

ETHICS MANAGEMENT IN PUBLIC SECTOR FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF PUBLIC SERVICES' CONSUMERS

Lect. Silvia Puiu Ph. D
University of Craiova
Faculty of Economics and Business
Administration
Craiova, Romania

Abstract: The paper analyzes ethics management in public sector through the perspective of public services' consumers in Romania. The areas taken into account are education, medical system, parliament, police, army, public administration and other public institutions. The objective of the paper is to understand the mechanism of corruption in public sector, as the most important part of unethical behavior in this sector. The methodology used consists of a quantitative research conducted in October 2014 on a number of 171 people. The questionnaire was distributed online, respecting the confidentiality of respondents. The results of the study could be used by public managers or by government to create adequate strategies in order to increase the ethical level in public sector and also developing a better image of these institutions.

JEL classification: M12, M14

Key words: ethics management; public sector; corruption; public services; Romania

1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of the paper is to understand the perspective of public services' consumers regarding ethics in public institution of Romania and to provide solutions in order to change the bad image we have as a country in the eyes of our citizens but also in the eyes of foreigners, at least when we talk about corruption or other ethical issues.

The objectives of the article are the following ones:

- Identify the main ethical problems in the public sector
- Establish the causes
- Offer solutions to improve this image
- Establish the role of ethics management in this vicious circle

The article is written taking into consideration the perception of public services' consumers on the subject of ethics and ethics management in the public sector of Romania and when we talk about public sector, we refer to education, health, police, public administration, justice, Parliament, army and other public institutions.

The issues approached in the article refer to the following:

- Perception on the corruption in the public sector

- Perception on the efficiency of the measures taken by public authorities to fight against corruption
- Measures taken by the respondents if they would be in an unethical dilemma
- Perception on some tools of ethics management and on their utility

Steinberg and Austern (1990) indirectly define ethical dilemmas in public sector as those situations in which the personal and professional integrity of public employees are tested. The authors realized a study on 1000 public employees that had to express their opinions regarding 14 potential ethical dilemmas.

This article is a part of a project that analyses different aspects of ethics in public sector of Romania and different perspectives. In my research, I always had the feeling that ethics is not seen as a serious subject, but scientific research deals with precise facts not subjective feelings. I searched about this opinion of mine and I can conclude that ethics and ethics management is not seen as a serious issue, at least in the public sector of my country.

Hausman and McPherson (1993) wrote an article called Taking Ethics Seriously: Economics and Contemporary Moral Philosophy, in which they give four reasons for economists to take ethics into consideration and be interested in moral dilemmas:

- Morality of economists influences their behaviors and also the outcomes
- Standard welfare rests on strong moral norms
- Conclusions of economics must be linked to the moral commitments that drive public policies
- Positive and normative economics are intermingled.

Everybody agrees that corruption is a serious problem, but corruption is in fact a facet of ethical problems. But too many people see just the legal aspect and not the ethical one of a matter. An increased interest in ethics must lead to a more ethical climate and to a cleaner society. Ethics and laws do not always overlap, sometimes what is unethical is not illegal or what is legal is not always ethical. So, ethics has also its importance, like laws and should be taken more serious by people in all areas of economy.

2. METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this article consists of a quantitative research conducted in October 2014 on a number of 171 people from Romania, having different profiles as consumers of public services. The questionnaire was distributed online; even there appeared a risk of not having an equal proportion of the categories in the study, we preferred this method because the issues approached in the questionnaire are related to delicate problems and people would definitely have been more skeptic and afraid to be honest.

This was not just my perception; even the questionnaire was completely anonymous, people were still afraid and keep asking me if there is a way someone will find out what they said there. So, a face to face questionnaire would have brought me fake answers from people being afraid. I am aware of the limits brought by an online study where I could not control the categories and the number of respondents in one

category or another. But in qualitative terms, I am convinced that the answers are more honest and precise and more representative than in the case of a face to face questionnaire.

The questionnaire was made in Google forms and the data gathered were introduced in SPSS, where we determined some indicators and tried to see a tendency that could explain the perspective of public services' consumers on ethical issues they notice and on the tools that could be used to raise the ethical climate in public institutions.

