

# A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH ON CIVIL SERVANTS' MOTIVATION FROM ROMANIAN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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**Abstract:** Since the beginning of 1975, researchers have grown their interest in public service motivation and, despite the increased number of publications until our days, no research has been developed on PSM in the Romanian' public administration system. The present study analyses the motivation system in the Romanian public administration and the prime goal was to find out the main problems and aspects that must be improved in order to increase both the extrinsic and intrinsic motivation among Romanian' civil servants. The research is based on a qualitative approach, being an exploratory study conducted using two research methods: the analysis of the official documents and the opinion survey based on an interview, in order to design a series of proposals for improving civil servants' current level of motivation. The results show a difference in the respondents' answers regarding the system of motivation for civil servants. The participants in the interview were respondents from the central and local public administration.

**Keywords:** public service motivation, civil servants, public administration, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Most of the time, managers rely on the work of employees to accomplish their organizational objectives. Employees must have the skills and equipment necessary for the task, as well as the motivation to carry out instructions, in order to perform properly. Because of this, it is possible to typically correlate motivation with action, and it becomes clear that understanding motivation is essential to the success of any public or private organization. In terms of employee's job performance, motivation is crucial. As a result, both academics and professionals have long considered employee motivation to be a key research area. In an effort to understand the nature of employee motivation, a variety of theories and methodologies have been created. However, the majority of these studies do not have any practical application or do so, solely for the private sector. Governments now require effective strategies more than ever before, to encourage public personnel to be efficient and perform better. More research was done to see if workers in the public sector differ from those in the private sector in terms of their motivational antecedents. In fact, a unique theory of motivation called Public Service Motivation (PSM) was developed to explain how public employees differ from private ones in terms of the intensity and nature of their innate drive to work and serve.

## 2. PUBLIC SERVICE MOTIVATION: MAIN THEORETICAL ASPECTS

According to Stanciu (2001), motivation is the result of both internal and external factors, or the energy that starts and guides people's conduct in the direction of a goal that, once attained, will decide the fulfilment of a need. Extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation are the two main categories of motivation to participate in an

activity. Studies that went into great detail about motivation (Laufer, 1985; Lévy-Leboyer, 2006; Mercier, 2000; Zakaria, 2012) emphasized the significance of the dichotomy between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Unlike extrinsic motivation, which refers to being motivated by the benefits of the job, intrinsic motivation is the act of carrying out a behavior because it makes you feel good (Serhan, 2018).

According to Xu et al. (2020), intrinsic motivation refers to engaging in an activity for its intrinsic qualities and satisfactions (for instance, to explore, learn, and expand its capabilities), whereas extrinsic motivation refers to engaging in an activity for its instrumental qualities or separable effects (for example: to seek affirmation, win recognition, or absolve oneself of guilt). The employee's commitment to exerting effort and achieving outcomes that will enable him to experience personal satisfactions is considered by the intrinsic or direct motivation. The main determinant factors for employee's commitment are: accountability, independence, opportunity to use and develop abilities and skills, and chances to advance and develop a carrier.

Ahmadu (2007) asserts that in order to increase worker productivity, it is advised that employees be highly motivated by both internal and extrinsic variables, such as a good salary and a compelling work environment, in order to minimize sabotage, low morale, and drift. In addition, this will increase efficacy and efficiency. Since Deci and Ryan's pioneering work in 1985, motivation theories have long recognized the importance of distinguishing between intrinsic pulsations and external stimuli. The former concerns the pleasure that comes from engaging in an activity, whereas the latter concerns the activity's outcomes (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Studies comparing public and private employees have repeatedly demonstrated that the motivations of the former are distinct. Particularly, they are more likely to emphasize the inherent qualities of the job rather than external factors such as pay and other material rewards (Anderfuhren-Biget et al., 2010).

In the domains of public personnel management and public administration, public service motivation (PSM) is one of the most researched and discussed subjects (Perry and Vandenabeele, 2015). Due to the multidisciplinary nature of the concept and the use of psychological concepts in public administration, researchers have recently referred to it as the "precursor of public behavioral administration" (Vandenabeele et al., 2018).

