

CHARACTERIZING ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE ACROSS DOLJ COUNTY BASED ON HOFSTEDE'S MODEL

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Abstract: The globalization of economic activities pushes a company's success outside the national borders, where the multi-ethnic teams and the mixture of cultures, languages and different work habits pose new managerial challenges, while influencing the decision of international implantation. The existence of nations has favored the intensification of cultural traits specific of each people and collective mental programming. Identification of cultural differences and their influence on management has been the object of a number of different studies and research by famous specialists. In the absence of any generalized studies in Romania, the COMOR project sought to broaden the research of cultural dimensions in the context of organizations throughout the country. The main objective of this work was to analyze the findings recorded in Dolj County and to draw up a preliminary set of conclusions on the particularities of organizational culture among companies in this area. The main research methods employed were the case study, the stratified statistical survey and Hofstede's analysis model.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The period between 1950 and 1960 is marked by the prevalence of the so-called managerial convergence hypothesis, after which differences between management in different countries tended to fade and then disappear as a result of the application of its universal principles. Based on the theories in effect at that time, these principles acted independently from national averages. In 1970, this belief would gradually wither and soon it was observed that these differences do not disappear; on the contrary, they are becoming increasingly discernable, manifesting themselves clearly even at regional level.

The identification of cultural differences and their influence on management has been the object of multiple studies and research conducted by established experts such as Inkeles et Levinson (in Weitekamp and Kerner, 2002), Kluckhohn and

Stodtbeck (in Hills, 2002), Peabody (1985), Hofstede (1980, 2005). Their main preoccupation was to determine the ways in which each country governs over its people or, in other words, to point out the limitations of the theories on the organization and management of nations' intellectual capital, the stated purpose being to highlight the role of culture in organizational management (Table 1). One of its most remarkable achievements is the establishment of a theory on cultural dimensions, which proposes a systematic structure for evaluating the differences between nations and cultures.

The cultural dimensions accounted for are distinct, yet the ones that have been most commonly cited in the recent extensive studies are based on the Hofstede model. A number of studies have aimed to describe the main cultural dimensions that differentiate human groups and to identify the consequences that arise in the management of people, more particularly the very essence of leadership, motivation and organization of their activities.

For various reasons, large-scale surveys that have focused on the study of the cultural specificity of many countries across the globe have overlooked our country on the world map. This has been an obstacle in the process of comprehending the management and the human behavior of Romanian employees at their workplace and affected the development of foreign investments in Romania.

Table 1. Organizational culture analysis models

Inkeles, Levinson (1969)	Kluckhohn, Stodtbeck (1961)	Peabody (1985)	Hofstede (1980, 1994, 2005)
1. Relationship with authority 2. Self-perception 3. Primary conflicts and the ways in which they are solved	1. Perception over the human nature (positive/negative) 2. The relationship between people and their environment (submission/authority) 3. Temporal orientation (past / present) 4. Environmental orientation (to be /to do) 5. Human relations orientation (hierarchical /individualistic)	1.Impulse control 2.Self-affirmation 3.The evaluative dimension	1.Hierarchic distance 2.Apprehension towards risk 3.Individualism/collectivism 4. Masculinity/femininity 5. Long-term/short-term orientation

Source: Propeck J., Arellano R. *Une approche multi-dimensionnelle de la mesure de l'impact du pays d'origine*, as retrieved from www.strategie-aims.com

2. OBJECTIVES

A careful screening of the staff of certain socioeconomic entities can reveal the essential elements of each culture, which can improve the understanding of the intimate operational mechanisms of enterprises located in a national or regional environment. Every organization adheres to a certain form of mental programming that is durable in time, which is partly inherent to the individual, and partly shared with others. Therefore, the mental programming of individuals at the organizational level consists of their collective values. The values that characterize an organization are referential values which, combined, make up the ethics of that enterprise. Generally, a value represents a pronounced human tendency to incline towards a particular situation

instead of another. Established early in life, individual values are interconnected and form systems or hierarchies of values.

Individual values are also known as preferential values and, approached from this perspective, make up the individual morals (de Person, 2001). Individual and organizational ethics morals are not necessarily harmoniously aligned with each other; there emerge conflicts that generate sources of uncertainty across social systems.

Based on these considerations, culture can be defined as a form of collective programming of the human spirit, which allows for a clear distinction between the members of a particular human category from those of another category. In this sense, culture includes some of the most essential value systems across a given culture. Culture is to a community that which personality is for an individual.

As a general rule, the concept of culture is reserved for describing societies or nations, as well as regional and ethnic groups, but it can also be used to describe other human communities, such as enterprises, profession or family, as well as when it comes to describing subcultures. Nations are the most comprehensive human groups that exist and, in most cases, we can singularize mindsets shared by most residents, which can be considered as their culture or as their national character. Foreigners (outsiders) will recognize this character better than the people belonging to that particular nation (insiders).

Societies have and use mechanisms that enable the retention of a culture's stability over a number of generations. The question is whether a culture can be changed under these circumstances, and the answer is affirmative, but only as long as this process is initiated from the outside. Therefore, cultural programming is difficult to change unless the individual is somehow isolated from his native culture. Within a nation or part of a nation, culture only evolves slowly. The most effective way to change the mental programming of individuals is to work on changing their behavior first. This ascertainment is very important, as it conveys one of the fundamental principles of the economic development of societies. Effecting contextual changes induces new behaviors, which, in turn, will lead to new values.

Employing the Hofstede model and making use of an appropriate set of methods, the COMOR project aimed to compensate for this pronounced shortage of internationally consistent information about the behavior of Romanian managers and employees at the workplace, while offering interesting regional and cross-regional information, the latter depending on the nature of the activities.

3. METHODOLOGY

Hofstede's theory builds on the idea that culture can be described and measured using cultural dimensions and power (equality versus inequality), individualism versus collectivism, avoidance / acceptance of uncertainty, masculinity / femininity and temporal orientation.

The entire research was based on the cultural diagnosis established according to the model elaborated by Hofstede and his disciples (Hofstede et al, 2002; 2010; Schwartz, Bardi, 2001; Schwartz, 2006) and was comprised of several instruments. The fundamental instruments were the typical proportional statistical (layered) survey based on questionnaires, methods of measuring and analyzing specific statistical

indicators, methods of verifying the accuracy of the gathered data, graphs and other representations of results.

The research was conducted at the national, regional, county and local levels and, subsequently, the results were interpreted and synthesized in reverse order to provide information to interested partners who were not an active part in Hofstede's research on the cultural phenomenon or in the Globe project.

Research undertakings on the Romanian cultural dimensions based on this model are not a premiere (Luke, 2005; Globe Romania, 2006; Gavreliuc, 2011). These studies, however, have not crossed the sectorial stage and have failed to provide an overview of the particularities of the cultural phenomenon across social economic organizations throughout Romania, as the COMOR projects set out to investigate.