3. RESULTS OF RESEARCH

The hypotheses of this research are the following:

H1: *In citizens' perception, anti-corruption measures of public managers were inefficient, revealing a bad image in society.*

H2: *From the tools of ethics management, punitive measures are seen as more efficient than those focused on prevention, like ethical trainings, ethical codes or ethical committees.*

The online research revealed that youngsters were more open to answer these questions, 61% of the respondents being between 18-35 years old, 33% between 36 and 60 years and just 6% people being more than 60 years (table 1).

Table no. 1 Distribution of respondents according to their age

Age (years)	Percentage
18-35	61%
36-60	33%
>60	6%

Source: Data processed in SPSS

From the total of 171 respondents, 46% graduated high school or an after high school program, 30% a bachelor degree, 19% a master degree and the rest of them (5%) have doctoral and postdoctoral studies.

Regarding the sector where they work, 44% of the respondents are in the private sector, 23% in the public sector and the others -33% - do not work or they did not offer an answer to this question.

In my opinion, perception on corruption or other ethical problems in the public sector is not influenced in a direct way by the sector we work, the income or the studies we have, because all of us interact with public sector and are beneficial of the public services in education, health, justice and so on.

Even if the income that people earn does not influence the perception on corruption, it is certain that people with a lower income are more affected by the economic consequences of corruption or other unethical behaviors in the society we live. In table 2, we see a distribution of respondents' income:

Table no. 2 Distribution of income

Income (lei) 1 euro=4.43 lei	Percentage
< 1000 lei (226 Euro)	31%
1000 lei -2000 lei (226 Euro – 450 Euro)	32%
2000-3000 (450 Euro – 676 Euro)	11%
> 3000 lei (676 Euro)	8%
N/A	18%

Source: Data processed in SPSS

Most of respondents have their income between 1000 and 2000 lei (32%) followed with a little difference by those who earn less than 1000 lei. 18% of the respondents do not have a job or are retired. Those who have a decent income are in a minority, 11% between 2000 and 3000 and just 8% more than 3000.

Perception of respondents regarding the measures taken by public managers to fight against corruption showed inefficiency. The descriptive statistics in table 3 reveals a bad image of public managers in terms of anti-corruption measures.

Table no. 3 Descriptive statistics regarding anti-corruption measures of public managers

	Percentage	Mean	Standard deviation
1 – Very inefficient	31.6%	2.08	0.997
2- Inefficient	39.2%		
3- Medium	22.2%		
4- Efficient	3.5%		
5 – Very efficient	3.5%		

Source: Data processed in SPSS

We notice that more than 70% of the respondents appreciate that the measures taken by public managers were very inefficient or inefficient and just a small proportion – 7% see them as efficient or highly efficient. The mean is 2.08 highlighting this bad image people have on the efficiency of anti-corruption measures in public institutions of Romania.

The questionnaire I conducted was inspired from other questionnaires related to perception of citizens on corruption. Some questions were really direct and aggressive in my opinion, but I asked them. If it were a face to face questionnaire, I definitely could not get sincere answers to the following question: *In the last 12 months, you or a member of your family bribed someone?*

From 171 respondents, 25% answered yes, 65% no and 10% did not want to answer. Those who submitted my questionnaire kept writing me in private to ask if there is a chance someone would know what they answered. This fact revealed me more than their answers at this question. I do not know for certain if the number of those who needed to bribe someone is higher than they said, but definitely there is a high probability for that, because of respondents' fear.

The first hypothesis - *In citizens' perception, anti-corruption measures of public managers were inefficient, revealing a bad image in society* - is validated if we look at the quantitative data in table 3 and the qualitative data above that reveals the fear of saying the reality.

Obviously, there is corruption in Romania and the perception of corruption in our country measured by Transparency International highlights this idea. Corruption Perceptions Index (2014) of Romania places our country on the 69th position out from 175 countries (figure 1), with a score of 43 (where 0 is very corrupt and 100 means very clean).