The most pertinent notion when defining how public staff motivation functions is public service motivation, which is the public sector-specific kind of employee motivation. (Giauque et al., 2013). PSM is a pro-social value that combines inherent elements including altruism, compassion, and commitment to public ideals, mission, and interest to inspire employees to engage in actions that are good for the community or society (Mostafa et al., 2015; Ritz et al., 2016). Public employees work more altruistically and for the benefit of others than for themselves. They perceive their employment as serving the needs of others rather than their own, and, as a result, they feel a greater sense of responsibility for their work (Allan et al., 2018).

The intrinsic motivation variables that affect civil servants' success at work include accountability, autonomy, fascinating and significant work, contribution, and justice (Ciobanu & Androniceanu, 2015; Nica, 2016; Profiroiu et al., 2021a). The ability of the work environment to motivate employees is heavily reliant on the variety of jobs performed and the importance of those duties for maintaining high levels of engagement among public employees (Allan et al., 2018). Negative effects on the PSM-job satisfaction relationship may result from the ascendancy of the hierarchical structure and the absence of an objective organizational characteristic (Kjeldsen and Hansen, 2018). When comparing their counterparts with low PSM to those with appropriate levels, relevant PSM participants report longer-lasting job satisfaction (Breaugh et al., 2018).

According to Ciobanu and Androniceanu (2019), human resources policies and procedures reflect the organizational climate that surrounds public employees and are crucial in the development and maintenance of PSM. Public institutions can create a positive work environment, encourage employee's engagement and intrinsic motivation, and guarantee the accomplishment of the corporate objectives by combining the right human resources strategies. Implementing high-commitment HR practices, particularly intrinsic HR practices, in the public sector will encourage employees to put in more time and energy into their job by strengthening

their commitment to the organization and to their civic responsibilities. By creating a positive link between employees and their organization, fostering dedication, emotional commitment, and job satisfaction, intrinsic HR practices help to create a positive working environment in public institutions.

In a study undertaken by Anderfuhren-Biget et al. (2010), it was analyzed whether and to what degree the achievement of motivation for public service (PSM) for 3,754 Swiss civil servants at the municipal level has an added value, in order to explain the motivation of work in the public sector. The theoretical model supporting this empirical study contrasts PSM with two additional explanatory factors: connections and team support, such as acknowledgment by superiors, in order to address the characteristics of PSM while examining motivation in the workplace. Its findings showed that the justification for working in the public sector depends on intrinsic factors like the PSM or the willingness to interact in a supportive and cooperative environment, and that the reforms that increase the importance of extrinsic incentives (like payment for performance) risk falling short of the desired goals. How rewards and limitations can be applied in a way that boosts or sustains intrinsic motivation was a question Deci et al. (1981) pondered. They looked at this issue using the study of cognitive assessment theory. The idea holds that incentives and limitations have both a control aspect and an informative aspect. However, when the notion of control is less pronounced, there is a chance that the informational part of the rewards will have an impact on intrinsic motivation. External influences are predicted to reduce intrinsic motivation when the control aspect is more prevalent. Deci et al. (1981) claim that a shift in perceived competence may have an impact on intrinsic motivation. People's intrinsic motivation will improve if they perceive and feel more competent; conversely, if they perceive and feel less competent, their intrinsic motivation will decrease. People typically feel and view themselves as more capable after successful experiences than after unsuccessful ones. The increase in intrinsic motivation after receiving good feedback and the decline after receiving negative feedback can both be attributed to this process of changing perceived talents.

There are two crucial approaches to naturally encourage employees (Deci, 1972). The first step is to create tasks that are engaging and demand imagination and ingenuity, or what White (1959) refers to as the "motivation of the effect." The second step is to give employees a voice in decisions that affect them so they feel like they are responsible for the actions they take. According to Decharms and Carpenter (1968), humans require a sense of personal responsibility and that the capacity for free will and commitment are the fundamental components of intrinsic drive.

