

Ethics and Integrity in the Romanian Public Administration: The Role of Ethics Advisor

Daniela-Gabriela CAZAN¹,
Claudiu-Emanuel SIMION²

¹National University of Political
Studies and Public Administration,
Bucharest, Romania,
danielagabrielacazan@gmail.com

²Bucharest University of Economic
Studies, Romania,
simionclaudiuemanuel@gmail.com

Abstract: *In public administration, ethics and integrity are key factors for the proper functioning of public authorities and institutions at both the central and local level. Public organisations aim to ensure a proper ethical framework so that staff in public organisations serve the public interest, manage public money properly and make fair decisions for a modern, transparent, and therefore honest public administration. In this study, we focus on the role of the ethics advisor in promoting ethics and organisational integrity in the public sector, starting from the assumption that the ethics advisor is essential for implementing the ethics standard, as well as for promoting ethics and organisational integrity in the public sector. This is quantitative research conducted at the level of local public authorities: county councils and city halls, using an opinion survey through a self-administered questionnaire distributed to ethics advisors.*

Keywords: *ethics; ethics advisor; integrity; public administration.*

How to cite: Cazan, D.-G., & Simion, C.-E. (2023). Ethics and Integrity in the Romanian Public Administration: The Role of Ethics Advisor. In A. Grigorescu & V. Radu (vol. ed.), *Lumen Proceedings: Vol. 19. Global Ethics - Key of Sustainability (GEKOS 2022)* (pp. 180-206). LUMEN Publishing House.
<https://doi.org/10.18662/lumproc/gekos2022/15>

1. Introduction

Ethics and integrity are intensely studied and debated concepts from different perspectives. Scholars and governmental authorities alike attempt to establish a common framework of core elements regulating relationships between people. Ethics and integrity are key factors for the proper functioning of societies, with a major impact on all activities.

One of the various research questions concerning ethics and integrity refers to its social impact. The concept of ethics “can be assimilated to a form of social consciousness that reflects and fixes ideas, conceptions, beliefs about the behaviour of individuals in society” (Nicolescu & Ionescu, 2011, p.31). In this sense, one can state that ethics refers to standards of personal and professional conduct.

Closely related to the notion of ethics, the concept of *integrity* includes the principles of truthfulness and honesty (Butler & Cantrell, 1984, p.19). Integrity refers to the actions and behaviour of individuals. It has been demonstrated that one can identify improper behaviour more easily than a correct behaviour. Thus, integrity is defined in relation to its opposite – *corruption* (Păunescu, 2018), which is defined as “the illegal use of public resources for personal gain” (World Bank Group, 1997, p.19) or as “a behaviour which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private pecuniary or status gains; or violates rules against the exercise of certain types of private-regarding influence” (Nye, 2002, p.966). Thus, ethics and integrity are concepts related to *corruption* and *anticorruption*.

Another key concept closely related to the field of ethics and integrity is morality. The principles of dignity, responsibility, freedom, solidarity, and charity define morality: “While ethics and morality refer to reflection on moral values and norms, integrity refers to the quality of acting in accordance with the relevant moral norms” (Huberts, 2014, p.66).

Studies show that the morality deficit is generated, on the one hand, by a lack of relevant knowledge and, on the other hand, by a low level of awareness of doing *the right thing*. In this regard, some authors emphasize the need to develop the type of sensitivity and attitude, which increases motivation and improves the functioning of institutional tools for dealing with ethics (Socaciu et al., 2018).

Studies focused on ethics and integrity in the public sector as well. Research show that integrity in the public sector has become an important issue of good governance, so that lack of integrity undermines citizens’ trust in government and state institutions (Demmke & Bossaert, 2004).

At the same time, in public sector, the issue of ethics and integrity is closely related to social trust, since “society could not function without

social trust, both horizontally, between its members and institutions, and vertically, between human communities and levels of governance” (Dragoman & Ungureanu, 2016, p.29).

At the European level, there is a major focus on the study of ethics and integrity. Recently, ethics and integrity standards have become increasingly essential for ensuring good governance as well as for increasing organisational performance and citizens’ trust in public administration institutions. In this sense, studies highlight that only “a functioning ethics infrastructure promotes high quality public services” (Demmke & Bossaert, 2004, p.11). In this respect, at EU level, steps have been taken to establish common elements of ethical behaviour and to develop tools in order to create effective mechanisms for preventing corruption.

The establishment of cooperation mechanisms on the prevention of corruption in its various forms, such as influence peddling, abuse of office, illicit enrichment, underlines the importance and major interest in creating, developing, and promoting ethical values and integrity.

At national level, the implementation of ethics and integrity policies is linked to the European instruments for promoting ethics and integrity, to which Romania is part. These include the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism, The Group of States against Corruption, The United Nations Convention against Corruption, and Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative.

According to the Commission’s report to the European Parliament and the Council (European Commission, 2021), steady progress has been made domestically in strengthening mechanisms to prevent corruption. Within public institutions in Romania, the implementation of Standard No.1 on ethics and integrity of the Order of the General Secretariat of the Government (OGSG) no. 600/2018 is a constant concern. Also, the certification of some central and local authorities and institutions in the ISO 37001:2016 standard on anti-bribery management system contributes to a modern, and transparent public administration, based on ethical values and principles.

Starting from the above-mentioned results, in the following, we aim to examine the issue of ethics and integrity in Romanian public administration by analyzing the role of the ethics advisor in promoting ethics and organisational integrity in the public sector.

2. Problem Statement

In the Romanian public administration, ethics, integrity, and anti-corruption are constant concerns of public authorities. A series of recent legislation and externally funded projects, which have targeted the field of

ethics and integrity, contribute to the development and modernisation of public administration, with the main goal of a modern and transparent administration based on sound ethical principles. Institutions developed tools and mechanisms for information and training in the field of ethics and integrity. They also regulated the application, monitoring, and evaluation of the implementation of legal standards of integrity.

At the level of public administration, “integrity is represented by the fairness, legality, impartiality, morality, and objectivity that persons holding public office demonstrate in the exercise of their duties for the interests of citizens and the rule of law” (Project team members of SIPOCA 61, n.d., p.14).

A report by the 2021 Global Corruption Barometer (Kukutschka, 2021) indicates that Romania ranks 66th out of 180 countries, with a corruption perception index of 45/100 (where 0 is highly corrupt and 100 is honest).

The issue of ethics and integrity in the public sector is addressed from the perspective of institutional effectiveness, by providing a framework that facilitates increased accountability for behaviour in public office and strengthening the capacity of public authorities to meet ethics and integrity requirements.

“Violation of ethical rules affects the functioning mechanisms, relations, and procedures within the institution, its relations with the external environment, the quality of services and the relationship with citizens, the institutional image and prestige” (Nicolae et al.,2010, p.3). In this sense, the leader of each public organization must encourage, promote and support everything that means integrity and ethical values among the employees they manage, in order to increase organizational performance.