RANK	COUNTRY/TERRITORY	SCORE	RANK	COUNTRY/TERRITORY	SCORE	RANK	COUNTRY/TERRITORY	SCORE
1	Denmark	92	24	Bahamas	71	47	Costa Rica	54
2	New Zealand	91	25	United Arab Emirates	70	47	Hungary	54
3	Finland	89	26	Estonia	69	47	Mauritius	54
4	Sweden	87	26	France	69	50	Georgia	52
5	Norway	86	26	Qatar	69	50	Malaysia	52
5	Switzerland	86	29	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	67	50	Samoa	52
7	Singapore	84	30	Bhutan	65	53	Czech Republic	51
8	Netherlands	83	31	Botswana	63	54	Slovakia	50
9	Luxembourg	82	31	Cyprus	63	55	Bahrain	49
10	Canada	81	31	Portugal	63	55	Jordan	49
11	Australia	80	31	Puerto Rico	63	55	Lesotho	49
12	Germany	79	35	Poland	61	55	Namibia	49
12	Iceland	79	35	Taiwan	61	55	Rwanda	49
14	United Kingdom	78	37	Israel	60	55	Saudi Arabia	49
15	Belgium	76	37	Spain	60	61	Croatia	48
15	Japan	76	39	Dominica	58	61	Ghana	48
17	Barbados	74	39	Lithuania	58	63	Cuba	46
17	Hong Kong	74	39	Slovenia	58	64	Oman	45
17	Ireland	74	42	Cape Verde	57	64	The FYR of Macedonia	45
17	United States	74	43	Korea (South)	55	64	Turkey	45
21	Chile	73	43	Latvia	55	67	Kuwait	44
21	Uruguay	73	43	Malta	55	67	South Africa	44
23	Austria	72	43	Seychelles	55	69	Brazil	43
						69	Bulgaria	43
						69	Greece	43
						69	Italy	43
						69	Romania	43
						69	Senegal	43
						69	Swaziland	43
						76	Montenegro	42
						76	Sao Tome and Principe	42
						78	Serbia	41
						79	Tunisia	40
						80	Benin	39
						80	Bosnia and Herzegovina	39
						80	El Salvador	39
						80	Mongolia	39
						80	Morocco	39
						85	Burkina Faso	38
						85	India	38
						85	Jamaica	38
						85	Peru	38
						85	Philippines	38
						85	Sri Lanka	38
						85	Thailand	38

Figure no. 1 Corruption Perceptions Index, 2014

Source: http://issuu.com/transparencyinternational/docs/2014_cpibrochure_en/1?e=2496456/10375453

This figure shows us the bad perception of our country comparative with other countries in the world. We see that Denmark has the highest score, being close to the 100. At the question of bribe and the sector where they tried to bribe someone, respondents checked in majority medical system. But the question revealed that the number of those that checked a sector was 65, even if at the question where they had to say if they did or did not bribed someone, their number was 43.

As I thought, the number is higher but people are afraid to tell. Reconsidering, the percentage of those who tried to bribe someone in order to solve their problems was 38%, not just 25% as we calculated above. In table 4, we can see the distribution of the sectors where respondents said they bribed someone, health sector being the most important one.

Table 4 Distribution of bribe

The subsector	Percentage
Private sector	1.54%

Legislative system	3.08%
Health system	63.08%
Education	6.15%
Police	9.23%
Army	1.54%
Public administration	9.23%
Other public institutions	6.15%

Source: Data processed in SPSS

Note: n=65 respondents

We notice that 63% of the respondents or someone in their families bribed someone in the health system, but this is because our medical system has a bad image and people, when they get sick, are afraid of not getting the right treatment if they do not pay the doctor, the nurses or buying themselves the medicines.

Health system is followed by police and public administration, each with 9.23%, education and other public institution, with 6.15%, legislative system with 3.08% and army 1.54%. Army is seen as more clean than other areas of public system in the respondents' perception.

On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means very corrupt and 5 very clean, I inquired respondents what is their perception regarding the level of corruption in the following areas of the public sector:

- Parliament
- Justice
- Police
- Army
- Education
- Health
- Public administration

Corruption perceptions related to Parliament

The descriptive statistics of the question - On a scale from 1 to 5, how do you appreciate the level of corruption in the Parliament? – reveals that more than 80% of the respondents perceive Parliament as corrupt and very corrupt (table 5). In a normal life, legislative force represented by Parliament should be seen as clean and morally intact.