According to researchers, intrinsic motivational factors should receive more consideration because they are more important than extrinsic ones. In an eastern cultural context, Ouakouak and Zaitouni (2020) looked into the intrinsic sources of motivation by examining how leadership styles could foster employee motivation for workers' employees' employees. Given that public institutions typically face major management issues due to their low attraction to highly skilled managers and high-performing staff, they offer an intriguing framework for resolving these questions. The insufficient financial incentives that public institutions can provide are the cause of this lack of attraction, which also suggests that some current employees or managers put minimal effort into their work. According to the two researchers, when employees' psychological demands for autonomy, competence, and relationships are addressed, they are more intrinsically driven, which leads to better performance, perseverance, and creativity. They contend that employees who are more intrinsically motivated would work harder to achieve their performance goals.

Intrinsic motivation can be triggered in a number of ways, according to new theories of participatory management. It is highlighted that employees should participate in decision-making in order to increase their ego. Employees are allowed more latitude in how they carry out their duties and a say in choices that also affect them. The use of power as a means of control is less prevalent, and employees are evaluated on the basis of their performance. Although Leavitt (1962) noted that professions that allow participation in decision-making are among the most intrinsically rewarding, hard jobs may be even more crucial.

There is proof that when subjects get payment for actions that are intrinsically motivated and when this payment is subject to their actions, they are less intrinsically motivated than subjects who conduct the same actions without payment. According to Deci (1972), the key distinction between verbal and monetary rewards is that the former may not be phenomenologically separable from the feelings of satisfaction that the recipient experiences as a result of completing the task. Because they provide more positive value to the action, verbal reinforcements increase the subject's intrinsic drive. As a result, the subject is more likely to complete the task even in the absence of outside rewards. According to the notion of cognitive assessment, feedback is the second mechanism that might have an impact on intrinsic motivation. By enhancing a person's perception of competence and self-determination, positive feedback raises the activity's overall positive worth (Koch, 1956). His/her intrinsic motivation to complete the task is significantly increased by this factor.

Deci and Cascio (1972) demonstrated in a different experiment utilizing the paradigm of a single session that negative feedback coming from subpar performance on an activity with intrinsic motivation decreased intrinsic motivation. According to the idea of cognitive evaluation, the psychological process that underlies this decline is the same as the one that has raised intrinsic motivation as a result of positive feedback. A reduction in intrinsic motivation results from the positive value of the activity being partially offset by the negative value of failure and the threat it poses to the person's feeling of competence. As a result, a person's feedback is critical in determining how to change their intrinsic motivation.

The intrinsic motivating factors for civil servants in Romania were identified and analyzed during a study on their motivation (Cristescu et al., 2013), which included the following factors: autonomy in the post, authority and responsibility in the post, work-life balance, sense of fulfillment at work, freedom to take initiative at work, participation in activities within the institution, satisfaction of accomplishing useful things for the citizens of the community, professorial support, and attractiveness of the work performed. When the study's findings were analyzed, it became clear that the balance between work and personal life, the sense of accomplishment provided by the workplace, and the satisfaction provided by completing tasks that benefit the community's residents were the three most crucial intrinsic motivational factors for Romanian civil servants. According to Cristescu et al. analysis of the same study's responses, just 27.9% of officials are mostly driven by intrinsic factors, while 69.9% of them are primarily driven by external factors.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present research approaches the concept of public service motivation and represents an analysis of the motivation system in the Romanian public administration conducted with the purpose of finding out the main problems and aspects that must be improved in order to increase both the extrinsic and intrinsic motivation among civil servants.

The main objectives of the study are:

1. To analyze the motivation system from the Romanian public administration.
2. To investigate civil servants' perception regarding the existing motivation system and about the main factors that influence public service motivation.
3. To propose a set of recommendations for the development and improvement of the motivation system among civil servants in the Romanian public administration.

This study started from the following research questions:

1. Which are the main problems related to the motivation system in the Romanian public administration?
2. Which are the main factors that influence civil servants' motivation?
3. How can the motivation system in the public administration of Romania be improved?

