by: "the desire for prestige, need to assert oneself as a support for one's own family or close friends, recognition, need for validation in professional circles, personal ambition, etc."; (MAI-DGA, 2020)

- the organizational environment tolerant of lack of integrity by "unsystematically sanctioning people involved in acts of corruption or integrity, respectively encouraging the violation of rules by management actions"; (MAI-DGA, 2020)

- resistance to change, manifested by some civil servants (Groza, 2023: "Social barriers restrict access to change, resistance to adapting technological innovations being the result of lack of knowledge and adequate training, ignorance and fear of changing the status quo, the threat of decreasing the power that some organizations have over citizens due to the development of "net" contacts, etc.); Tripon, 2014: "The factors that most influence resistance to change are: purpose, organizational culture, organizational structure, communication and leadership. The factors with the least influence on resistance to change are exogenous ones (both categories) and the size of the organization.");

- hiring civil servants not based on criteria of professional competence and morality, but on criteria of loyalty to political parties and kinship relations (nepotism); (Alistar et al, 2020; Profiroiu et al. 2022)

- the mentality of some civil servants is inadequate to the standards self-imposed by the employing authorities and institutions (Groza, 2023: "In most public entities, employees operate with a closed mentality, each living in a "tight circle" and afraid to go beyond the specifications of the department to which they belong." ANFP. GOV.RO, 2006: "lack of a mentality open to new and change, to be accompanied by a desire for permanent improvement of civil servants.");

- superficial checks and opposition of some officials to controls; (Alistar et al, 2020)

- some officials and civil servants are not sufficiently well prepared to responsibly exercise the duties in their job descriptions: "the lack of effective training of officials and civil servants, the set of knowledge held, but also the attitude manifested towards citizens (...) control institutions are not sufficiently effective and their

cooperation with business and civil society is minimal" (Alistar et al, 2020)

- 'interinstitutional cooperation is one of the most vulnerable and underdeveloped elements of administrative capacity in Romania and, in general, any process, including bribery investigations, requiring inter-institutional cooperation takes more time;' (Alistar et al, 2020)

"Public institutions are taken over by the powerful and wealthy (...) thus, the interests of individuals and differences in power make the system dysfunctional and incapable of reform from within;" (Ciuchi et al, 2014)

- some public authorities and institutions have not established, according to Law 544/2001, art. 6, specialized structures to provide citizens with information of public interest; (Legislatie, 2021; Moraru et al, 2011)

- overburdening civil servants responsible for providing public information on request; (Prodemocracy Association and Transparency Romania, 2007, p. 101);

- cumbersome communication between departments of public institutions and low and inadequate use of electronic communication means; (Sandor et al, 2020);

- insufficient digital skills of some Romanian citizens do not allow them to participate effectively in e-government. (Sandor et al, 2020)

- the double standard practiced by some politicians who arrogate to themselves merits that do not belong to them, when some decisions of European forums are successfully implemented and blame the European Commission, the European Parliament and other decision-making forums in Brussels and Strasbourg when our country is criticized for deficiencies in different fields, including institutional communication;

4.3. Proposals to improve institutional communication

The process of improving institutional communication must be continuous in order to adapt in due time to the evolution of the society, to the requirements of citizens and other relevant publics, but also to the evolution of methods and means of communication. Some of the most important ideas that should be analysed and applied to improve institutional communication refer to:

- identifying areas and locations with a high degree of risk from an ethical point of view – ports, healthcare, construction, urban planning, etc. – and ensuring their permanent monitoring to prevent deviations and violations of the national and international regulatory framework; (EUR-LEX.EUROPA.EU, 2023)

- encouraging the work of whistleblowers and protecting them effectively; (EUR-LEX.EUROPA.EU, 2023)

- the normative framework on combating the unethical behaviour of public servants “must also address profound aspects of mentality, beliefs, attachments, constantly supported through an effort to educate citizens, institutions and companies”; (MAI-DGA, 2020)

- the relationship of authorities and institutions with citizens and other relevant publics must be done fairly, honestly, transparently and on the basis of mutual respect, in order to determine them to participate in formulating decisions and not to react after decisions are taken;

- the transmission of messages to relevant groups must also be done by involving target groups that retransmit messages to group members and thus messages reach as many citizens, members of business communities and other relevant publics as possible; (Luca, 2009)

- the methods of institutional communication must be diversified and permanently adapted to the specifics of the institutions and communities within which they operate; (Luca, 2009) for example, citizens and relevant publics should be invited by the institutions to debates in seminars, forums, conferences and round tables where community-specific issues are addressed and proposals for different decisions are formulated. (Luca, 2009)