Table no. 5 Descriptive statistics regarding corruption perceptions on Parliament

	Percentage	Mean	Standard deviation
1 – Very corrupt	56.7%	1.76	1.125
2 - Corrupt	25.7%		
3 - Average	8.2%		
4 - Clean	3.5%		
5 – Very clean	5.9%		

Source: Data processed in SPSS

More than 50% of the respondents see Parliament as very corrupt, and this fact is strengthened by the mean that is 1.76 and the standard deviation that is 1.125. This fact can be connected also with the high number of people in the Parliament (588).

Corruption perceptions related to Justice

The perception related to justice seems better than that related to the Parliament, but the general image is also bad, this area also been considered corrupt by most people, as we can see in table 6. The mean is 2.18, a bit higher than the previous one and the standard deviation is 1.104.

Table no. 6 Descriptive statistics regarding corruption perceptions on Justice

	Percentage	Mean	Standard deviation
1 – Very corrupt	33.3%	2.18	1.104
2 - Corrupt	31.6%		
3 - Average	22.2%		
4 - Clean	9.4%		
5 – Very clean	3.5%		

Source: Data processed in SPSS

The report on justice made by European Commission in 2014 shows a progress of Romania regarding the fight against corruption, more and more officials being brought in the attention of the public with their acts of corruption.

Corruption perceptions related to Police

The situation is similar when people revealed their perceptions on corruption of police, as an institution. More than 62% of the respondents perceive police as corrupt and very corrupt, as we can notice in table 7.

Table no. 7 Descriptive statistics regarding corruption perceptions on Police

	Percentage	Mean	Standard deviation
1 – Very corrupt	33.9%	2.19	1.09
2 - Corrupt	28.7%		
3 - Average	24.6%		
4 - Clean	10.5%		
5 – Very clean	2.3%		

Source: Data processed in SPSS

Philippe Gustin, the ex ambassador of France in Romania was saying in an interview at the beginning of 2014 that everyday corruption in this country has become a normality and mentalities should change. The official mentioned education, health system and police among the domains where bribe has become a custom. This fact tells a lot about our country’s image abroad.

This and other opinions too should be a signal for all of us to try reduce corruption at a low level, be more honest and let authorities know about unethical

behaviors when they appear. In fact, this is about saying no to passivity and old mentalities and saying yes to awareness.

Corruption perceptions related to Army

Army or people working in the army have a better image comparing with the other public domains, 35.1% of the respondents considering this sector as clean and very clean and just 32.7% as corrupt and very corrupt, as we can see in the descriptive statistics of table 8.

Table no. 8 Descriptive statistics regarding corruption perceptions on Army

	Percentage	Mean	Standard deviation
1 – Very corrupt	14.6%	2.91	1.105
2 - Corrupt	18.1%		
3 - Average	32.2%		
4 - Clean	31.6%		
5 – Very clean	3.5%		

Source: Data processed in SPSS

The better image is highlighted also by a higher mean (2.91), the highest from all the subsectors taking into consideration. No mean passed the threshold of three, meaning an average image related to corruption.

Corruption perceptions related to Education

After the army, education has the second better image regarding corruption, the mean at this question being 2.63 and the standard deviation 1.057. The percentages from table 9 strengthen this perception of respondents.

Table no. 9 Descriptive statistics regarding corruption perceptions on Education

	Percentage	Mean	Standard deviation
1 – Very corrupt	18.1%	2.63	1.057
2 - Corrupt	22.2%		
3 - Average	43.3%		
4 - Clean	11.7%		
5 – Very clean	4.7%		

Source: Data processed in SPSS

Those who checked an average corruption in education sector are the majority - 43.3%, few said education is clean or very clean (16.4%) and an important part said corrupt and very corrupt (40.3%). The situation looks better than that of parliament, justice, police or health system.

Corruption perceptions related to Health system

After the bad score of corruption in parliament according to respondents' perception, health system registers also an impressive number of people that see this subsector as corrupt and very corrupt – 70.8% (table 10).

This can also be connected with their answer at the question regarding the sector where they or someone in their families needed to bribe someone. The mean is 2.01, the second worse score after legislative system and the standard deviation - 1.138.

This fact, this reality in Romania is not easy to surpass because we cannot say it is just mentality and passivity. In my opinion, here we face with a stronger feeling and this is the fear of people that they or someone in their family will not get the right treatment and the adequate attention if they do not pay the doctors or nurses. And this is not just a perception or a false feeling, a lot of doctors really expect money or gifts in order to do their job.