“Romanian legislation on combating corrupt behaviour and encouraging ethical attitudes began with Law no. 115 of 16 October 1996 on the declaration and control of the wealth of dignitaries, magistrates, certain persons in managerial and supervisory positions, and public officials” (Matei, 2010, pp. 82-83). Several other legal acts have contributed to the regulation of the field. Among them, we mention: Parliament of Romania, 2003; Parliament of Romania, 2004; Parliament of Romania, 2007 or Parliament of Romania, 2010.

Since 2001, Romania has adopted a series of National Anti-Corruption Strategies, in line with the provisions of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. They concern the fight against fraud and any illegal operations affecting the financial interests of the Union. The role of these strategies is to promote integrity through the rigorous

application of the regulatory and institutional framework to prevent corruption in Romania.

The European Commission has monitored the implementation of the national anti-corruption strategies, in line with Recommendation 11 of the European Commission Report to the European Parliament and the Council (2021), which states the continued implementation of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy.

Therefore, setting up integrity mechanisms and establishing structural measures in vulnerable areas is a priority for government authorities.

The current National Anti-Corruption Strategy 2021-2025 includes measures aimed at institutional transparency and the prevention of corruption. These are regulated by various normative acts on: code of ethics/deontology/conduct, ethics advisor, declaration of assets, declaration of gifts, conflicts of interest, incompatibilities, transparency in the decision-making process, access to information of public interest, whistleblower protection in the public interest, post-employment bans in public institutions (pantouflage), sensitive functions, integrity risk management, and ex-post evaluation of integrity incidents (European Commission, 2021).

A key factor regarding ethics and integrity at the level of public authorities and institutions in Romania is the implementation of Standard 1 - Ethics and Integrity of OGS no. 600/2018 [6]. This standard refers to the ways in which the management of public organisations and employees are aware of and uphold ethical values, apply regulations on ethics, integrity, avoidance of conflicts of interest, prevention of corruption facts and reporting of irregularities (Project team members of SIPOCA 432, 2022).

The Ethics Advisor plays a key role in ensuring the correct understanding of situations that may arise in a public institution with regard to ethics and integrity. According to OGS no. 600/2018 (point 1.2.3), the management of the institution is obliged to appoint an ethics advisor to monitor compliance with the rules of conduct at the institutional level.

The role of the ethics advisor is to interpret the particular cases that arise from the perspective of the general ethical principles that are laid down in the Code of Ethics (Sandu, 2022) “the ethics advisor is called to participate in the establishment of the ethics policies of the public organization and in the management of ethics in the organization” (Sandu, 2015, p.113).

In Romanian public administration, the profession of ethics advisor emerged with the adoption of Law no.50/2007, which made it compulsory to appoint a civil servant to monitor the rules of conduct in the organisation and to provide employees with ethical advice.

The Administrative Code (articles 451- 457) regulates the exercise of the ethics advisor's profession at the level of public entities and his/her attributions. The legislative framework was completed by Government Decision No. 931/2021[9] for the adoption of the appointment procedure, attributions, organizing the activity, and the procedure for evaluating the ethics advisor's individual professional performance, as well as the approval of the way in which institutions and authorities are reported for implementing, monitoring, and controlling compliance with the principles and rules on the conduct of public officials.

According to the regulations of the Administrative Code (article 452), in order to be an ethics advisor, a civil servant must meet a number of specific conditions, such as: being a permanent civil servant, class I, having an administrative record without sanctions in force, having moral probity, not being in a state of incompatibility with this position, not being under administrative investigation, and preferably having a degree in social sciences.

Among the most important duties of the ethics advisor, one can list: informing and training the staff of the organization on the rules of ethics, developing analyses on the causes, risks, and vulnerabilities that arise in the work of employees, conducting ethics counselling sessions for civil servants, and monitoring the application and observance of the principles and rules of professional conduct by employees of the institution (article 454). In the performance of his/her duties, the ethics advisor has a legal obligation to draw up reports and analyses on the activities carried out, which he/she must report to the National Agency for Civil Servants (NACS) (2021).

A *sine qua non* condition for the fulfilment of specific tasks is the professional training of the Ethics Advisor. According to the Administrative Code (article 451), the authorities must ensure that ethics advisors participate in training programmes organised by the National Institute of Administration (NIA). One may remark the particular importance to the training of this category, giving the NIA powers in this respect, as a public institution of national interest which carries out professional training for public administration staff, by implementing the strategic directions of the Government. In addition, one has to remark that the first priority training area is the audit, control, quality, and integrity (National Agency for Civil Servants, 2022).

In public administration, one of the ways to ensure ethical behaviour is to adopt and approve a Code of Ethics at the level of the organisation. The Code of Ethics is the main tool for public managers to demonstrate the values and principles of the organisation and to set morally acceptable behaviour in the organisation. The adoption of a Code of Ethics at the level

of the institution is one of the requirements set out in the legislation on the implementation of the Standard “Ethics and Integrity” (General Secretariat of the Government of Romania, 2018). The implementation of this standard is related to the way in which the top management of the organisation and the staff know and support the ethical values and values of the entity.

Based on the legislative regulations concerning the Ethics Advisor, one can state that the Ethics Advisor’s role is to monitor the application of and compliance with the principles and rules of conduct applicable to budgetary staff, imposed by each public organisation’s legislation and codes of ethical and professional conduct. The increased emphasis on the Ethics Advisor in public organisations aims to create, develop, and maintain an ethical organisational climate. The Ethics Advisor is instrumental in creating the necessary conditions for the development of a strong organisational culture based on ethical behaviour and the promotion of professional ethics’ values and principles, as well as for the uniform application of the rules of professional conduct throughout the organisation.

In this regard, at the level of each public organisation, the adoption of a code of professional conduct or code of ethics and the appointment of an Ethics Advisor are essential elements for implementing ethical standards and promoting organisational integrity.

3. Research Questions/ Aims of the research

The aim of this paper is to analyse the role of the ethics advisor in public administration in Romania, based on the assumption that the Ethics Advisor is essential for implementing the ethics standard and promoting ethics and organisational integrity in the public sector.

The data obtained was processed using SPSS 26.0 in order to answer the main research questions: *to what extent have public organisations implemented corruption prevention measures, code of conduct, and Ethics Advisor?, to what extent does the role of the Ethics Advisor contribute to the promotion of organisational integrity?*

4. Research Methods

This study is quantitative research conducted at the level of local public authorities, county councils, and city halls, using as a research method an opinion survey through a self-administered questionnaire.

The sample consisted of ethics advisors appointed by county councils (41) and town halls (103). The questionnaire was developed and administered online.

The first part of the questionnaire included questions on the characteristics of the respondents, such as their institution, gender, level, the

field of studies, and seniority in public administration. The second part of the questionnaire contained specific questions on the code of ethics' development and adoption at the level of the organisation. In the last part of the questionnaire, the questions focused on the ethics counselling activity within the organisation, as well as on issues related to participation in ethics and integrity training programmes or on the ethics advisor.

Based on the questionnaire, 70 responses were received, representing a response rate of 48.61%, allowing for comments on how ethics and integrity issues are addressed in public organisations and on the role of the ethics advisor in public administration.