The Dolj county community sample was determined by statistical rigors that were deemed capable to ensure a high reliability of the results obtained from the sample and the basic community. The sample included 22 organizations in 11 different fields of activity that operated in the economy of the area, 5 legal forms and a class divided into four groups, which started from 50 to over 1,000 employees. Eventually, 233 respondents were retained, whose relevance was ensured by a segmentation accounting for age, gender, education and hierarchical position.

Three questionnaires were designed and used for the collection of data. The first comprised 10 questions and was used to obtain general identification information from the respondents based on various criteria (gender, age, family status, education and activity, years of service, hierarchic position). The second questionnaire, which sought to record the value judgments of the persons included in the sample comprised a total of 80 questions, 52 of which were opinion questions over a particular statement, and the remained 28 were reserved for evaluating the common practices within organizations. Each question accounted for both the existing and the desired situation. The third questionnaire targeted leadership and was made up of two separate parts, which aimed to identify the profile of effective leaders and elite leaders. All questionnaires used Lickert attitude scales, with 5 levels for the characteristic of quality, starting from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Questions addressed work satisfaction levels, the perception over particular employment matters, as well as the personal goals, beliefs and main characteristics of the individuals included in the sample. The ultimate objective of the study was to collect information concerning the values of men and women in Romania / Dolj, to process and group the gathered information according to various criteria and to conduct a final analysis to achieve the desired results, consistent and comparable to those of already existing research on a global scale. Cultural identity was defined accounting for five dimensions, to the initial four being added, at the request of the Asian countries, the long-term/short-term orientation dimension.

4. DATA PROCESSING AND ANALYSES

All the data gathered from the survey was subjected to extensive processing, thus facilitating the retrieval of position indicators such as weight (used to express the relevance of companies, respondents and the distribution of opinion on group variables), the majority opinion and the level of interest, indicators of central tendency (arithmetic mean, median, asymmetry), indicators of variation (standard deviation,

coefficient of variation). Table 2 gathers and groups together all these indicators for each of Hofstede's cultural dimensions, including the values calculated for the entire Dolj County.

Table no 2 Average indicators of the cultural dimension in Dolj County

Indicators Dimension	Average (xi)		Standard deviation (σ)		Median (Me)		Asymmetry index (Cas)		Variation index (vi) (%)	
	Pa	Pd	Pa	Pd	Pa	Pd	Pa	Pd	Pa	Pd
1. Distance from power	3,59	4,01	0,24	0,72	3,44	4,10	1,86	-0,38	6,74	18,02
2. Avoidance of uncertainty	3,60	4,37	0,42	0,30	3,58	4,39	0,12	-0,20	11,74	6,84
3. Time orientation	3,68	4,27	0,15	0,15	3,71	4,28	-0,59	-0,16	4,12	3,40
4. Individualism/Collectivism	3,63	4,04	0,32	0,63	3,77	4,21	-1,30	-0,81	8,90	15,58
5. Masculinity/Femininity	3,62	4,10	0,16	0,61	3,56	4,20	1,06	-0,48	4,41	14,77
Overall total of the cultural dimensions	3,62	4,16	0,26	0,48	3,61	4,24	0,23	-0,41	7,18	11,72

4.1 Distance from the power

This dimension corresponds to the degree of inequality expected and accepted by individuals at the macro, middle and micro levels. It is measured based on the value systems of those who hold the least power, more particularly the employees. Unequal distribution of power is, in fact, the very essence of enterprises and organizations and an important means to temporarily coordinate the entropy law.

Hierarchical distance is measured by the perception that the subordinate has over the amount of power held by his or her superior, since this representation will likely determine its behavior within the organization. The greater the distance from the power, the more authoritarian the hierarchical relationships become, and the structure of the society (organization) is more vertical.

The countries that register a high hierarchical distance include European Latin countries (France, Italy, Spain, partly Belgium), the countries of South America, Arab countries and black African countries. Hierarchical distance is smaller in Germanic countries and Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian countries.

The COMOR questionnaires comprised questions that were designed to provide information on the ways of expressing the distance from power, and the ways in which the criticism on and the distance from the hierarchy manifests itself, primarily concerning the ruling hierarchy across the organization, trust, order and the application of privileges, as well as the existing and desired mentality. Figure 1 displays the mean scores recorded for the factors taken into account for identifying and quantifying the distance from power and their profile in the two versions of the questionnaire.

Hierarchy criticism (3.22/3.33). The analysis of central tendency indicators reveal a situation where employees generally accept in a tacit manner the decisions made by the management, even when they consider these decisions to be wrong (Q30). The average score (3.88/2.84) emphasize this position and indicates the need for an attitude of rejection of erroneous decisions taken by the management in the future. In turn, the management is authoritative (Q55), which discourages any debate by the employees concerning its decisions (2.56/3.82). Such a position of leadership is subject to a desire for change, according to the respondents. The influence factor emphasizes a relatively large distance from corporate leadership.

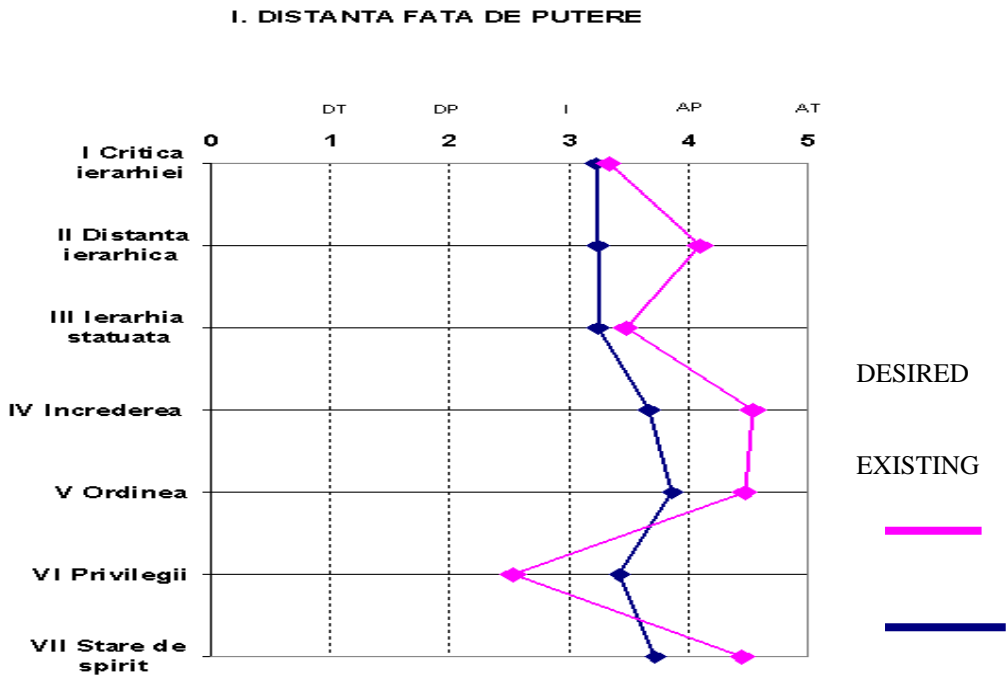


Figure no. 1. The score and profiles recorded for the dimension 'distance from power'