The present research is based on a qualitative approach. The study is an exploratory one conducted using two research methods: the analysis of the official documents, conducted in order to investigate the motivation system in the Romanian public administration and the opinion survey based on interview conducted with the purpose of revealing civil servants' perception about the current motivation system and to design a series of proposals for improving it based on the interviewees opinions.

The interview is structured (Duverger, 1961; Chelcea, 2009), with free and focused answers (Chelcea, 2009). The interview was conducted by sending the questions by email or on WhatsApp, due to the COVID-19 pandemic that restricted the access to the public institutions. The interview guide included five open questions, and the answers were collected and centralized to be interpreted more easily. The interview was applied to the directors of the HR Departments because they have the necessary competences and know the current motivation system, as well as the recruitment and selection process, the remuneration system, and other aspects related to civil servants' careers. The convenience sampling method was chosen, and five institutions-three from the local public administration and two from the central public administration, agreed to participate in the study.

#### 4. THE ANALYSIS OF THE CIVIL SERVANTS' MOTIVATION SYSTEM IN ROMANIA

The general legal framework in the field of human resources management in the Romanian public administration includes normative acts issued by the competent authorities (laws, ordinances and decisions of the Government, Community legislation (directives, regulations), as well as orders of the President of the National Agency of Civil Servants (ANFP)). The large number of regulations accentuate fragmentation and uneven approaches in the field of strategic human resources management in public administration. The Framework Law no.153/2017 on the remuneration of the personnel paid from public funds defines public administration staff (both civil servants and contractual staff) as an occupational family within the budgetary sector, distinct from education, health and social work, culture, diplomacy, defense, public order and national security, and justice (ANFP, 2021). The number of employees in the public sector represents approximately 13.79 % of the total number of employees at national level, being lower than the EU average, i.e., 23.5 % (Banca Mondială, 2019).

Out of 36 legislative acts included in the general legal framework regulating human resources management in the Romanian public administration, few of them are addressing civil servants' motivation. Among the most important ones, the following should be mentioned: Law No. 153/2017 on the remuneration of the personnel paid from public funds; Government Emergency Order No. 57/2019 on the Administrative Code; Law No. 53/2003 on the Labour Code, republished; Law No. 81/2018 on the regulation of teleworking activity; Government Decision No. 611/2008 approving the rules on the organization and career development of civil servants; Government Decision No. 341/2007 on the occupation of public functions in the category of senior civil servants, career management and mobility of senior civil servants; Order No. 193/2020 approving the procedure for redeployment of civil servants, as well as how to conduct professional testing for redeployment; Order No. 13601/2008 approving the deadlines and standard format for the transmission of data and information on the annual professional development plan and the funds allocated for training activities. As it can be observed, none of the aforementioned normative acts comprises specific stipulations regarding civil servants' motivation system. The legislation comprises some aspects with an impact on motivation development, and most of them are related to extrinsic or financial motivation. Consequently, the most important motivating factors will be analyzed in the present section.

**1. Career development:** one of the most important motivating factors is the possibility of career advancement. In practice, most of civil servants are dissatisfied with the existing career development opportunities (Potcovaru, 2021), for many reasons, such as:

- The reduced number of training opportunities organized by public institutions;
- The constant changes of civil servants' professional titles which have led to the impossibility of promotion for certain categories of personnel which were not able to promote for many years;
- Many public institutions prefer to recruit from the labour market and not to promote;

- Civil servants' assessment process is often subjective and formal. In practice, it is not a criterion taken into account for promotion because it is a formality. 98 % of civil servants are evaluated with ratings such as "good" and "very good," although it is well known that in many cases, they do not deserve these ratings;
- The reality demonstrates the active presence at the decision-making level of civil servants promoted based on political grounds, without real knowledge about public administration, which also leads to frustration among career civil servants;
- Ensuring a motivational system, by rewarding civil servants who have achieved good results, that should lead to an increase in individual professional performance is mentioned in the legislation, but this motivational system does not exist in reality.