One of the limitations of the research is the small number of institutions that participated in the study, so the results obtained cannot be extrapolated to the whole public administration in Romania.

Respondents voluntarily participated in the online questionnaire in May 2022 and were assured of confidentiality regarding the data provided.

5. Findings

Figure 1 shows the distribution of respondents by type of institution: county council and city hall. 42 responses were collected from the 103 municipalities, representing a 40% response rate and 28 responses were collected from the 41 county councils, representing a 68% response rate. Thus, out of the total of 70 responses collected, 40% were ethics advisor from county councils and 60% from municipalities.

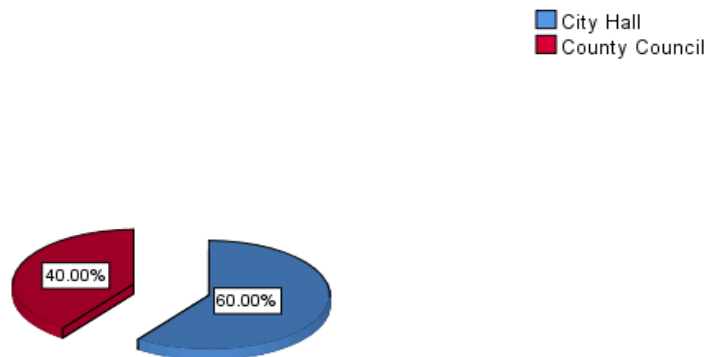


Figure 1: distribution of respondents by type of institution

Source: authors' own processing (2022)

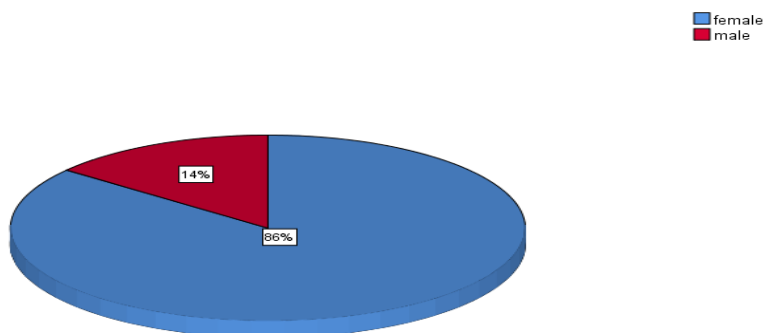


Figure 2: distribution of respondents by gender

Source: authors' own processing (2022)

Regarding the distribution of respondents by gender, shown in figure no. 2, the majority of respondents are female – 86 % (60) and only 14 % (10) are male. According to the National Civil Servants Agency report on civil service management (2020), two thirds of civil servants are women and one third are men, therefore, the distribution of respondents is one in line with the aforementioned statistics.

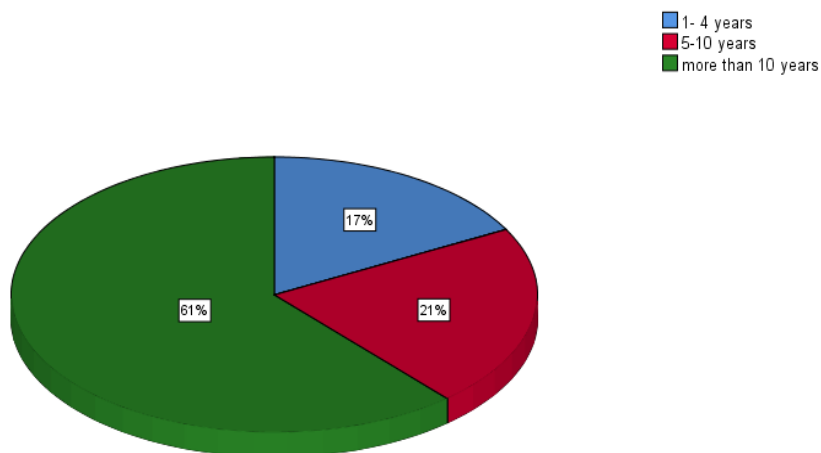


Figure 3: distribution of respondents by seniority in public administration

Source: authors' own processing (2022)

Figure 3 shows the distribution of respondents by seniority in public administration. Most respondents - 61 % (43) have been working in public administration for more than 10 years. About 17% (12) have been working in the public sector for 1-4 years and 21 % (15) for 5-10 years.

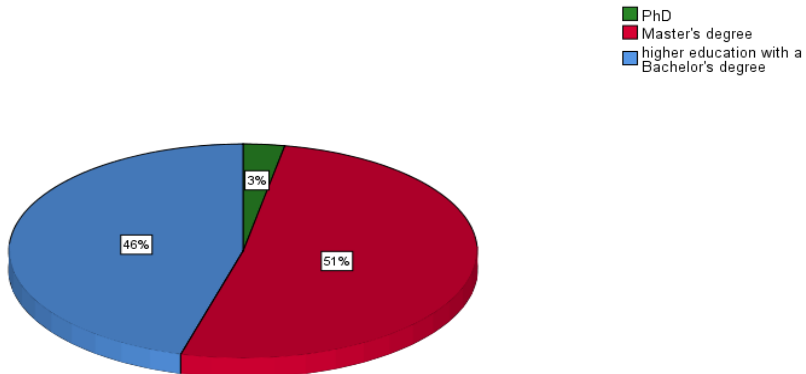


Figure 4: distribution of respondents by level of education
Source: authors' own processing (2022)

Regarding the respondents' level of education, most of respondents - 51% (36) have a master's degree, 46% (32) have a bachelor's degree and only 3% (2) have a doctoral degree.

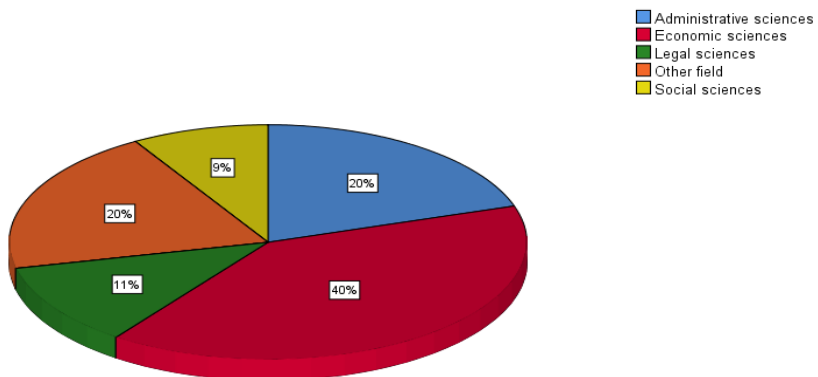


Figure 5: distribution of respondents by field of study
Source: authors' own processing (2022)

Most of respondents - 40% (28) - have a degree in economics, 20% (14) of the respondents have a degree in administrative sciences, 11% (8) graduated legal sciences, while only 9% (6) graduated social sciences. Thus, the recommendation of the Administrative Code to appoint an ethics advisor with a degree in social sciences (art.452) is fulfilled to a small degree. Thus, the employees responsible with the appointment of the Ethical Advisor should take into account the lawgiver's recommendation should give more weight to the Ethical Advisor's professional training.