Table no. 10 Descriptive statistics regarding corruption perceptions on Health system

	Percentage	Mean	Standard deviation
1 – Very corrupt	43.9%	2.01	1.138
2 - Corrupt	26.9%		
3 - Average	17.5%		
4 - Clean	7.6%		
5 – Very clean	4.1%		

Source: Data processed in SPSS

Corruption in health system and the low quality of medical services are the weaknesses of the system, according to a study coordinated by Health Ministry and Association for Democracy Implementation in 2014. The study revealed that despite of the bad image of public medical care institutions, people still use them in most cases, because the services are most of the time free or cheaper than in the private sector, even if the quality is worse. Of course, this fact has to be correlated with a low level of living, in a country where we have a low purchasing power and a minimum wage of 200 euro (150 euro - the net salary).

Corruption perceptions related to Public Administration

On a scale from 1 (very corrupt) to 5 (very clean), the mean for this question is 2.36 at a standard deviation of 1.151, as we can see in table 11. This highlights the corrupt environment in public administration, as well as in the other areas of public sector, strengthening the image of a corrupt country, as Transparency International places us on a 69th place out from 175 countries, having only 43 points from 100. So, we are in the bad half in Corruption Perception Index in 2014.

Table no. 11 Descriptive statistics regarding corruption perceptions on Public Administration

	Percentage	Mean	Standard deviation
1 – Very corrupt	29.8%	2.36	1.151
2 - Corrupt	25.7%		
3 - Average	26.9%		
4 - Clean	14.0%		
5 – Very clean	3.6%		

Source: Data processed in SPSS

As we can notice, most of the respondents perceive public administration as very corrupt (29.8%), and if we add the percentage of those who see it as corrupt (25.7%), the cumulative percentage for corrupt and very corrupt becomes more than 55%. On the other side, those who perceive public administration as clean or very clean are just 17%, because an important part mentioned an average level of corruption in this area of public sector.

Causes of corruption

At the question related to causes of corruption in public sector in their opinion, respondents were allowed to check more than one cause if they thought it was necessary. The causes are: the low level of wages, the greed, a collective mentality, pressures of the public services’ consumers and also the cultural and historical tradition of the country. Because people chose or two causes, the total percentage is higher than 100%, as we see in table 12.

Table no. 12 Causes of corruption in public sector

Causes	Percentage
The low level of wages	58%
Greed	50%
A collective mentality	47%
Pressures of the public services’ consumers	12%
The cultural and historical tradition of the country	19%

Source: Data processed in Google Docs

We can see that the low level of wages is also the main cause of corruption in public services’ consumers’ perception, as it is stated in the professional literature (Mauro, 1998; Tanzi, 1998; Rijckeghem and Weder, 2001; Muttreja, 2012). Of course, this doesn’t necessarily mean that if we raise wages in public sector, corruption will decrease, but definitely the number of corrupt people will, even if we can argue that those who will risk a higher salary will ask a higher bribe, too.

I debated this problem of corruption’s causes at a few conferences with some researchers and they said – *There are a lot of people that are corrupt and they earn very much? So, what’s the problem?*

In the case of those people, we can say that greed is also an important cause of corruption. I did not find this cause in the literature, but in my opinion, it is also a very psychological cause and should be taken into consideration.

Mentality and passivity of citizens are also an important cause for corruption, 47% of the respondents appreciating so, in accordance with what the literature in this area states (Mauro, 1998; Păceșilă, 2004). A lot of corrupted societies reach a moment in which citizens do not react in front of corruption, because this seems normal to them, people are not anymore surprised by corruption, but by honest behaviors.

In my subjective opinion, I compare these societies with the atmosphere we meet in the amazing play of Eugene Ionesco (1959) – Rhinoceros. Rhinocerotization is a real phenomenon that should be stopped, because honesty is the normal and corruption the abnormal. The values reversed in our society and I do not speak just about

Romania, because in the Corruption Perceptions Index of Transparency International, we occupy the 69th position out of 175 countries, so a lot of countries are behind of us.