In addition, many reports concluded that the Romanian civil service career system is not motivating, not related to performance, and not oriented towards professional development (World Bank, 2016, SGG & World Bank, 2020). The promotion in the civil service involves the advancement in the hierarchy to the next professional grades. There are four professional degrees (beginner, assistant, principal, and superior), and the advancement is linked directly to seniority in the public service consisting in the transformation of the position after passing the examination for advancement to the next professional grade. Consequently, civil servants can reach the highest professional grade, in less than 8 years after occupying the public position in which they advance. After this, there is no other professional level to be achieved (other than management positions), which in time decreases motivation. Also, in the advancement process, the results of the professional evaluations are taken into consideration, but these evaluations are only formal, consequently, civil servants' achievements are not a real factor with impact on promotion. More than that, the present career system does not stimulate professional development, as in other European countries, by diversifying professional experience (e.g., through inter-institutional mobility) or developing towards skills-based leadership positions (ANFP, 2021).

**2. Performance assessment:** According to a Romanian SGG and World Bank (2020) study, performance management is an integrated framework for planning and defining, monitoring, empowering and developing, measuring and evaluating, rewarding, and adjusting employee performance. In order to implement a coherent and objective system for assessing professional performance, the individual objectives of each employee must be linked to institutional objectives. Managers play a key role in this process, and the employees must be consulted regarding the design and the implementation of the performance management system. Various feedback and performance evaluation approaches can be considered. High performance can be rewarded by various forms of motivation such as: public recognition of work, work mobility schemes, flexible working hours, performance bonuses, fast promotion, and performance-based remuneration.

Romania integrated the use of performance assessments to a degree, slightly higher than the average of OECD countries. Formalized assessment of employee performance is mandatory for almost all public administrations and consists of annual meetings and written feedback from seniors. According to the legislation, performance assessment is important for career advancement and contract renewals. Despite this, there is a perception that performance assessments are often considered to be just another procedure — most of the employees have a high score and usually there is no (good or bad) consequence of the outcome of the evaluation, even though the legal framework allows it (OECD, 2016).

There is no correlation between assessing professional performance and improving work, in order to achieve institutional objectives and reforms in public administration. The assessment of professional performance has a formal role, does not reward the good work outcomes, and does not manage the poor performance (SGG & World Bank, 2020).

**3. Civil servants' training system:** Civil servants' training and continuous professional development in priority areas are supervised by the National Agency of Civil Servants. In The 2016-2020 strategy on vocational training for public administration, the reestablishment of the National Institute of Administration was requested, in order to provide training for execution and management civil servants. The legislation stipulates that each institution in the central public administration should design training plans and communicate them to the National Agency of Civil Servants. However, in practice, not all the institutions design such plans.

Current priorities in the field of training and professional development include: the training strategy for the whole public administration; coordination mechanisms for civil service training (e.g., at the level of ministries/agencies); training for managers; coaching and mentoring; partnerships with universities and public institutions of post-secondary education (OECD, 2016). However, in the public administration' institutions, there is no correlation between the training necessities and resources allocation and recruitment planning (World Bank, 2020). Even if training and continuous professional development is very important for acquiring new skills, achieving work performance, and raising motivation, the resources allocated by the public institutions to civil servants' the professional development are insufficient. More than that, there is no strategic approach for training and motivating senior civil servants and civil servants in management positions in order to promote performance, change management, and leadership practices. The National Institute of Administration organizes training courses, but their themes and number are limited, consequently, the institution does not cover all the training necessities from the public administration.

**4. The remuneration system:** In the last 20 years, the Romanian public sector has been marked by wide debates on the discrepancies between the remuneration of different categories of public personnel, on the differences in the application of the legal framework, as well as the lack of correlation between the results of individual work performance and the level of remuneration. The low income level and the lack of legal forms of rewarding public personnel for their work achievements have led to low performance in the public sector and also, to a low level of motivation among civil servants. Consequently, in 2017, Law No. 153/2017 on the uniform remuneration of the personnel paid from public funds has been adopted. The aim of the law was to ensure a uniform remuneration framework in the public sector by applying clearly formulated principles, criteria, and to decentralize the decisions taken in this area (Profiroiu et al., 2021b). The purpose of adopting the aforementioned law was also to improve human resources management and to increase public sector attractiveness as an employer.