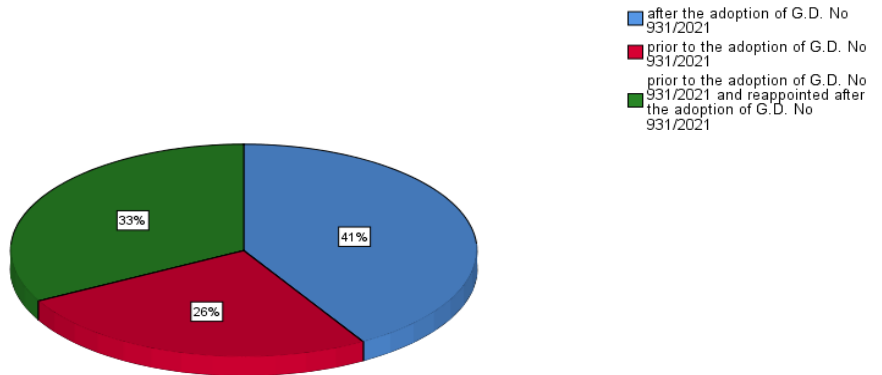


Figure 6: appointment as Ethics Advisor
Source: authors' own processing (2022)

Most Ethics Advisors (74%) have been appointed or reappointed in agreement with the legal provisions in force established through DG no. 931/2021. 26% (18) of the respondents are Ethics Advisors appointed before the adoption of these regulations.

no
yes

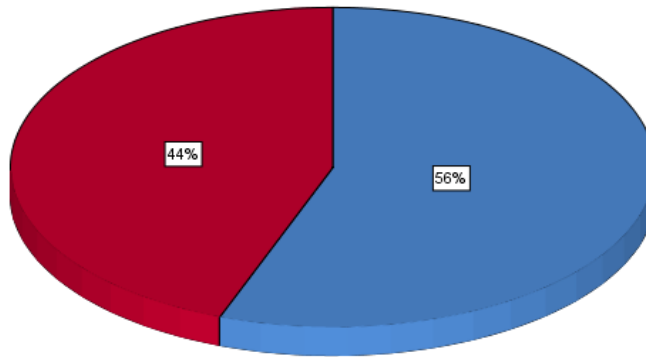


Figure 7: ethics advisor's participation in integrity training programmes or ethics advisor courses

Source: authors' own processing (2022)

The attendance of ethics, integrity, and ethics advisor training programmes is important for developing the skills required by the specific nature of the work as an ethics advisor. The skills obtained after graduating a professional training programme in the field provide the necessary tools for integrating the ethical culture's components into the internal management control system, and for building and developing a climate of ethics and integrity within the organisation. 44% (31) of the respondents have participated in ethics and integrity or ethics advisor training programs while 56% (39) have not participated in such training programs, fact which could have a negative impact on the performance of the ethics advisor in the organization.

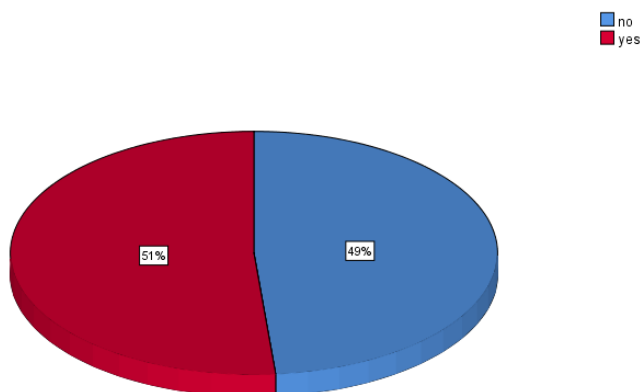


Figure 8: participation of public staff in ethics advisor courses/ training programmes

Source: authors' own processing (2022)

As far as participation of public institutions staff in ethics and integrity or ethics advisor training programmes is concerned, 51% (36) attended such programmes. 49% (34) of the respondents said that employees in their own institution had not participated in training or professional programmes in this field. Thus, one can observe that not much importance is attached to staff training in this area in public organisations.

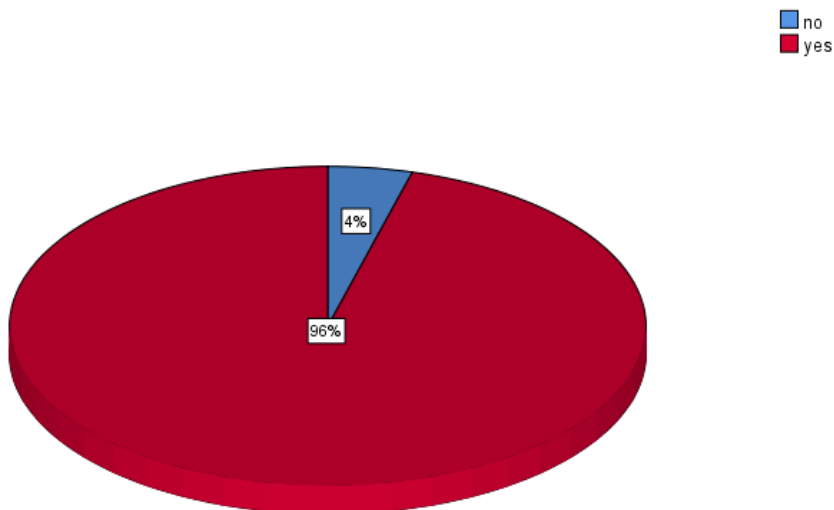


Figure 9: the development and approval of a Code of Ethics in public organisations

Source: authors' own processing (2022)

96% (67) of the respondents said that a Code of Ethics or Code of Professional Conduct for employees has been drafted and approved in their institutions and only 4% (3) answered that there is no such code. This distribution shows that there is a concern at the level of public organisations to establish an internal framework on ethics and integrity rules and to create an organisational culture in this respect.

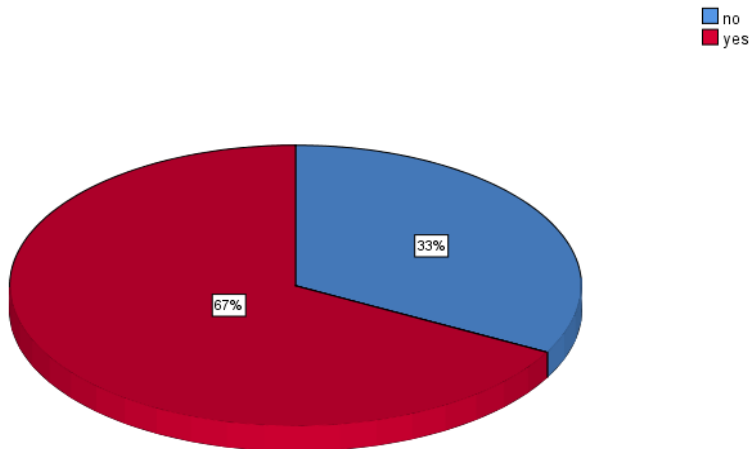


Figure 10: application of questionnaires to determine the awareness level of employees concerning the provisions of the Code of Ethics
Source: authors' own processing (2022)

Regarding the use of questionnaires to determine the degree employee concerning the provisions of the Code of Ethics, 67% (47) of respondents said that they had applied such questionnaires, while 33% (23) had not conducted tests in this regard. As previously stated, awareness level of institution's employees concerning the provisions of the Code of Ethics is an essential element in creating an ethical culture into public organisations. Therefore, one can remark that there is a concern regarding the awareness of ethical rules by employees.