At the question if they would reveal to an authority a corruption act if they would be aware of it, majority of the respondents said they would (67%). This is a positive and encouraging fact if it is true in reality because sometimes we believe we would do a thing and when we are facing with the reality, we react differently, there intervening a lot of factors, like fear, insecurity and so on.

Those who said will reveal the corruption, mentioned they will go to media (38%), to an anti-corruption public institution (37%), to the institution directly involved in the corruption (14%) – table 13. Media is the most trusted institution, because people know that if the case appears at television, there are fewer chances that they will be mistreated after revealing something.

Table no. 13 The trusted institutions for revealing corruption

	Percentage
To the institution directly involved	14%
To media	38%
To an anti-corruption public institution	37%
To an independent non-profit organization	2%
Others	9%

Source: Data processed in SPSS

Note: n=115 respondents

I also asked those who said they would not report a corruption act, to mention the reason for that and the result highlights what I said above about passivity of citizens and mentality, as we notice in table 14.

Table no. 14 The reasons for not revealing corruption

	Percentage
I do not know where to report	5%
I am afraid of consequences	16%
It would not make any difference	73%
Other reasons	5%

Source: Data processed in SPSS

Note: n=56 respondents

Most of the respondents (73%) consider that revealing corruption does not make any difference, this fact meaning that they became so familiar with the unethical background at such an extent they would do nothing against it. This also means a lack of hope, a general feeling of discouragement.

Those who said they would not reveal corruption because they are afraid represent a small number, just 16%, so the problem in our society is not necessarily the fear but passivity and the lack of trust in the public institutions that should fight against corruption.

Mechanisms, measures, instruments and procedures related to ethics management

I addressed several questions to public services' consumers regarding the way they perceive the efficiency of some instruments or measures that could be used in order to improve the ethical climate, by implementing an ethics management system. These were:

- ethical trainings
- hotlines
- ethical codes
- ethical committees
- control made by ethical experts
- increase of wages in public sector
- anti-corruption campaigns
- more severe sanctions against corrupted people

Ethics management tools should be correlated with marketing campaigns and also with laws that should be more severe with the people that are involved in corruption acts. At the same time, mentality should change and people understand that they must react when they see corruption, because, in my opinion, it is the most important chance of improving the image we have in our country but also abroad.

From the eight aspects they expressed their perceptions, the severe sanctions are appreciated as the most efficient and ethical trainings as the least efficient (table 15).

Table no. 15 Descriptive statistics of the efficiency of some tools in ethics management

Tools/ measures	Level of efficiency	Percentage	Mean	Standard deviation
Ethical trainings	1-Very inefficient	20.5%	2.68	1.201
	2-Inefficient	23.4%		
	3-Average	32.2%		
	4-Efficient	15.8%		
	5-Very Efficient	8.1%		
A hotline for ethical problems	1-Very inefficient	8.2%	3.45	1.261
	2-Inefficient	15.2%		
	3-Average	26.9%		
	4-Efficient	22.8%		
	5-Very Efficient	26.9%		
Ethical codes	1-Very inefficient	18.7%	2.83	1.26
	2-Inefficient	21.6%		
	3-Average	28.7%		
	4-Efficient	19.9%		
	5-Very Efficient	11.1%		
Ethical committees	1-Very inefficient	19.3%	2.75	1.208
	2-Inefficient	21.6%		
	3-Average	32.7%		
	4-Efficient	17.5%		

	5-Very Efficient	8.9%		
The control made by an ethical expert	1-Very inefficient	8.2%	3.12	1.164
	2-Inefficient	22.2%		
	3-Average	33.9%		
	4-Efficient	20.5%		
	5-Very Efficient	15.2%		
Raising the level of wages	1-Very inefficient	8.8%	3.38	1.189
	2-Inefficient	13.5%		
	3-Average	27.5%		
	4-Efficient	31.6%		
	5-Very Efficient	18.6%		
Anti-corruption campaigns	1-Very inefficient	13.5%	3.07	1.23
	2-Inefficient	17%		
	3-Average	33.3%		
	4-Efficient	21.6%		
	5-Very Efficient	14.6%		
More severe sanctions against corrupted people	1-Very inefficient	7%	3.81	1.213
	2-Inefficient	8.2%		
	3-Average	17.5%		
	4-Efficient	31%		
	5-Very Efficient	36.3%		

Source: Data processed in SPSS

Note: n=171 respondents

The highest mean (3.81) is represented by the perception of public services' consumers that if there would be more severe sanctions for those involved in corruption acts, the level of corruption in public sector will decrease and the ethical climate will improve. Ethical trainings are seen as most ineffective (2.68), even if in theory, they are seen as preventive measures, preparing people for ethical dilemmas they can meet in their lives.