Distance from the hierarchy (3.24/3.08). The answers provided by employees of the sample complement and confirm those already mentioned in the preceding paragraph. Managers show little preoccupation towards the careers of their own successors and rarely get involved in settling the conflicts that arise among the teams they coordinate. Such an attitude can be transferred to the employees as well, which no longer turn to their managers to resolve their own conflicts. We can therefore assume that this distance from the hierarchy draws up a dimension that is felt by the entire staff. When expressing their position on the evolution of these attitudes and behaviors, respondents consider it necessary to strengthen the interaction between managers and employees and to show a higher level of involvement in preparing successors for the top positions in the hierarchy (3.24/4.10). This position represents a desire to minimize the distance from the hierarchy. All other indicators of position and the median (3.47/4.36), the asymmetry coefficient (-1.02/-1.31) and the coefficient of variation

(20.94/14.48) register values that support the average of the responses given by the subjects. The level of interest and the majority opinion also record values that validate the conclusions drawn up so far.

The ruling hierarchy (3.57/3.61). The scores registered for the ways in which this cultural characteristic manifests itself confirm the existence of a distribution of power that favors the top hierarchical power and the overall tendency is to maintain its current privileges. Authority and influence are based on professional skills and competencies, but these are surpassed by the occupied position and by the formal authority. Respondents who would like the key positions in the organization to be occupied by persons that are more competent assert this situation (Q67: 3.88/4.58).

Trust (3.66/4.53). Organizations across Dolj county make no specific efforts to encourage and support their employees towards improvement of their professional performance, nor do young people enjoy a privileged status in this regard. The average scores obtained (3.66/4.53) convey that their managers show no concern towards increasing the autonomy of subordinates, nor provide them the opportunity to select their own ways to achieve their objectives. Such a situation is felt negatively by the respondents, who suggest that the involvement of managers in improving professional performance and autonomy of employees should be increased.

Order (3.87/4.46). Across enterprises with bureaucratic structures of the mechanistic type, the control of the employees is achieved in ways that strengthen control, such as assigning precise work tasks, instructions and procedures to regulate the forms of action, particularly in activities with a decisive role in achieving efficiency. In the light of that, we can assert that, in this respect, enterprises across Dolj county line up to the average level, and the respondents are in favor of a more pronounced identification of their tasks in the job descriptions, as well as increasing the number of procedures and instructions. Another vital factor for organizational order is the motivation of the staff and the methods of gratification used. Placing the focus on the development of performance standards is considered most appropriate. The order equation includes the functions of planning activities and that of communication, whose score reveals a lack of support from managers.

Privileges (3.42/2.52). In general, the employees of organizations included in the sample agree that the rewards are granted by performance at work, but also draw attention upon the fact that other unrelated factors such as political ties, kinship relations, sympathy relations, also intervene in this matter. At the same time, the information provided by the data processing shows that people with a certain rank and those that share various bonds with the corporate management benefit from certain privileges that helps them to fulfill their job tasks better. The respondents, who call for a mitigation of these privileges (3.40/2.07), consider this inappropriate.

The state of mind (3.72/4.44). The score registered for this characteristic of the distance from the power indicates a rather acceptable context and social climate within the organizations in this part of the country. Employees are interested in the results of their managers, have an almost normal social life and are loyal to the organization to the same degree that the organization respects them. As concerns the future outlooks, all respondents agree that some additional effort is required from all parties involved, but especially from the management, to allow for a further improvement of the social climate at the workplace.

To conclude, the distance from power stands out as a quantification of the extent to which the members that have limited or no power accept and expect that the power should be distributed unevenly (Gavreliuc, 2011). This inequality is defined primarily by subordinates, who support and promote it alongside their managers and superiors. Power and inequality stand out as two closely interconnected concepts that are fundamental to any person and any society, but the way in which they correlate with each other is different. Some societies tend to promote inequality more than others do. In our case it becomes apparent that the mean score (3.59/4.01) reveals a relatively high distance from power that registers no significant differences in terms of other variables such as gender, age, education level or hierarchical level. From a structural level, we can note that managers tend to maintain quite a large distance from their employees, which have to respect the orders they receive without any room for objection. The coordination mechanisms that prevail in such a situation are the direct supervision and standardization of work processes or results, and existing structures are generally of the mechanistic bureaucratic type.

In such structures, the employees are not expected to issue their own suggestions or solutions, as the systems in which they operate are considered well developed, and operating changes is something that only management can undertake (de Person, 2001). Such structures are convenient and acceptable to people who show no intention of engaging in innovative and creative activities, and who show little to no entrepreneurial spirit at all. Such a profile is also revealing of the poor involvement of Romanian managers and employees in creative and innovative areas, hence the difficulty to design and promote new products and services on the market.

4.2. Avoidance of uncertainty

This dimension refers to the way in which the members of a society deal with risk and, in this regard, some cultures foster risk taking, while others tend to avoid it. Such a dimension measures the degree of tolerance that a culture finds acceptable in view of the anxiety and uncertainty caused by future events.

To measure the degree of control over uncertainty we have taken into account eight different ways of manifestation (components):

- Embracing the element of novelty;
- The attitude of managers in practicing their job;
- The criticism of power;
- Organization and coordination of work;
- Activity planning;
- Procedures and regulations;
- Ways of approaching problems;
- The position towards the strategic approach.

Across societies that try to control uncertainty, anxiety is manifested by displays of aggression and by externalizing emotions, against which specific safety measures should be enforced. In these countries, the high level of aggressiveness renders conflict and competition between individuals particularly dangerous.

Countries that are more lenient towards the prospect of uncertainty are also those that show greater flexibility towards undertaking personal risks. Personal achievement in these countries entails taking initiative, while for others it is definable

more in terms of reinforcing security, which prevents individuals from undertaking such risks. Countries in which the anxiety of the future is more poignant are also those that practice religions insisting on absolute certainty and that prove intolerant towards other religions.

Uncertainty is a key concept of modern theories of organization, most often linked to the concept of enterprise environment, which the enterprise does not control directly.

Enterprises tend to control uncertain events in two different ways. They control the future needs of the environment that they can predict accurately, subsequently circumventing these by implementing specific plans, standard operating procedures and by respecting industrial traditions.