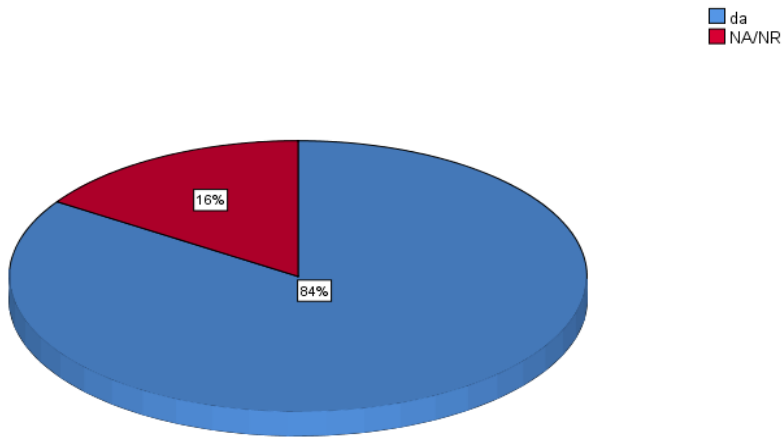


Figure 11: the employees' awareness level concerning the rules applied to the Code of Ethics and the rules applied to the Ethics Advisor
Source: authors' own processing (2022)

The employees' awareness level concerning the provisions of the Code of Ethics and those relating to the Ethics Adviser is high - 84%. Although the level of knowledge is high, it should be 100%.

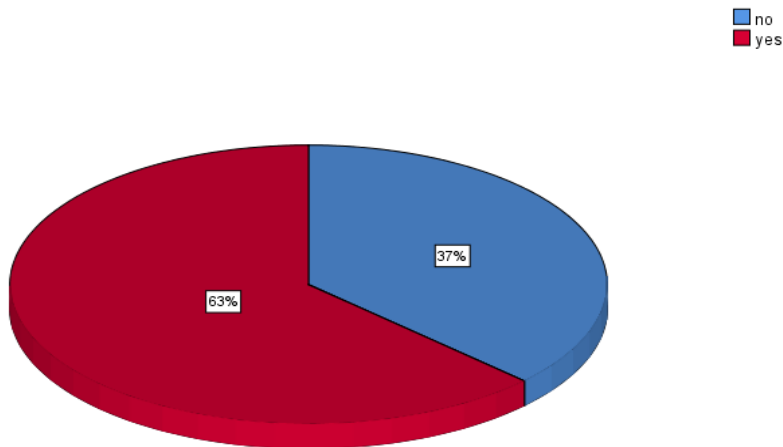


Figure 12: application of questionnaires to determine employees' awareness of the provisions of the ethics advisor
Source: authors' own processing (2022)

63% (44) of the respondents have applied questionnaires to determine the degree of knowledge of the institutions' employees concerning the rules on the ethics advisor, while 37% (26) have not conducted tests in this regard. This fact indicates a concern for the employee's awareness of ethics rules and the norms related to the ethics advisor.

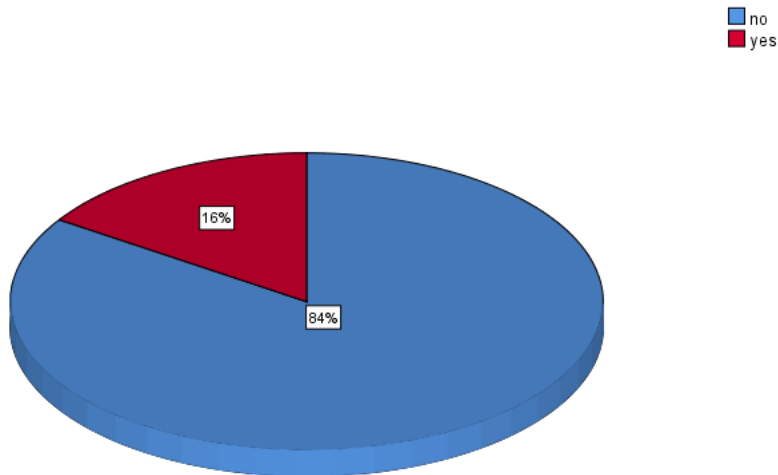


Figure 13: frequency of requests for ethics advice

Source: authors' own processing (2022)

Most respondents - 84% (59) - said that in their institution, staff did not seek ethics advice, while 16% (11) answered that there were requests for ethics advice from staff. Although non-compliance with the rules of conduct can affect the collective psychological integrity, i.e. it can harm the moral integrity of the people they work with while performing their public duties, the number of requests.

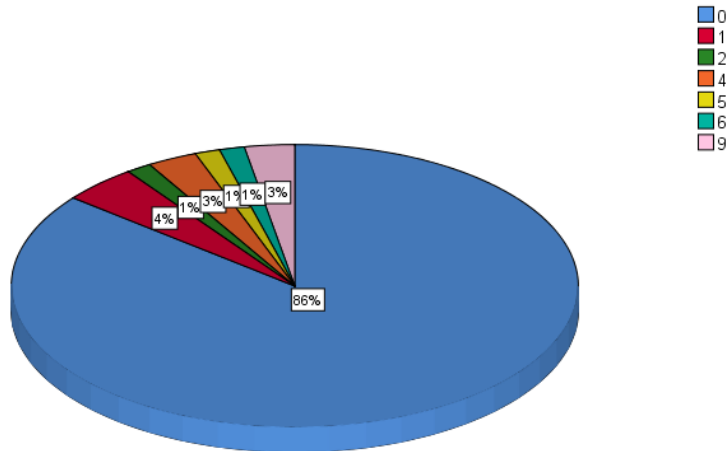


Figure 14: ethics advisor activities based on written requests from staff, in the last 3 years
 Source: authors' own processing (2022)

Figure 14 shows the number of ethics counselling activities carried out following written requests from the institution's staff over the past three years. Most respondents - 86% (60) - have not carried out ethics counselling activities for staff during this period. 4% (3) said that they had carried out one ethics counselling activity; 3% (2) responded that they had 4 or 9 counselling activities. 1% (1) responded that they had carried out 2, 5, or 6 ethics counselling activities. One can note that the level of ethics advice activity in public institutions is not significant. There may be multiple reasons for this fact.