The results of applying the law were: the incomes of all public sector personnel have increased, new bonuses, incentives, prizes, food, and holiday allowances were offered, and public sector salaries exceeded the remuneration level from the private sector. Also, additional revenue increases were expected in 2022, but the the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on the economy slowed down or halted these increases (European Commission, 2019). Although the application of the law had a positive impact on the income increases for the civil servants and other categories of public personnel, there was no development in terms of non-financial motivation or the shift towards a performance-oriented remuneration system. Although the law mentions performance criteria, they are difficult to apply and quantify. (Profiroiu et al., 2021b).

Moreover, the income increases due to the application of the Framework Law no. 153/2017 on the remuneration of the personnel paid from public funds, solved some of the problems related to public sector remuneration and motivational policy, but might generate negative consequences for the economy. Public sector salaries have increased significantly, exceeding the salaries from the private sector, and this situation may have negative impact on inflation and competitiveness, as these increases will not be accompanied by productivity growth.

In one of the most recent studies carried out by Profiroiu et al. (2021b) on Law 153/2017, a number of important conclusions were reached. In practice, the law was intended to be a reform for the public sector that would contribute to increasing institutional and individual performance by applying a motivating, objective, and balanced pay system. However, the study showed a high degree of dissatisfaction among civil servants regarding this new pay system. Moreover, the data collected showed that, there are other factors than the remuneration, that influence positively civil servants' motivation, such as the attitudes of the hierarchical superiors or citizens opinions about their services. In addition, the new pay system is not linked to the level of performance and encourages an increase in the quality of public services, only to a small extent. Overall, the study leads to the conclusion that the current pay system does not sufficiently support the modernization process in the public administration, especially as the allocated financial resources have led to a decrease in the public investments and a reduction in the amount allocated to the professional development. The positive aspects of the application of the new regulations are related to the increased capacity of the public administration to attract European funds and to reduce corruption in the public administration.

In conclusion, although civil servants' incomes increased, reaching a similar level to the private sector, the benefits for the administrative system are few in terms of modernization, performance and quality, the only obvious benefit being the reduction of corruption. The legislative act requires adjustments in the light of the applicable criteria, the correlation with other legislative acts, and clarifications on the enforcement mechanism. There is also a need to better correlate the level of individual incomes with the individual performance assessment system and to implement measures that will increase the non-financial motivation among human resources in the public administration (Profiroiu et al., 2021b).

1. There are no mentioned measures that would lead to an increase of the non-financial/intrinsic motivation among civil servants.
2. Career development is based on limited advancement possibilities based almost exclusively on the seniority criterion.
3. The training opportunities are insufficient and the financial allocation for training activities is maintained at a low level.
4. The performance assessment is only a formal activity with no real impact on the promotion system.
5. There is no correlation between performance and remuneration level; consequently, the performance-based salary system is not used.

## 5. CIVIL SERVANTS' PERCEPTION REGARDING THE MOTIVATION SYSTEM IN ROMANIAN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: MAIN RESULTS

### 1. In your opinion, is the system of motivation for civil servants currently adequate? Please justify your answer.

At this first question, the participants in the study answered differently. The respondents from the central public administration as well as those from the territorial institutions argued that civil servants' motivation system is currently not entirely appropriate, since the used motivational tools are limited only to those provided by the national legislation in the field. According to these respondents, there are major remuneration inequities between civil servants with the same level of education and in the same occupied position, resulting from completely different court rulings. These major dissatisfactions created in recent years can only be solved by the entry into force of the 2022 unitary remuneration law; otherwise the institutions continue to not have the legal levers for equalising the incomes for the public positions in the same professional category/education/labour graduation levels. The respondents argued that while there is the possibility to use motivational factors that do not involve the allocation of budgetary funds exists, these factors are not used by managers due to the lack of interest or the lack of information about their existence. The managers of the public institutions have little interest in identifying motivational factors adapted to the profile or specificities of the institution they lead. Stopping the payment of the remuneration differences and the granting of the holiday vouchers in 2021, as well as limiting civil servants participation to the annual professional trainings (by not allocating a proper budget and due to the restrictions imposed by the current pandemic) has also led to a low level of motivation among civil servants. At the same time, the respondents considered that the level of satisfaction regarding civil servants' freedom to come up with their own ideas for solving work tasks decreases as it relates to the institutions' management that can only have an overview of indirect employees and problems to be solved.