- extending institutional communication by electronic means is a solution that can increase decision-making transparency and reduce the frequency and scale of actions lacking integrity of civil servants and public institutions; (MAI-DGA, 2020)

- supplying electricity to all localities, expanding high-speed internet and increasing citizens’ digital skills to standards; (Sandor et al., 2020: According to data provided by the National Institute of Statistics, in 2019 48% of rural

households in Romania did not have access to the internet and Eurostat 2017 informs us that the population in our country has basic digital skills between 4% - citizens aged over 65 - and 53% - young people aged between 16 and 24);

- framing the public relations structures of public institutions and authorities with people of integrity and professionals;

- the internal and external control structures of institutions must put more emphasis on prevention, to be streamlined through legal regulations and adequate to the specifics of public institutions, respectively by employing experienced staff who have a high and recognized level of professionalism and integrity; (Vasilache et. al, 2021).

- Sanctions applied to civil servants, public authorities and institutions must be tougher when they violate legal and ethical norms.

5. CONCLUSIONS

A political system and institutions based on integrity, transparency and accountability is a guarantee for ethical institutional communication, respectively for a correct relationship of the institutions with their relevant publics. (EUR-LEX.EUROPA.EU, 2023)

Transparency eliminates opportunities for the manifestation of behaviour lacking the integrity of officials and public institutions. (EUR-LEX.EUROPA.EU, 2023)

The elaboration of an adequate normative framework is not sufficient to ensure ethics in institutional communication. It is necessary to prepare and rigorously select human resources within public authorities and institutions. (Vasilache et al, 2021). Also, “the mere development of ethical codes is not sufficient to discourage immoral practices, just as participation in courses or ethical debates may have limited effectiveness in changing behaviours.” (Mureșan, 2021)

In order to have ethical behaviour, proper education and promotion of moral values within society are necessary. (Luca, 2009)

In order to be credible, efficient and achieve its objectives, institutional communication must be based on reality, fairness, transparency and dissemination of information of public interest

in the simplest and clearest manner possible to relevant citizens and publics. (Babău, 2009)

Quality institutional communication can only be achieved through morality, respect and responsibility and must be practiced with respect and seriousness. (Luca, 2009)

We cannot talk about ethical institutional communication when there are discrepancies between the normative framework and the practices of public authorities and institutions. Deviations of political leaders and civil servants from legal and moral norms will undermine citizens' trust in authorities and institutions.