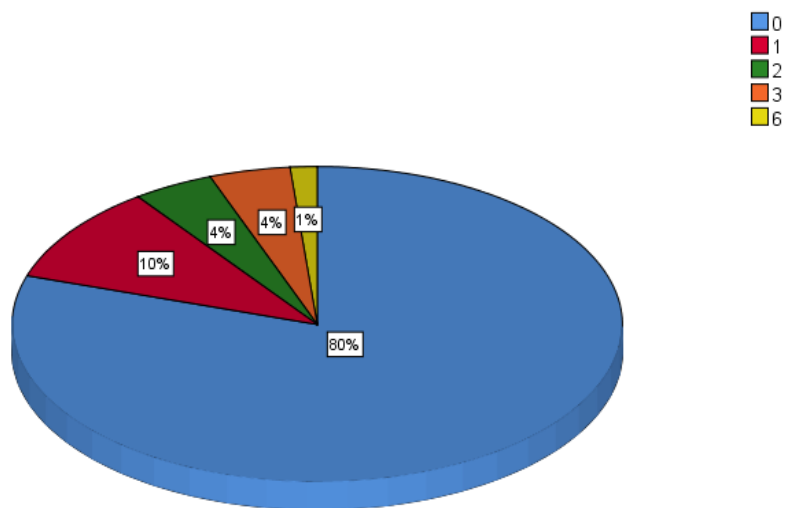


Figure 15: frequency of ethics counselling activities carried out at the initiative of ethics advisors, in the past three years
Source: authors' own processing (2022)

This question referred to counselling activities carried out at the initiative of ethics counsellors when staff did not make a request, but from their behaviour resulted a need for improvement. Most respondents - 80% (56) - said that they did not have such initiatives. 10% (7) of the respondents had only one initiative on ethics advice to staff, 4% (3) had 2 or 3 ethics advice activities, and 1% (1) had 6 ethics advice activities on their own initiative. Although the number of own-initiative ethics counselling activities is low, one can note a concern of ethics counsellors for their competence.

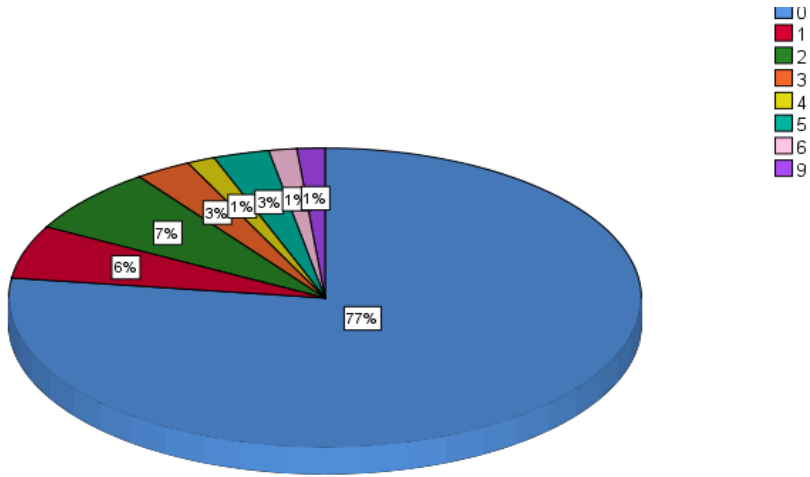


Figure 16: non-compliance with the rules of conduct recorded at entity level in the past three years

Source: authors' own processing (2022)

77% (54) of the respondents did not report any case of violation of the rules of conduct. 7% (5) reported 2 violations, 6% (4) 1 violation, 3% (2) reported 3 or 5 violations of the rules of conduct, and 1% (1) reported 6 or 9 violations of the rules of conduct. According to the NACS report on compliance with the rules of conduct for the year 2020 (2021), non-compliance with the rules of conduct may lead, in the medium term, to the failure to perform their duties correctly and effectively. The main way to prevent breaches of ethical rules in public organisations is to provide regular information and training to staff on the regulations in force in the field of ethics and professional conduct.

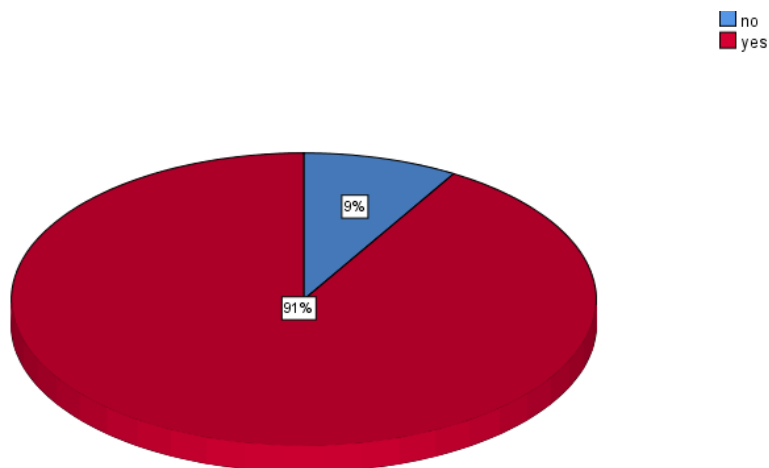


Figure 17: completed job description with ethics advisor duties

Source: authors' own processing (2022)

91% (64) of the respondents had their job description completed with the specific duties of the Ethics Adviser, while 9% (6) did not have their job description updated in this respect. This distribution shows compliance with the legislative provisions (Government Decision no. 931/2021).

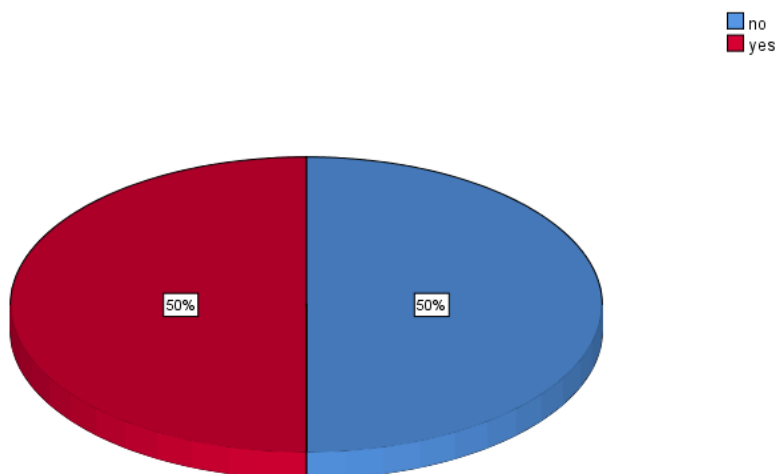


Figure 18: annual plan for the specific activities of the Ethics Advisor

Source: authors' own processing (2022)

Regarding to the approval of an annual plan that includes both training/information activities on the provisions of the Code of Ethics and the rules on the ethics advisor, and the determination of the employees's knowledge of the aforementioned provisions/rules, the distribution of answers is equal. 50% (35) answered that in their institution the specific activities of the Ethics Adviser are carried out on the basis of an annual planning. Thus, one can note that there is a moderate concern to set objectives for the work of the ethics advisor at the level of the public organisation.