This cultural dimension deeply affects the life of organizations. In the same way human societies employ technology, law and religion to fight against uncertainty, companies use techniques, rules and rituals. All these elements are designed to increase the tolerability of inevitable incertitude. They can be classified into reunions, management training programs, memoranda and reports, certain parts of the accounting system, most of the planning system, a large part of the control mechanisms and the nomination of experts.

The rules of tolerance against uncertainty may also affect the exercise of power across enterprises. If the standard of a particular social group entails denying uncertainty, those who control it will have more power than those who govern the groups in which it is more easily accepted.

The overall profile for this cultural dimension is shown in Figure 2, which accounts for both the actual context and the situation desired by the respondents.

Embracing the element of novelty (3.35/4.29). Employees perceive the process of change as relatively slow (score 3.35), yet there are some efforts that gradually decrease in intensity in terms of structural changes, leadership style adjustment, learning promotion and organizational culture improvement.

Such a score, whose percentage would rise up to a threshold of 67%, is considered unsatisfactory by the respondents, who would desire a sensibly more intense level (4.24), of at least 85%, for the efforts of change. In conclusion, it is considered that, in the future, the pace of organizational culture change and development should register higher levels in terms of increasing organizational performance.

The attitude of managers in practicing their job (3.60/4.60). The score recorded for this criterion of assessing the levels of work uncertainty (3.60) is higher (72%) than that which measures the embracing the element of novelty within organizations across Dolj county, but fails to rise up to the level of the desires (4.37) of the employees in the sample (87,4%). The managers of companies fail to take actual effective measures (continuous training, communication, ethical gratification etc) that would encourage the ongoing improving of individual and organizational performance substantially, regardless of the length of service.

The situation is similar in terms of training successors for managers and their involvement in creating a favorable social climate within the groups and organizations they lead. All respondents acknowledge that the attitude of managers towards investing

in training, careers management, social climate, should be improved to facilitate the onset of behaviors that favor performance.

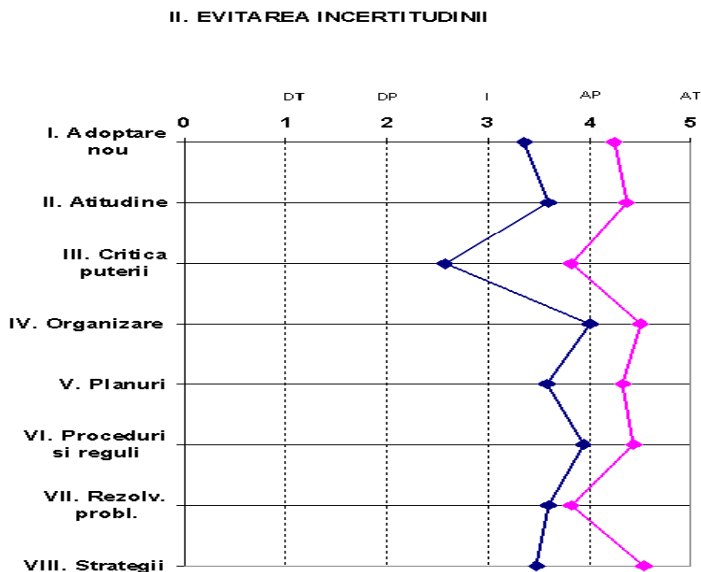


Figure no. 2. The score and profiles recorded for the dimension “avoidance of uncertainty”

The criticism of power (2.56/3.82). The culture of criticism is less apparent across organizations in this geographical area, which disallow questioning the decisions of managers (2.56 and 51.2%). This situation further substantiates the presence of a largely autocratic leadership style, mostly due to the predominance of mechanistic type structures, which employees do not always approve. The score registered for the choice ‘desirable’, 3.82, and 76.4% respectively, still bears the imprint of the current relationships between management and employees, of which the latter proved rather skeptical about the prospect of any dramatic shifts in perspective in this area.

Organization (4.00/4.50). From an organizational perspective, we can assert that the efforts that managers have been undertaking towards ensuring fluency in fulfilling individual tasks and objectives by the employees have gained some visibility lately. Work tasks are clearly defined and are largely accounted for in job descriptions; there also exist instructions and procedures effected in the same direction and which determine a strengthening of the control and an increase in the work routine.

These results are consistent with those that reveal the autocratic leadership style and the mechanistic structure. The average of the opinions offered by respondents scores a high value (4.00 and 80.0% respectively), and the desire they manifest is that of growth (4.50, and 90.0% respectively). The latter aspect can also be interpreted, in our opinion, as a predisposition of the employees towards obedient behaviors, which no longer requires individual effort in terms of involvement, innovation and creativity,

and which is preferable for those who accept a bureaucratic structure of the mechanistic type.

Activity planning (3.58/4.34). The concern for and towards planning for the future does not stand out as an advantage for the enterprise nor for the employees, if we take into consideration the scores registered for this criterion (3.58 and 71.6%, respectively as opposed to 4.34, respectively 86.8%). This conclusion is supported by the concern manifested by the employees for their future plans, by the way in which the organization resorts to experimentation and innovation in the process of change and the way in which it plans its own activities. For the leadership, such a situation can be catalogued as 'subject to improvement' in the future.

Procedures and regulations (3.93/4.44). This criterion complements the position of managers towards the organization and does not deviate far from the score registered in this respect (3.93 and respectively 78.6%, and 4.44, respectively 88.8%). The detailed assignation of tasks and the availability of a satisfactory number of work instructions and procedures are perceived as a positive factor by the employees in terms of carrying out their activities, because it simplifies their work efforts and promotes routine, an element that is often desirable given the convenience it allows for. With regard to certain particular aspects of motivation, especially those related to the gratification of the staff, the focus falls on the achievement of performance indicators and less on managerial charisma. Such a position is explainable, on the one hand, by scarcity of charisma, and on the other hand, by the low wages, which, in Romania nevertheless represent a basic motivational factor, and not one of dissatisfaction. All respondents agree that the situation concerning the matter at issue leaves plenty of room for improvement.

Problem solving (3.59/3.82). The answers provided by the respondents emphasize the fact that there is a certain predetermined priority in terms of the kind of problem solving that directly affects the success of the employees across enterprises in Dolj county, irrespective of the nature of the problems that arise. The opinion expressed about the desired approach to that in the future tends to emphasize the predetermined order and to minimize erratic actions in solving entrepreneurial problems.

The position towards the strategic approach (3,48/4,53). The score registered for this particular manifestation of uncertainty points out to a poor concern from enterprises, and respectively management, over the strategic dimension of their activities. Such a situation is felt mainly at the functional, commercial (marketing) and human resources levels (communication, negotiation, and other activities). We can also note that the respondents perceive the incompatibilities registered as a result of the poor level of concern from the leadership towards strategic matters as very pronounced and desire a significant revival of this approach within their companies.