Ethical codes seem more efficient than ethical committees (the mean is higher and the percentages too) in the eyes of public services' consumers from my sample. Ethical codes are perceived as efficient and very efficient by 31%, comparative to 26% for ethical committees.

In my opinion, this difference can be explained by the fact that most ethical committees in my country, at least in public sector, have a post factum function, meaning that they rarely constitute and when they do, it is just to sanction an unethical behavior.

The control made by ethical experts is also seen as not very efficient or efficient, the mean for this measure being 3.12 and just 35% of the respondents appreciated it its efficiency. The same situation is with anti-corruption campaigns, where 36% of respondents think these are efficient or very efficient, the mean being 3.07 and the standard deviation 1.23.

Surprisingly, a hotline for revealing ethical problems, conflicts and assuring confidentiality is perceived as having a higher efficiency, 49% of the respondents appreciating so, fact strengthened also by the higher mean that is 3.45.

This is very unusual for our country, because there are no institutions having a hotline for ethical issues even if this tool is presented in the literature as being a part of ethics management. A hotline would offer some protection for whistleblowers and could be correlated with the procedures for their protection, another weak point of public system in Romania.

More than 50% of the respondents consider that raising the level of wages in public sector might be efficient or very efficient, the mean also showing this – 3.38. The professional literature also states that a low salary can lead people to become corrupt, but a raise of the salary may mean only that fewer people will steal, for example, and corruption may still be the same in terms of the amount involved.

Of course, in our country, the number of people working in the public sector is very high, comparative with other countries, so a rapid increase of the wages is not the solution. Maybe restructuring and reorganizing the system is a better option at first and a gradually increase of income, after that. After 1st of January 2015, the minimum wage (the gross income) in Romania will be 975 lei (220 euro), but still very low for a decent living.

So, from all the measures, procedures or tools I asked people, severe sanctions are seen the most efficient, 67% of the respondents appreciating so and only 15% considering that this will not be efficient. The mean of 3.81 is the highest, reaching almost the threshold of 4 (corresponding to efficient), strengthening this perception of people.

This should mean a powerful and a correct justice, but justice itself has its problems of corruption and image, so the problem, the causes and the solutions are more complicated they may appear at a first sight.

Taking all these aspects in consideration, we can conclude that hypothesis no. 2 - *From the tools of ethics management, punitive measures are seen as more efficient than those focused on prevention, like ethical trainings, ethical codes or ethical committees* – is validated, but in my opinion, solutions must be focused on more aspects and not only on punitive measures. We have to be ethical because this is the right thing and not because we are afraid of the consequences.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Public services' consumers consider that the measures of the government against corruptions are not effective, the general climate affecting the image our country has abroad. The area where people think there is a lot of corruption are parliament, justice, police, health system and the least corrupt are education system and army. Some of the respondents even recognized that they or someone in their family needed to bribe someone in the health system to receive the right treatment.

This is not unusual in Romania, the media showing almost daily a lot of cases of doctors that neglect their patients. So, people are afraid they will also be ignored or not given proper attention, so, in numerous situations, they initiate the corruption chain.

Regarding the causes of corruption, respondents appreciate that the low level of wages, greed and mentality are the most important ones. Most people said they would reveal corruption acts if they would be aware of them (67%). From these

respondents, majority would go to the media (38%) or to a public author responsible for anti-corruption fight (37%).

These percentages are encouraging, but from those who would not reveal corruption, we saw that most of them (more than 70%) believe it would not make any differences if they tell or not. And this reality is a constant in collective mentality, meaning passivity of citizens.

Public services' consumers consider that from all tools and measures that ethics management can provide, severe sanctions are the most efficient. They do not trust very much in the efficiency of ethical trainings, ethical codes or ethical committees. So, punitive measures or an outside motivation for being correct seem more adequate than an internal belief in moral values.