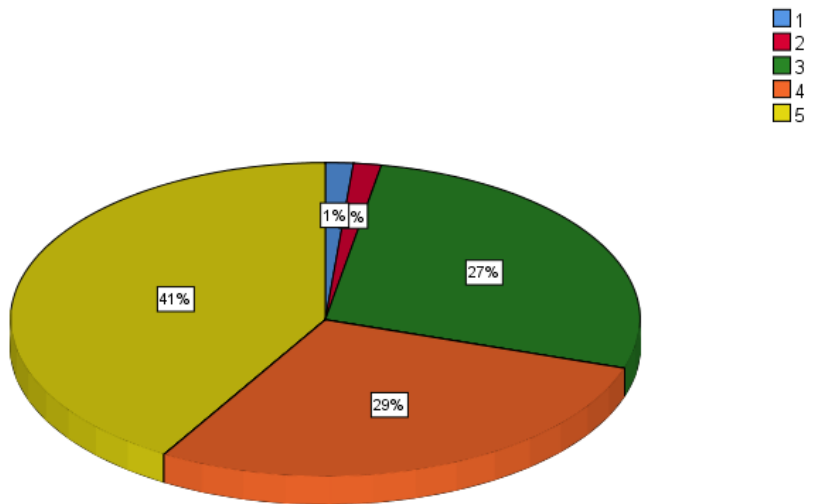


Figure 19: perception of the role of the ethics advisor in promoting organisational integrity

Source: authors' own processing (2022)

The role of the ethics counsellor in promoting organisational integrity is considered important and very important by 70% (49) of respondents. A very small proportion of respondents consider the role of the ethics counsellor in promoting organisational integrity to be low - 1% (1), while 27% (19) of respondents consider the role of the ethics counsellor to be somewhat important. Thus, one can note that a significant percentage believe that the role of the ethics counsellor in promoting the values and principles of professional ethics is an essential element in creating an environment conducive to the development of a strong organisational culture.

6. Discussion

The objective of implementing ethics and integrity standards in public administration is to create, develop, and maintain an ethical climate conducive to doing business and providing a qualitatively superior public service.

In this study, we examine role of the ethics advisor in promoting ethics and organisational integrity in the public sector, starting from the assumption that the ethics advisor is essential for implementing the ethics standard, as well as for promoting ethics and organisational integrity in the public sector. This is quantitative research conducted at the level of local public authorities: county councils and city halls, using an opinion survey through a self-administered questionnaire distributed to ethics advisors. At the examination of survey results, we found that the majority of respondents are female, it is one in line with the National Civil Servants Agency report on civil service management (2021). Also, just 9% graduated social sciences. Thus, the recommendation of the Administrative Code to appoint an ethics advisor with a degree in social sciences (art.452) is fulfilled to a small degree. Thus, the employees responsible with the appointment of the Ethical Advisor should take into account the lawgiver's recommendation should give more weight to the Ethical Advisor's professional training.

The attendance of ethics, integrity, and ethics advisor training programmes is important for developing the skills required by the specific nature of the work as an ethics advisor. The skills obtained after graduating a professional training programme in the field provide the necessary tools for integrating the ethical culture's components into the internal management control system, and for building and developing a climate of ethics and integrity within the organisation. 44% (31) of the respondents have participated in ethics and integrity or ethics advisor training programs while 56% (39) have not participated in such training programs, fact which could have a negative impact on the performance of the ethics advisor in the organization.

However, according to the NACS report on compliance with the rules of conduct for the year 2020 (2021), non-compliance with the rules of conduct may lead, in the medium term, to the failure to perform their duties correctly and effectively. The main way to prevent breaches of ethical rules in public organisations is to provide regular information and training to staff on the regulations in force in the field of ethics and professional conduct.

The role of the ethics counsellor in promoting organisational integrity is considered important and very important by 70% (49) of respondents. A very small proportion of respondents consider the role of

the ethics counsellor in promoting organisational integrity to be low - 1% (1), while 27% (19) of respondents consider the role of the ethics counsellor to be somewhat important. Thus, one can note that a significant percentage believe that the role of the ethics counsellor in promoting the values and principles of professional ethics is an essential element in creating an environment conducive to the development of a strong organisational culture.

7. Conclusions

In this paper we analyzed ethics and integrity in public administration from the perspective of mechanisms and measures whose implementation leads to the prevention of corruption in general and the reduction of different types of corruption in particular. The overall objective of implementing ethics and integrity standards in public administration is to create, develop, and maintain an ethical climate conducive to doing business and providing a qualitatively superior public service.

For public administration to function properly, the building blocks of ethics and integrity must be understood, applied, and monitored at all levels. Although in recent years significant progress has been made in the Romanian public administration's ethics and integrity, the implementation of these processes requires more attention from both heads of institutions and employees.

In order to create and develop an ethical climate, one of the central elements is the implementation of existing legislative provisions on ethical and integrity standards. The results of the study indicate that the formal framework for the appointment of the Ethics Advisor in public organisations is not fully in line with the legislation in force. The results also show that the appointment of an ethics counsellor with a degree in social sciences, as recommended in the Administrative Code, is fulfilled in a very low percentage. The legislator's recommendation regarding the field of study of the persons appointed to this position should be fully implemented.

In order to create and develop an organisational climate based on ethical values, it is not enough to formally implement the ethics and integrity standard. More than this, it is necessary to take measures for raising the awareness of employees about the role of the ethics counsellor and integrity in public office. Although the results indicate a high level of awareness of 84%, this is not sufficient. It is absolutely necessary that all employees of an organisation become aware of issues related to ethics, integrity, and professional conduct. In this respect, increasing the level of knowledge of

staff in public entities is a prerequisite for preventing breaches of the rules of conduct caused by lack of knowledge.

In addition, ethics counsellors' attendance of training programmes in order to acquire new skills or develop existing ones for carrying out their duties in a responsible and thorough manner should be a constant concern of both the organisation's management and the persons designated as ethics counsellors.

This study can be extended to all central and local public authorities and institutions in order to identify the main tools for contributing to the development of the ethics counsellor's role in promoting organisational integrity.