The avoidance of uncertainty expresses a society's degree of tolerance towards uncertainty and ambiguity, which causes its members to feel uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations, in other words unfamiliar and unusual situations. Cultures that avoid uncertainty attempt to circumvent the occurrence of such situations by effecting laws, safety and security measures, and, at philosophical and religious level, by promoting the belief in absolute truth ('there can be only one truth

and we hold that truth'). People who perform in such structures are more emotional and turn to the inner energy of those structures to find their motivation.

Cultures that accept uncertainty exhibit a higher degree of tolerance in terms of how their opinions are perceived and towards the personal stereotypical position that most people are used to. The members of such a culture strive for minimum regulation, while at the philosophical-religious level they tend to be relativistic, embracing the coexistence of multiple different ways of thinking in the same space of social debate. They are more phlegmatic, more contemplative and more contained in terms of expressing their emotions.

The index recorded for this particular cultural dimension (3.60/4.37) and, respectively, 72.0/ 87.4%, reveals a position of timid attempt at avoiding uncertainty, which reinforces the perception of the employees as more fearful against actual change, which is considered a threat as opposed to an opportunity.

Such an identity profile is indicative of the need for stability, security, safety (Gavriliuc, 2011) and reveals an exacerbation of the fatalistic views on the transformation of 'the world'. Additionally, according to the opinion of the employees included in the sample, such a score should reach significantly higher levels in the future. Both results, much like in the case of those obtained for the other dimensions, are influenced, in our opinion, by the synchronization of the research with the long period of financial and economic recession that started in 2007 and continues to manifest itself to the present day.

4.3. Long-term/short-term orientation

This Hofstede dimension relates to the selective promotion of a number of values derived from Confucian ethics. The factors that have enabled the economic development are targeted at the economy, at perseverance, a sense of modesty and respect for hierarchy. Other factors pertain to tradition and divine protection.

This particular dimension allows for a description of temporal context of a society. Short-term oriented cultures are characterized by the value they attach to traditional methods, the long period of time in which they enable the creation of relationships and, generally, promote the belief that time is cyclical. From such a perspective, the past and the present are interconnected, which means that if something cannot be done today, it can be done tomorrow. Long-term orientation builds on a form of reversed philosophy, which perceives time as being linear, while the focus falls on the future rather than the past. Such a society is goal-driven and values reward systems.

In order to characterize this dimension, multiple different components were analyzed, which exert a direct influence over it, namely managerial skills, the image of the organization, layout (organizational spirit), human relationships, existential security and stability (Fig. 3).

Managerial attitudes (3,59/4,26). The first component of this dimension enjoys special attention because of the multitude of aspects taken into account in its description. Its score (3.58, respectively 4.26) tends towards an average that outlines a rather ambiguous position, which can be interpreted as a lack of interest towards long-term orientation. The expression of this view is supported primarily by the respondents' desire to persevere in achieving long-term objectives, in increasing efficiency, manifesting courage, accepting slowly progressing results, in other words in

matters that currently allow for significant improvement. Therefore, in terms of *seeking new solutions* and managers' position towards change, the general opinion (score 3.41) is that the current efforts are modest, almost imperceptible, and that they should be strengthened considerably (score 4.39) to allow for the generation of an adequate number of new solutions that are well grounded and entail favorable results on the long-term. Another aspect analyzed for this criterion is *the courage of corporate management and employees* to take on and cope with the long-term challenges. Although the recorded score is better than that of the previous sub-criterion (3.76), its importance is, in our view, crucial for long-term orientation. Moreover, this level doesn't rise up to the position of 'partial agreement' of the questionnaire scale, which translates into a considerable amount of doubt with respect to its capability to exert a positive influence over the long-term success of the enterprise. Obviously, the desire expressed by employees reaches the 4.58 threshold, or 91.6%, which means that they are in favor of long-term projects that are safer for ensuring business sustainability and, additionally, more resilient. A notable indicator with relevance towards long-term orientation is also *the approach to the problems* the problem affecting human collectives and individual success in the organization. The values obtained following the processing of the data (3.66/4.65) showcase a situation that reveals tendency towards respecting a particular predetermined order, as well as their resolution according to the order in which they occur. *Work perseverance* is a component that exceeds the 'partial agreement' mark (4.06), which suggests that the behavior of managers reveals the acceptance of slow and gradual results in favor of greater short-term advantages. A long-term orientation is also linked to the *common sense* of the leadership, manifested by modesty, greater freedom granted to employees and the promotion of women in higher positions. If modesty (4.20) scores intriguingly high values, the promotion of women (3.48) and the freedom granted to employees (2.56) reduce the average score to 3.41, which is far off from a long-term orientation.

Organization image (3,98/4,45). The averages registered at this position (3.98, respectively 4.45) indicate a partial agreement regarding the importance that members of the organization manifest towards its image in the environment in which they perform. Such a position signals an attitude and behavior that does not particularly ensure continuity of direction, but rather short-term rebounds that can jeopardize business.

Organizational spirit (3,86/4,48). A company's system can be effective and productive under multiple forms of organization that may entail a more or less direct, respectively a more or less sophisticated form of control. In the light of that, mechanistic bureaucratic structures are correlated with highly detailed divisions of labor and a set of procedures and instructions aimed at ensuring the continuity and quality of a company's entire activities. It is these structures that are most commonly portrayed in the research conducted in Dolj County. The calculated score (3.86) denotes a moderate level of organizational spirit that requires much improvement (4.48).

Human relationships (3,74/4,29). The behavior of employees within the group (score 3.74, 4.29 respectively) is considered natural in an organization that does not show an adequate level of confidence in its future, as was the case in the vast majority of enterprises across the County over the last 10-15 years. Turbulent changes affected

the consistency of groups, whereas values such as friendship, truth, justice, honesty and fairness failed to cement themselves over a short period of calm. The same conclusions remain valid in the case of managers, who cannot become properly involved on the long-term in ensuring the irreversible improvement of human relationships within their systems.