In my opinion, solutions for a more ethical climate in the public system might include the following steps:

- a reorganizing of the system, in order to have a proper number of employees working in the public system. This must be also correlated with strong policies for offering support or facilities for investors and existing companies when they hire unemployed people, because firing people from the public sector is not a good solution if it is not followed by others in order to reintegrate them.
- better recruitment policies to employ people that are qualified and well motivated.
- restructuring of the system must be done with an increase of wages to motivate the staff and also an increase of the control.
- use the expertise of ethical counselors that could offer some ethical trainings that could be helpful for public employees in order to understand the ethical dilemmas that could appear in their activity and to know how to respond properly or at least, have a debate in a group based on ethical problems.
- the implementation of a hotline for employees and other people that want to reveal some ethical issues in the system, having the advantage of being anonymous.
- strong procedures for protecting whistleblowers, that may encourage employees to reveal the problems when they appear, because in this case, they will be protected.
- a good ethical code created after debates with people involved and a better communication of codes because, in a lot of cases, the problem is not that these codes do not exist or are bad, but the dissemination is not done accordingly, in order to be known by everyone that needs.
- implementation of ethical committees in all public institutions, these reuniting on a regular basis not just after an incident, so they should not be post factum structures and the focus must be on preventing the problems.
- members in ethical committees must represent all parts involved in order not to be subjective and in an interest conflict, they should have some qualifications on ethical problems and know the legislation related to the ethical issues (like plagiarism for example).
- campaigns for promoting ethical behavior and encouraging people to react, to inform them where they could reveal the problems if they are aware of some.

These campaigns could raise the awareness of people and gradually change their passivity and old mentalities that nothing changes no matter they do.

- laws that will punish more severely those that are guilty and more often controls related to ethical problems.

All these solutions are not efficient if they are not correlated and if people are not aware of the fact each of us have a moral duty. So, all of us should react against unethical problems and stand for our right to live in a more ethical climate.

Acknowledgements: *This work was cofinanced from the European Social Fund through Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2007-2013, project number POSDRU/159/1.5/S/140863, Competitive Researchers in Europe in the Field of Humanities and Socio-Economic Sciences. A Multi-regional Research Network.*

REFERENCES

1. Association for Quality of Services in Health System of Romania and Perception on Democracy Corruption in the System, www.aid-romania.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/RAPORT-CERCETARE-NATIONALA-calitatea-serviciilor-medicale-Partea-I.pdf, 2014.
2. European Cooperation and Verification Mechanism, Commission http://ec.europa.eu/cvm/docs/com_2014_37_en.pdf, 2014.
3. Hausman, D.M., Taking Ethics Seriously: Economics and Contemporary Moral Philosophy, McPherson, M.S., www.colorado.edu/economics/morey/4999Ethics/ethicsandmoralphilosophy/HausmanMcPherson1993_Edward.pdf, 1993.
4. Mauro, P. Corruption: Causes, Consequences, and Agenda for Further Research., Finance & Development, vol. 35, no. 1, 1998, pp. 11-14.
5. Muttreja, V. Effects of Wages of Government Officials on Corruption in Developing Countries, http://econ.duke.edu/uploads/media_items/vansh-muttreja-thesis.original.pdf, 2012.
6. Păceșilă, M. Aspecte privind combaterea corupției în administrația publică, Revista Administrație și Management Public, no. 2, pp. 114-117, 2004.
7. Rijckeghem, C., Weder, B. Bureaucratic Corruption and the Rate of Temptation: Do Wages in the Civil Service Affect Corruption, and by How Much?, Journal of Development Economics, 65:2, 307-331, 2001.
8. Steinberg, S.S., Austern, D.A. Government, Ethics, and Managers: A Guide to Solving Ethical Dilemmas in the Public Sector, Greenwood Publishing Group, 1990.
9. Tanzi, V. Corruption around the World: Causes, Consequences, Scope and Cures, www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/wp/wp9863.pdf, 1998.
10. Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index of Romania. issuu.com/transparencyinternational/docs/2014_cpibrochure_en/?e=2496456/10375453, 2014.
11. * * * www.realitatea.net/ambasadorul-frantei-la-bucuresti-recomandari-la-final-de-mandat-nu-acceptati-coruptia_1413345.html