References

- Butler, J. K., & Cantrell, R.S. (1984). A behavioral decision theory approach to modeling dyadic trust in superiors and subordinates. *Psychological Reports*, 55(1), 19-28.
- Demmke, C., & Bossaert, D. (2004). Ethics in the public services of the European Union member states. Survey for the 42nd meeting of the directors-general of the public service of the European Union member states. Eupan. https://www.eupan.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/2004_1_2_IE_NL_Ethics_in_the_Public_Services_of_EU_Member_States.pdf
- Dragoman, I., Ungureanu D. Încrederea socială în administrația publică. In: E Bălan, C Iftene, M Văcărelu, coordonatori. *Reforma Statului. Instituții, proceduri, resurse ale administrației publice*. [State reform. Institutions, procedures, resources of the public administration] (pp. 29-36). Wolters Kluwer.
- European Commission. (2021). Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council - 2021 Annual Report. European Commission.
- General Secretariat of the Government of Romania. (2018). Ordinul nr. 600 din 20 aprilie 2018 privind aprobarea Codului controlului intern managerial al entităților publice [Order no. 600 of April 20, 2018 on the approval of the Code of internal managerial control of public entities]. *Official Journal of Romania*, 387 from May 7, 2018.
- Government of Romania. (2019). Administrative Code, adopted by Government Emergency Ordinance no 57/2019. *Official Journal of Romania*, 555 from July 5, 2019. [https://static.anaf.ro/static/10/Anaf/legislatie/OUG_57_2019.pdf](https://static.anaf.ro/static/10/Anaf/legislatie/ OUG_57_2019.pdf)
- Government of Romania. (2021). Hotărârea nr. 931 din 1 septembrie 2021 privind procedura de desemnare, atribuțiile, modalitatea de organizare a activității și procedura de evaluare a performanțelor profesionale individuale ale

- consilierului de etică, precum și pentru aprobarea modalității de raportare a instituțiilor și autorităților în scopul asigurării implementării, monitorizării și controlului respectării principiilor și normelor privind conduita funcționarilor publici [Decision no. 931 of September 1, 2021 regarding the appointment procedure, the attributions, the way of organizing the activity and the procedure of evaluating the individual professional performances of the ethics advisor, as well as for approving the way of reporting the institutions and authorities in order to ensure the implementation, monitoring and control and rules on the conduct of civil servants]. *Official Journal of Romania*, 893 from September 17, 2021.
<https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/246437>
- Huberts, L. (2014). Governance and Integrity. In L. Huberts (Ed.), *The Integrity Governance. What it is, What we Know, What is Done and Where to go* (1st edition) (pp. 66-78). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kukutschka, R. M. (2021). Global Corruption Barometer European Union 2021. Citizens' views and experiences of corruption. *Transparency International*.
https://images.transparencycdn.org/images/TI_GCB_EU_2021_web_2021-06-14-151758.pdf
- Matei, O. (2010). Legislația etică în administrația publică românească [Ethical legislation in the Romanian public administration]. *Revista de Administrație Publică și Politici Sociale [Journal of Public Administration and Social Policies]*, 4(5), 80-98.
- National Agency of Civil Servants. (2021). *Raport privind respectarea normelor de conduită, anul 2020, trimestrul I-IV* [Report on compliance with the rules of conduct, year 2020, quarter I-IV]. National Agency of Civil Servants.
http://static.anaf.ro/static/10/Bucuresti/rap_n_cond_dgrfpb_2020.pdf
- National Agency of Civil Servants. (2022). Order no. 234 of March 21, 2022 for establishing the priority areas of training and professional development and the specific topics of training and professional development programs for civil servants. *Official Journal of Romania*, 306 from March 30, 2022.
<https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/253296>
- Nicolae, R., Stan, V., & Bujder, I. (2010). *Ghid practic pentru activitatea funcționarilor publici cu atribuții de consiliere etică și monitorizare a respectării normelor de conduită* [Practical guide for the activity of civil servants with ethics counseling and monitoring of compliance with the rules of conduct]. Alpha MDN.
- Niculescu, O., & Ionescu, G. (2011). *Mini dicționar de management. Cultura organizațională* [Mini dictionary of management. Organizational culture]. Pro Universitaria.
- Nye, J. S. (2002). Corruption and Political Development: A Cost-Benefit Analysis. In A. J. Heidenheimer, M. Johnston & V. T. Levine (Eds.), *Political Corruption: A Handbook* (3rd edition) (pp. 963-983). Transaction.

- Parliament of Romania. (1996). [Law no. 115 of 16 October 1996 on the declaration and control of the wealth of dignitaries, magistrates, certain persons in managerial and supervisory positions, and public officials]. *Official Gazette Romania*, 263.
- Parliament of Romania. (2003). [Law no.161 of April 2003 regarding some measures to ensure transparency in the exercise of public dignities, public functions and in the business environment, preventing and sanctioning corruption]. *Official Gazette of Romania*, 279.
- Parliament of Romania. (2004). [Law no.7 of 18 February 2004 regarding the Code of Conduct of Civil Servants]. *Official Gazette of Romania*, 525.
- Parliament of Romania. (2007). [Law no.144 of 21 May 2007 regarding the establishment, organization and operation of the National Integrity Agency]. *Official Gazette of Romania*, 535.
- Parliament of Romania. (2007). [Law no.50 of 13 March 2007 for the amendment and completion of Law no.7 of 18 February 2004 regarding the Code of Conduct of Civil Servants]. *Official Gazette of Romania*, 194.
- Parliament of Romania. (2010). [Law no.176 of 1 September 2010 regarding integrity in the exercise of public functions and dignities, for the amendment and completion of Law no.144 of 21 May 2007 regarding the establishment, organization and operation of the National Integrity Agency, as well as for the modification and completion of other normative acts]. *Official Gazette of Romania*, 621.
- Păunescu, M. (2008). *Management public în România* [Public management in Romania]. Polirom.
- Project team members of SIPOCA 432. (2020). Ghid de bune practici privind consolidarea mecanismelor de control administrativ la nivelul autorităților publice centrale. „Mecanisme eficiente de control administrativ și de prevenire a corupției (SIPOCA 432)” [Good Practice Guide for the Implementation of Standard 1- Ethics and Integrity. - deliverable of the project „Mecanisme eficiente de control administrativ și de prevenire a corupției – cod SIPOCA 432]. Control.gov.
<http://control.gov.ro/web/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Ghid-de-bune-practici-privind-consolidarea-mecanismelor-de-control-administrativ.pdf>
- Project team members of SIPOCA 61. (n.d.). Ghidul prevenirii incidentelor de integritate în administrația publică locală - deliverable of the project „Consolidarea sistemelor de integritate – cea mai bună strategie de prevenire a corupției în administrația publică [Guide to preventing integrity incidents in local public administration - deliverable of the project "Strengthening integrity systems - the best strategy to prevent corruption in public administration]. MDLPA.
<https://www.mdlpa.ro/uploads/articole/attachments/5fd21eadec79d069383217.pdf>

- Sandu, A. (2015). *Etica profesionala si transparenta in administratia publica [Professional ethics and transparency in public administration]*. Didactic and Pedagogical Publishing House.
- Sandu, A. (2022). *Etică și deontologie profesională [Professional ethics and deontology]*. Lumen.
- Socaciu, E., Vică, C., Mihailov, E., Givea, T., Mureșan, V., & Constantinescu, M. (2018). *Etică și integritate academică [Ethics and academic integrity]*. University of Bucharest Publishing House.
- World Bank Group. (1997). *Helping Countries Combat Corruption: The Role of the World Bank*. World Bank.
<http://www1.worldbank.org/publicsector/anticorrupt/corruptn/corrptn.pdf>