The participants in the interview, employees of the local public administration institutions, argued that the currently motivational system is appropriate due to the fact that the competency of establishing the basic salaries for the civil servants' from the local public administration institutions has been delegated to the local councils and thus the financial motivation of the civil servants has been achieved to a high extent. However, the non-financial motivation is satisfied to a lesser extent and differs greatly from one administrative unit to another and often differing from one department to another within the same institution, depending very much on the management of the department. Other mentioned factors used to currently lead to increased motivation were:



the opportunity for professional development and promotion in the civil service, congratulations offered on the various achievements, honorary titles, badges or merit diplomas.

**2. Give some examples of financial and non-financial motivation tools that are currently used in the public administration field.**

The most common examples of financial motivation tools given by the respondents to the interview were: the level of remuneration; the fact that civil servants benefit from a system of promotion in their professional grade, which allows them to advance from their initial professional grade, to the assistant professional grade, the main professional grade, and, in the end, to the highest professional grade in only seven years, as well as a system for the award of seniority grades, in accordance with criteria mentioned by law which are applicable to all civil servants; the existence of an allowance for food, bonuses such as those for working in special or harmful conditions, for working with classified information, bonuses for the work carried out in the implementation of projects with European funding, as well as bonuses for holidays, such as the granting of holiday vouchers, access to canteens with subsidized prices, or a paid free day for annual medical examinations.

Regarding the examples of non-financial motivation, the respondents mentioned: the working conditions which were described as being generally acceptable, where employees may require new work equipment, supplies/consumables necessary for carrying out their work; the IT system which was considered to be well-developed, with platforms and software used to follow the status of the documents. More than that, the execution civil servants develop a sense of responsibility through their role in solving the tasks assigned to them, being allowed to propose new ideas and solutions to the hierarchical superiors and then implement them into practice. Also, being part of a public institution of national interest seems to give employees a high status and high sense of responsibility. Another motivational factor mentioned was the development of supportive relationships between the civil servants in the same department which have a positive impact especially in solving certain cases that are delegated to the team, which have as their end point a more efficient and rapid resolution of some problems, without requiring the support of the specialized departments (legal, etc.) or without asking for the support of other coordinating institutions (such as the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, National Agency for Civil Servants, etc.). Also, the possibility given to civil servants to work from home under the conditions imposed by the Coronavirus pandemic. Other mentioned factors would be: the participation in vocational training courses; participating in exchanges of experience abroad; an increase in the number of leave days based on the length of service; the possibility of working for fixed periods in other public institutions; the permission to be part of a trade union, which offer their members various facilities (e.g., reduced prices in their own accommodation units), as well as the flexible working hours (possibility of shifting time), etc.

**3. In your opinion, which are the main motivational factors for the civil servants in the Romanian public administration (in general)?**

The respondents considered that the main motivational factors are: the remuneration level in accordance with the occupied position (the income level in some institutions is higher than in the private sector, for similar activities carried out); granting additional benefits such as: holiday vouchers, food norm, additional rest days, flexible working hours; good professional relationship with the hierarchical superiors and colleagues (the general work climate); job stability; gradual increase in salary according to the length of service; the possibility of improving professional performance by participating in training sessions and traineeships, inclusively abroad; retention of the post in case of suspension of service relationships; the possibility granted to the execution civil servants to involve and participate in the development of manuals and procedures used in the activity and also the mobility in the civil service.