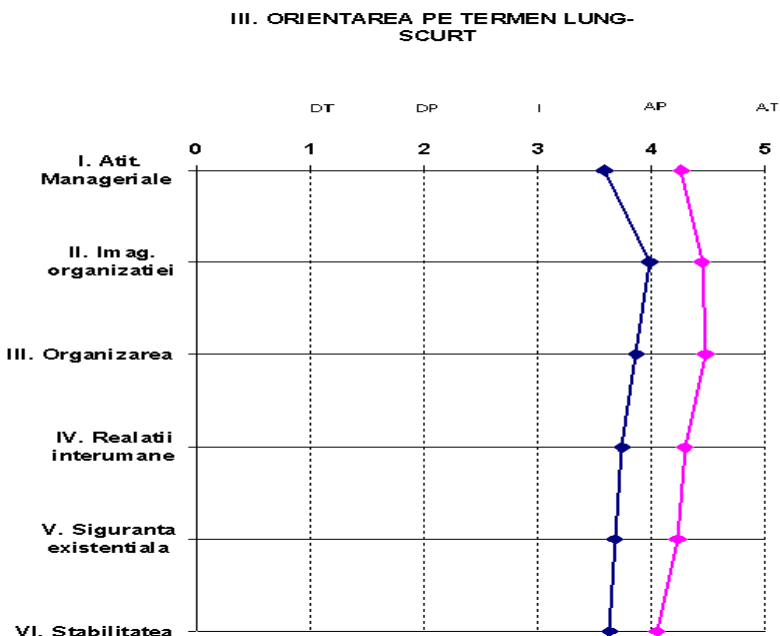


Figure no.3. The score and profiles recorded for the dimension ‘long-term/short-term orientation’

Security of operation (3,67/4,23). When the priorities of managers and employees do not focus on the future, but on the present or the near future, their orientation undoubtedly aims at short-term objectives, which may negatively impact the durability of the organization. In the case of our sample, the concerns of employees (4.01, respectively 3.59) incline more towards solving current problems at the expense of long-term problem solving (3.64, respectively 4.37). This trend is reinforced by the behavior of managers in terms of their successors’ careers (3.41, respectively 4.44). The average score for this criterion (3.67 versus 4.23) attests that the management’s concern about the future of the enterprise is significantly off par.

Stability (3,63/4,05). Social balance and the adjustment of the leadership style to the organization’s structure and realities stand out as a guarantee of its stability and longevity. The Dolj County case can be characterized as follows: some degree of managerial interest (4.08) towards creating, training and leading teams, a reward system that favors neither the individual interests, nor those of the group (3.07) and a priority for formal authority at the detriment of individual skills and competence. The recorded average score and the desired average score (3.63 and 4.05) stand as proof of

the substantial stability problems that organizations are currently faced with and are indicative of the orientation of enterprises, which is rather focused on the short-term.

The long-term/short-term orientation (TO) accounts for a score comparable to that of the two dimensions discussed above, namely 3.68/4.27, or 73.6/85.4%, completely opposite to the 'here and now' practice, which is revealing of a staff that favors the medium-term and long-term focus on organizational and social dynamics, a staff that doesn't follow the logic of 'grab whatever you can while you still can'.

Such an employee does not plan his or her career accounting for continuity and displays a calm and predictable behavior. Although the TO index is much higher than those revealed by other recent studies, this seemingly unnatural situation, is, in our opinion, the result of individual accumulations that have occurred as a normal reaction to what happened so far in the Romanian economic, social, institutional and political environment. There is a broad tendency to blame the political opacity and the overall lack of strategic thinking for the problematic state of the Romanian economy, which led to the onset of the kind of orientation that favors medium-term and long-term planning among employees in the Dolj area.

4.4. Individualism/ Collectivism

The individual and the collectivity, respectively, are concepts that relate to the degree of independence and freedom within the grasp of the members of a particular society. Therefore, human societies differ from one another in terms of the relationships that individuals maintain with other members of the same community. In general, we can assert that community societies perceive the passage of time from the perspective of the group, whereas individualistic societies place value on the passage of time from the perspective of the individual.

The level of technical development and individualistic culture are interconnected. On the one hand, the richest countries are those that have become the most individualistic, while the poorest are those that tend to preserve the values of living a community life.

Community spirit is manifested through increased training requirements, proper conditions for carrying out physical work and proper use of professional skills, which stand out as three aspects of work that emphasize the dependence of the individual on the organization. Individualist spirit is manifested by the time requirements for living a personal life, freedom in exercising work and the capability to take on new challenges; in other words, three issues that emphasize independence from the organization.

Some of the most individualistic countries are the United States, Australia and the UK. France, like all European countries, also sticks by the individualist group. All Arab countries and all developing countries lie among the countries that nurture a community culture.

There is a great connection between individualism and the wealth of a country. The richer a country, the more individualistic the mentality of its people, and the poor a country, the more accented its community spirit. The wealth of a country allows people to live easier lives and to depend less on each other. A high score on this scale equates to a higher level of individualism, whereas a lower score is characteristic of situations in which the focus falls on the group, so what we get is collectivism.

Aside from wealth, historical factors also determine the degree of individualism. A second source of individualism is considered the development of a middle class. This class entails the existence of social mobility and a lower population growth rate, since its families have fewer children. When a country comes into being, the middle class tends to adopt its own system of values based on individualism. The level of individualism in a country entails a number of consequences for enterprises, including:

Relationships between employers and employees are determined based on moral principles in community countries, whereas in individualistic cultures they are determined based on personal principles. In a community culture, they resemble those that exist between a child and its extended family. They are woven on a moral background, and create mutual obligations: protection of the employee by the employer (irrespective of performance), loyalty to the employer from the employee.

In the case of individualistic cultures, the relationships between employers and employees are limited to the workplace environment, which, in turn, are established on the postulate of mutual benefit and calculated based on economic criteria.

Decisions may be taken either privileging personal relationships, or by promoting a balanced approach. Thus, conducting business in a community culture entails tying relationships of friendship first.

The approaches to conflict resolution are also different. In individualistic cultures, a conflict that emerges as a consequence of direct confrontation is considered salutary for everyone. By contrast, in community cultures there is a strong chance that one of the two protagonists will lose their dignity, pride and honor following a conflict, which is unacceptable. Such cultures place an emphasis on maintaining harmony, at least at a formal level, in interpersonal relations.

In order to furnish quality information relevant to the 'individualism/collectivism' dimension across enterprises in Dolj County, the COMOR project analyzed a large number of influential factors, including the self-affirmation needs and personal aspirations of employees and managers, as well as their commitment, attitudes, behavior, motivation, opinions, privileges, underlying decisional structures and subordination (Figure 4).

Self-affirmation and aspirations (3.77/4.04). When it comes down to implementing corporate projects, there is a general tendency to resort to collective work as opposed to individual work (3.95 versus 3.09), and all employees agree on supporting this trend in the future (4.50 versus 2.57). The data obtained from processing the questionnaires allow us to observe that employees focus on achieving organizational goals (3.92/4.51) and are preoccupied with the kind of image their company conveys (4.13/4.55). The collectivist emphasis also becomes apparent in the respondents' desires for the future.

Attachment (3.77/4.21). The bonds that employees share with their managers can be considered partially satisfactory (3.48/4.32), and the same applies to the relationships within work teams (3.52/4.14). Family relationships are also considered a factor of balance and for increasing the work potential. Human relationships are generally well established and employees display good levels of understanding towards each other and are mutually supportive. There is a focus on team cohesion, which the employees seek to improve. As concerns employee behavior, the respondents claim

that there is no evident dominant behavior among their ranks and, in our opinion, the registered score (2.72/2.78) is rather typical of an obedient behavior.