References

- Alistar, V., Lonean, I., Berianu, P. & Maxim, M. (2020) Business Integrity Country Agenda, Romania, Transparency International Romania, Bucharest. Available from: <https://www.transparency.org.ro/ro/tiropage/business-integrity-country-agenda>, accessed 01.02.2024.
- ANFP.GOV.RO (2006) National Agency of Civil Servants, Transparency and ethics in public administration, anfp.ro, Bucharest. Available from: <https://www.anfp.gov.ro/R/Doc/2015/Proiecte/Incheiate/transparenta%20si%20etica/Manual%20de%20proceduri.pdf> [January 14, 2024]
- Babău, E. (2009) The efficiency of European communication "is admirable, sublime, we can say, but it is completely missing. Available from: http://www.anc.edu.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Dilemele_comunicarii_Uniunii_Europene-1.pdf [January 13, 2024]
- Bear, N. (2014) Access to public information and e-government. Covasna County Case Study, *Transylvanian Journal of Administrative Sciences*. 2(35), pp. 170-181.
- Ciuchi, C., Botan, C., Ciobanu, V. (2014) CMS (Content Management System) Online communication tool for Public Administration, Bucharest. Available from: <https://uefiscdi.gov.ro/download.php?id=6338&format=2> [January 22, 2024]
- Cziprián-Kovács, L. (2020) Decision-making transparency of local public authorities in multilingual communities. Study on decision-making transparency of local public administration authorities in Harghita, Covasna and Mures, counties inhabited mainly by the Hungarian minority. *Transylvanian Journal of Administrative Sciences*. 2(47), pp. 19-35.
- Digi 24(2023) Cops accused of protecting thugs. They are heard in the case of the Caran brothers. Available from: <https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/actualitate/evenimente/video-politisti-acuzati-ca-protejaui-interlopi-ei-sunt-audiati-in-dosarul-fratilor-caran-2590893> [January 12, 2024]
- EUR-LEX.EUROPA.EU (2023) European Commission, Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council and the European Economic and Social Committee, on the fight against corruption. Available from: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/RO/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52023JC0012> [January 23, 2024]
- Europalibera (2020) Control at the Capital Police on links between officers and thugs. Available from: <https://romania.europalibera.org/a/control-la-politia-capitala-privind-leg%C4%83turile-dintre-ofiteri-si-interlopi/30790460.html> [January 12, 2024]
- Ghiolțan, C. & Morar, A. (2021) Communication between citizen and local public administration, *Transylvanian Journal of Administrative Sciences*, 2(49), pp. 32-50.
- Groza, M. (2023) Electronic Document Management: Analysis of the level of adoption of Filedoc solution in public institutions in Romania, Bachelor thesis, National School of Political Studies and Public Administration. Available from: <https://scrd.eu/index.php/spr/article/view/410> [January 12, 2024]
- Integritate (2020) Transparency International Romania, Collection of cases relevant to the central public administration regarding conflicts of interest, incompatibilities and unjustified wealth, Integritate.eu, 2020, https://www.integritate.eu/Files/Files/Ghiduri%202013/002%20Culegere%20de%20spete_2020_LINC.PDF [January 21, 2024]
- Legislatie (2021) Parliament of Romania, Law no. 544 of 12 October 2001 on free access to information of public interest, OFFICIAL GAZETTE no. 663 of 23 October 2001. Available from: <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliuDocument/31413> [January 26, 2024]
- Luca, D. (2009) Dilemmas of European Union communication. Cluj-Napoca:Qual Media.
- MAI.GOV (2023) Annual Report on the evaluation of integrity incidents occurred in 2022 at the level of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Annex 1 to Report Note no. 4048278/23.03.2023. Available from: <https://www.mai.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/raport-MAI-incidente-MJ-2022-final.pdf> [February 04, 2024].
- MAI-DGA (2020) General Anticorruption Directorate, Causes and determinants of corruption acts, Criminological, qualitative and quantitative research report, Ministry of Justice. Available from: <https://www.mai-dga.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Studiu-POCA-MJ.pdf> [January 27, 2024]
- Morar, A., Iorga, E. & Lefterache, L. (2011) (Un) restricted access to information of public interest 10 years after the adoption of the law, Ministry of Justice. Available from: <https://www.juridice.ro/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Studiu-544.pdf> [January 27, 2024]
- Mureșan, R. (2021) Public relations ethics. Available from: <https://www.pr-romania.ro/articole/etica-in-pr/2358-etica-relatiilor-publice.html> [January 2, 2024]
- Ohanesian, E.A. (2016) Corrupt police networks make the law in Romania, Avertisment.net. Available from:

<https://www.avertisement.net/patrulaterul-sugac-sugac-urate-chenderes-si-lumea-interlopa/> [February 02, 2024].

Profiroiu, C.M., Profiroiu, A.G., Năstacă, C.C. (2022) The role of ethics counsellors in the public administration of Romania, Nispa.org, 2022. Available from: https://www.nispa.org/files/conferences/2022/e-proceedings/system_files/papers/202205172016240.Profiroiu_Profiroiu_Nastaca.pdf [February 02, 2024].

Rădulescu, C. (2012) Mass media - partner in the realization of forms of public communication, *Transylvanian Journal of Administrative Sciences*. 1(30), pp. 139-155.

Ranta, A.E. (2014) Access to information of public interest - legal obligation for public administration authorities. Case study on the degree of accessibility of public interest information communicated ex officio, *Transylvanian Journal of Administrative Studies*, 2(35), pp. 98-113.

RM.COE.INT (2023) Council of Europe, Preventing corruption and promoting integrity at central level (executive management positions) and at the level of

law enforcement institutions, Evaluation report, Romania, Strasbourg, 7 September 2023. Available from: <https://rm.coe.int/grecoeval5rep-2022-4-final-ro-evaluation-report-romania-public/1680ac77c8> [January 27, 2024]

Sandor, S.A., Chalk, S.C., Fecete, T.A., Cotoranu, D., Zai, P., Antonie, R.I. (2020) Digital competences among the Romanian population, *Transylvanian Journal of Administrative Sciences*. 2(47), pp. 132-147.

Trifonova Price, L. (2021) Ethical Codes in Post-communist Countries: The Case of Bulgaria and Romania, In: Price, L., Sanders, K. & Wyatt, Wendy N., (eds.) *Routledge Companion to Journalism Ethics*. New York: Routledge, p.496.

Tripon, C. (2014) Resistance to change in public administration institutions, *Transylvanian Journal of Administrative Sciences*, 2(35), pp. 141-159.

Vasilache, S., Gazdaru, R. & Sava, M. (2021) Corruption in Romania - Public vs. Private Sector, *Scientific Research*, March 2021, *Open Journal of Business and Management*, 9, pp. 928-954.