**4. Which are the main drivers that can cause civil servants demotivation?**

The participants in the interview considered that the most demotivating factors are: the differences in remuneration for the same type of work for civil servants that have the same level of education and work under the same conditions; the conflicting working environment; rigorous hierarchical superiors that do not use a real system for motivating their subordinates; the strict schedule; the imposed rules that are not in accordance with the reality (e.g. the number of duties defined in the job description); work assignments without a precise

resolution; the legislation in force which delays the solving of the tasks in an appropriate time; the bureaucracy that demotivates civil servants and also the citizens that are expecting for a prompt response to their requests/problems; the lack of an organizational culture that promotes performance; the lack of real opportunities for advancement on the hierarchy; the fact that the incentives or income increases can be provided only through the adoption of legislative acts, due to budget constrains; the nature of the professional evaluation which is only formal; outdated organizational chart models and high number of hierarchical levels; the lack of modern managerial tools used by managers and leaders; the instability of the civil service at management and execution levels due to the current legislative context that allows institutional reorganization to be a decision taken by the management of the public institution or authority, limited only by a few general conditions regarding the transformation of posts and the development of new compartments, offices, directorates. Other mentioned demotivating factors were: the lack of professional appreciation, the changes in management occurring after the political changes in the local elections, or the non-productive meetings.

**5. Which changes in the civil servants' motivation system do you propose? Please also do some suggestion of how can the civil servants in the Romanian public administration be financially and also non-financially motivated.**

The five participants in the interview formulated a series of proposals that could lead, in their opinion, to improvements in the motivation system, comprising measures meant to develop both financial and non-financial motivation.

The measured proposed for improving the financial motivation were: the unblocking of the remuneration system and allowing the harmonization of the salaries for the same occupied position to the maximum level decided for the 2022 pay scale at the same institution level; eliminating the remuneration inequities by bringing the public institutions with the same level of importance to the same level of pay; the allocation of the necessary funds for the annual professional training of civil servants; the allocation of the annual holiday awards/holiday vouchers; the pay scales to be designed taking into account other factors (e.g. accountability, exposure to corruption factors, risks) compared to the present (based on the level of education and seniority), the reintroduction of merit salaries in order to be able to motivate the civil servants with the most professional achievements.

The measures proposed for improving civil servants' non-financial motivation were: providing high-performance IT equipment; improving the working conditions; flexible working hours; permanent use of work from home for at least 1 day a week (where the nature of the activities allow it); rotation by post; widespread use of methods such as brainstorming, dissemination of information to subordinates, multidpartment teams, participatory management; encouraging staff to propose innovative ideas, by organizing regular competitions; modifying the methods used for establishing which can participate in the European projects implementation teams, by replacing the direct designation by the hierarchical managers with the organization of an internal recruitment process, ensuring equal chances of access to all the civil servants; organizing regular feedback sessions with the direct manager; depoliticization of the public institutions and assuring stability in the civil service.

**CONCLUSIONS**

In conclusion, it is possible to maintain that people are motivated to work in the public sector because it gives them the opportunity to positively impact society and other people. This idea is related to the idea that people are drawn to this field of work because it allows them to do good for others. Not everyone chooses to enter or stay in the public service for the same reasons, nor is this the only or even the most significant factor. Recent studies highlight the paramount significance of fair pay — or at the very least market pay — and tenure security. It is necessary to communicate goals and objectives that are in line with the public service principles in order to practice value-based leadership. Additionally, the leader must set an example for others by modeling these behaviors, demonstrating values that go beyond self-interest, and demonstrating their reliability.

An encouraging work environment is crucial for Romanian civil servants. The employees' motivation for working in the public sector and their performance are influenced by a variety of factors, including the nature of informal

relationships, the effectiveness of communication, the way conflicts are handled, the collegiality of the organization, and not least, the incentive structures. At the most fundamental level, managing the workplace environment in the public sector involves balancing incentives with intrinsic motivations. The bottom line is that remuneration in the public sector must be competitive with those offered in the private sector.

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