Attitude (3.77/4.21). The atmosphere within the structure of enterprises is generally one that can be considered acceptable in terms of the relationships between employees. However, employee courage is weakly defined, and this is substantiated by the fact that conflicts are not discussed openly in groups or with someone else. In case of errors, the management exhibits a certain degree of tolerance, but this is rather insufficient to improve the organizational climate. The final score (3.38/4.06) shows a modest desire for improvement, which, in our opinion, once again substantiates the lack of courage of employees and managers' dominant position.

Conduct (4.03/4.51). The respondents perceive the behavior of managers as common, expressed generally by a certain modesty, determination, and moderate levels of ambition and accountability. Employees, in turn, have some confidence in the group to which they belong and share the credit evenly on accomplishments. The average calculated is very close to that registered at 'partial agreement' (4.06), and it can be associated with a conduct that allows room for improvement (4.51) according to the respondents.

Motivation (3.48/4.38). The rewards granted to employees, which stand out as a primary motivator, are awarded not only according to their performance, but also according to a number of other unrelated factors (3.52/4.37). Both workers and young people are generally encouraged to strive for improvement in terms of their own performance, but their efforts, according to the respondents, are unsatisfactory. To control motivation and performance, managers impose standards and indicators, but also rely on their own charisma when exerting this form of control. Another factor of motivation, career management, lies at an unsatisfactory level (3.41/3.44). The current design of the payment system does not facilitate, according to the respondents, the maximizing of neither the individual nor group interests, which means that the motivation registered as a result of various factors (including the one mentioned above) is rather average. *Opinions (3.83/4.57)*. Communication and mutual respect are averagely defined for employees, and are not adequately encouraged by managers either.

Privileges (3.42/2.52). The rewards granted across companies in Dolj County take into account the performance of the employees, as well as other unrelated factors, including kinship, political affiliation, sympathy, collateral business, etc. In addition, people with a certain rank and position in the organization enjoy certain privileges that, according to the respondents, should be reduced significantly.

Decisional structures (4.26/4.45). The important decisions concerning the enterprise activity are taken primarily by managers, and to a lesser extent by the common management bodies. The trend shown by the employees interviewed is to increase the importance of collective leadership.

Subordination (3.21/3.30). Subordinates generally accept the decisions of their superiors, even if they disagree with them, but such a situation is considered detrimental to the social climate and motivation levels. The freedom of the employees to select their own work methods and tools is relatively low (3.79/4.42).

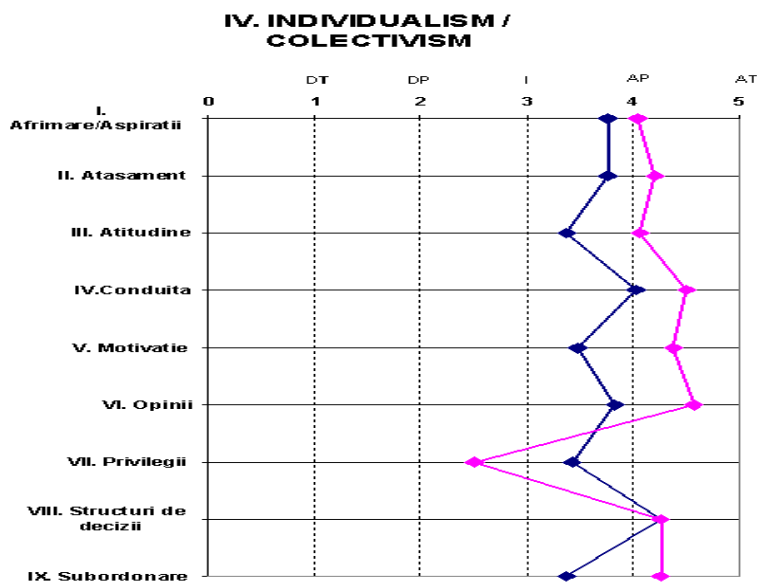


Figure no. 4. The score and profiles recorded for the dimension 'individualism/collectivism'

The main summary indicators of the 'individualism/collectivism' dimension reveal some signs of the individualistic characteristic in Dolj County (3.63/4.06), respectively 72.6/80.8%, a seemingly unlikely result in the light of the majority of studies in the field, in all of which the collectivist dominance prevails. Although the score recorded is surprising, we believe that it can be correlated to considered shift in the employees' perspective, determined by the unfavorable economy, the rising unemployment, the financial crisis and the poor performance of most businesses in the area, many of which are now extinct.

4.5. Masculinity/ femininity

Masculinity and femininity represent the two extremes of a continuum that conveys the emphasis on the values of success and possession (considered male values), as well as those of mutual aid and social environment (considered female values). Gender distribution of workplace roles at work is approached differently in the societies of the world, for which reason it stands out as the foundation of numerous cultural standards. The greater the differentiation of roles, the higher the likeliness that society will embody the so-called male traits. Similarly, the greater the interchangeability between roles, the higher the chance that the society will convey female traits. In societies dominated by men, most women comply with this form of domination. The way of answering the fundamental issue of the importance of relationships at the workplace in correlation with personal interests is what distinguishes the masculine societies from the feminine societies. In conclusion, we can assert that the employees in countries with a male culture 'live to work', while those in countries with a feminine culture 'work to live'.

Hofstede's studies have enabled the correlation between the masculinity index and geographic latitude, just like for the index of distance from power. Countries close to the Equator, with the exception of black Africa, are more masculine, while the feminine characteristics become increasingly apparent as we get closer to the two Poles.

The typical pattern for the gender distribution of roles is also conveyed within and with help from the family, much like in the case of the hierarchical distance (to power). In the first case, the mother's role is decisive, while in the second case it is the father that drives this transfer. The same studies have shown that countries with a Catholic culture tend to be more masculine, whereas those with a Protestant culture tend to be more feminine.

Cultural traits also play a role in fundamental society choices made by the politicians and the citizens of a country. One of these choices relates to growth, which is often the opposite of protecting the natural environment. Female values focus on the environment (quality of life), while male values insist on economic success.

This cultural factor will also have consequences on the organization of work in two main directions:

Job quality. Within masculine cultures, a humanized (higher quality) form of labor is that which enables career building and overall accomplishment. In feminine cultures, the same form of work entails a great deal of cooperation between employees and pleasant working conditions.

Conflict resolution. In masculine cultures, conflicts are open and fierce, while in feminine cultures they are not formalized and are settled through discussion and negotiation.

The COMOR study analyzed this dimension by probing into six of its main aspects, namely ambition, egocentrism, hierarchy, motivation, interpersonal relationships and the role held by managers within the organization (Figure 5).

Ambition (3.85/4.64). Both workers and the youth are not encouraged in a sustained manner to strive for the growth of their individual performance, although both categories share the opinion that such a behavior should be promoted and improved substantially (3.81/4.67). As concerns managers, respondents believe that their actions aim at achieving both their personal interests and those of the company, the first scoring a slightly higher value (3.95/4.58) compared to the other. The behavior of employees reveals masculine traits.

Egocentrism (3.44/4.04). Questions aimed at measuring the firmness of the employees received a response situated at an approximately equal distance from total indifference and partial approval on the questionnaire's scale (3.66). The spirit of mutual aid is slightly stronger (3.92). In businesses across the Dolj County, the employees show no clear signs of domineering behavior, nor share a mutual desire for this particular behavior (2.72/2.78). The final score for this criterion/factor of influence predominantly underscores feminine attitudes and behaviors across the organizational culture.

Hierarchy (3.45/2.92). The leading positions are generally held by men, who account for the majority of the staff across businesses in Dolj County, and the respondents believe that women should have the same access to promotion opportunities as men do (3.88 / 3.15). The professional development offered by the

management does not discriminate between the sexes, while mainly men, given their greater number among the ranks of the staff, undertake physical labor. The male dimension holds a slight advantage.

Motivation (3.48/3.56). The reward system, one of the main motivating factors in Romania, is built around performance, but also accounts for other unrelated factors such as kinship, sympathy, politics, business relations etc. Most respondents desire a substantial decrease in the influence of these factors (3.20/1.95).

Interpersonal relationships (4.06/4.34). The joys and sorrows of employees, which generally accept each other for who they are, are occasionally discussed in groups. The relationships between employees and their superiors are deemed appropriate, although the general consideration is that there is room for improvement in this particular area. Actions pertaining to professional development, the creation of a culture of ‘learning’, are weakly defined, as all respondents consider them necessary and in need of future improvement in the future. Managers engage in the resolution of frictions and conflicts, are lenient towards some mistakes of their subordinates, but their role as negotiators should be improved in the future. The overall score (3.72/4.35) reveals an atmosphere that can be considered in favor of a feminine culture.

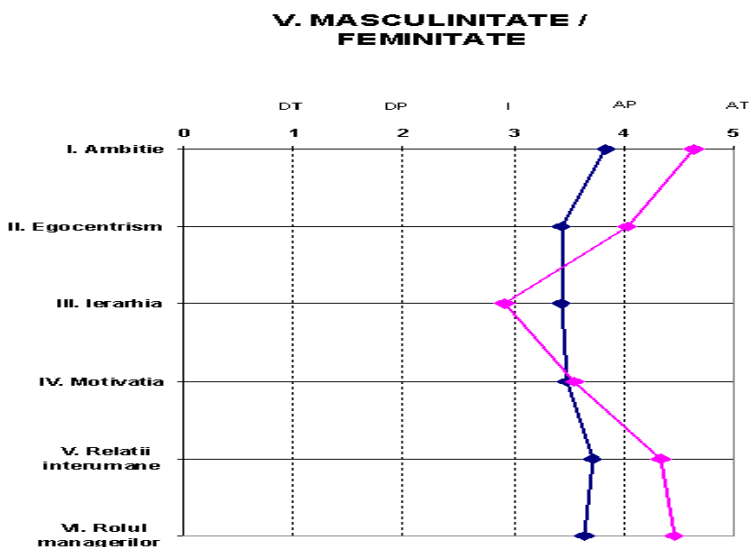


Figure no. 5. The score and profiles recorded for the dimension ‘masculinity/femininity’

Managerial roles (3.59/4.45). The leadership of businesses across Dolj County exhibits interest towards the loyalty of employees to the groups to which they belong, but fail to encourage it in a consistent and decisive manner. Leadership does not grant employees enough freedom in choosing the work methods and tools, maintaining a fairly high level of dependence. The managers here do not engage properly in the process of adopting new strategies or leadership styles that are best fitted to the reality of the enterprises and the environments in which they perform. Their efforts to create a culture of ‘learning’ are lacunary, just like in the case of building motivation and

naming successors. The average score recorded for this criterion (3.65/4.47) indicates a lack of managerial involvement in implementing the strategic and leadership approaches in leading groups and in building motivation, which results in the emergence of cultural traits that are specific of a feminine society.

The score recorded for the entire ‘masculinity/femininity’ dimension (3.62/4.10) and 72.4/82.0 respectively, is different from that of other research conducted in Romania, which marks out an important change in perspective, more specifically a shift in focus from employee relationships to employee tasks in the studied area. The research highlights the male character of the organizational culture across economic entities in Dolj County, which have already begun to strengthen areas such as rational decision-making, perseverance and performance while inhibiting affection, bonding and conviviality. A comparison of the results recorded for Dolj County with those recorded or foreseen by other studies is included in Table 3.

Table 3. The cultural profile of particular countries as envisioned by Hofstede and the cultural profile for Dolj County resulting from the COMOR project

Country	DP	I/C	MF	EI	OT
Belgium	65	75	54	9	
Brazil	69	38	49	76	65
Bulgaria *	70	30	40	85	
Colombia	67	13	64	80	
Czech Republic *	57	58	57	74	13
France	68	71	43	86	
Germany	35	67	66	65	31
Greece	60	35	57	112	
Hungary *	46	80	88	82	50
Italy	50	76	70	75	
Japan	54	46	95	92	80
Poland *	68	60	64	93	32
Portugal	63	27	31	104	
Romania * (Hofstede)	90	30	42	90	
Slovakia *	104	52	110	51	38
Spain	57	51	42	86	
United Kingdom	35	89	66	35	25
United States	40	91	62	46	29
Dolj (Romania) COMOR	72	73	72	72	74

* Estimated values

Source: Management culture & Geert Hofstede, www.elzear.com, Elzear Executive Research

5. CONCLUSIONS

The results produced by the COMOR project at the level of Dolj county are significantly different from those envisioned by Hofstede about Romania. In terms of the ‘distance from power’ and ‘avoidance of uncertainty’ dimensions, the differences recorded do not contradict the basic trends of cultural behavior, whereas the values

calculated for the pairs ‘individualism/ collectivism’ and ‘masculinity/femininity’ are completely divorced from these appraisals. Given the conditions in which the research took place and the restrictions undertaken to increase the reliability of results, we believe that the new values may stand for content changes in the cultural equation of Dolj County and, perhaps, even the entire country. These changes were caused by the return to a capitalist society, the country's affiliation to the European Union and, why not, the values that our country promoted before the externally dictated switch to socialism. We should also account for the trend of cultural consolidation manifested in all the dimensions included in the analysis based on Hofstede's model, which translates into an increased distance from power, a behavior that emphasizes the avoidance of uncertainty, and acts on the long-term in a context of increased individualism and accentuated masculine traits.

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