

**PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION-A COMMUNICATING ORGANIZATION. THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION AND ORIENTATION TOWARDS THE CITIZENS**

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**Abstract**

*Public organizations are complex structure, which are continuously changing, a “meeting point” for resources, be they human, material, technological or of a different nature. In terms of the Romanian public system, the last few years have seen some major changes across the board, the way state institutions are organized and function, the attributions and responsibilities of public workers, and the needs and expectations of the citizens which benefits from these services being but a few of these aforementioned changes. Communication is essential for any intervention which aims to change something, especially when it comes to the public domain, where the success of any action is based on interaction, on dialogue. Communication contributes to the creation of an image of the institution and the building of the trust that citizens have towards workers which are in contact with the external environment.*

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**1. Preliminary considerations in regards to the utilized concepts**

Trying to define “public administration” is a Sisyphean endeavor, for it is a very abstract and varied notion. In the acceptance of some authors, public administration mostly handles the organization of governmental politics and programs, as well as the behavior of public workers.

I .C. Petca affirms that public administration represents the ensemble of managerial and executive processes, of a political and juridical nature, through

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which the mandates of the legislative, executive and court are put into practice, with the express purpose of providing the regulations and services necessary to society as a whole, and to its components.<sup>2</sup>

We could say that the purpose of public institutions is mainly to satisfy the needs and general interests of the population, to respect the citizen, to implement the rules and laws promulgated by the people's chosen and to communicate.

Dominique Wolton affirms that communication represents a fundamental anthropological experience, more exactly that of exchanging/sharing something with someone.<sup>3</sup>

We all communicate in a different manner, using resources such as tongues, languages, communication channels and distinctive nonverbal elements.

Communication implies not only a trade of information, but also an exchange of attitudes, emotions, impressions, interpretations and so on and so forth. Information isn't a "rough" or "neutral" content. The most mundane piece of information gains additional meanings depending on the way we use it (in what context we place it, the tonality used, etc.)<sup>4</sup>

## **2. Communication – a key element of public administration**

In public administration, communication is omnipresent, bringing its contribution to accomplishing its objectives, answering to the needs of both its organization and of the citizens towards which the public information it transmits is targeted. Communication can be found in every structure and on every level of public administration, between public workers, between the administration and the political side, between the administration and the citizens as well as between the administration and the general environment

Because of the changes put into effect after the year 1980 in Romania, through the use of legislation which regulate the free access of citizens to public information, public institutions had to put much more importance on transparency, the creation of public politics and the need for information, and thus, communication, that citizens possess. The legislation of our country

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<sup>2</sup> Ioan-Constantin Petca, Management public, Ed. Universitatii "Lucian Blaga" din Sibiu, Sibiu, 2004,p.19

<sup>3</sup> Dominique Wolton, Penser la communication, Paris, Ed.Flammarion, 1997

<sup>4</sup> Carmen Beciu,Sociologia comunicarii si a spatiului public, Iasi, Ed.Polirom, 2011

establishes the access to information through the use of the following laws: Legea nr. 544/2001 updated in 2013 in regards to the liberal access to information which poses a public interest, Legea nr. 52/2003 republished in 2013 in regards to decisional transparency in public administration and Legea nr. 161/2003 updated in 2011, in regards to some measures of ensuring transparency when it comes to using public dignities, of public functions and the prevention and sanctioning of corruption in the business environment

The functions of communication in public administrations are the following:

- information function – encompasses the information pertaining to the services which the public administration provides, as well as to the rules through which the state functions
- the function of promoting the services provided by the institutions of the state
- the function of proposing- encompasses the projects and political offers which are put to public debate

The main goal of communication in the administrative domain is that of engaging citizens and other interested parties in the processes pertaining the enforcing of a policy. Efficiency in this field depends on the circumstances of governmental activities- what kind of politics are implemented and how many interested parties are involved in this process. Sadly, in spite of the relatively large amount of liberty of action and decisional power, the political factors can produce an important limitation if an initiative is too innovative.<sup>5</sup>

The political and judicial environment in which a public institution does its job, the changes in technology, economy or environment regulate and influence communication at their level. The organization thus takes on the attitudes and models offered, but in turn it shapes the external environment through the development of programs meant to respond to its needs.

Communication in terms of public administration has at its essence the interaction with the citizens. Public workers, the ones responsible with communication, being the emitters of the message, have established objectives such as informing, guiding and convincing the receiver, meaning the citizen,

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<sup>5</sup> Liu B.F., Horsley J.S., *The Government Communication Decision Wheel: Toward a Public relations Model for the Public Sector*, Journal of Public Relations Research, Vol.19 Issue 4, 2007

said person needing to understand and assimilate the information transmitted by the emitter.

Citizens which are well informed in regards to the objectives and instruments through which a governing policy of the state is put into practice contribute to the creation of a basic element needed between themselves and their elected representatives- trust.

The access to information, guaranteed by the state, isn't enough when we take into account the complexity of law texts, of procedures and the way they are applied, things which the citizens usually confront. Thus, communication (dialogue) is absolutely necessary when it comes to clarifying situations in which the citizen is put into contact with public services.

Public administration resorts in present in an increasingly clearer and more organized fashion to PR and advertising means. This is due to the fact that, on one hand, the stat has to brave new responsibilities, and on the other hand, must utilize ne procedures of managing social relations, part of the public opinion, from the sphere of commercial and industrial businesses.<sup>6</sup>

According to the following law: Legea nr. 544/2001<sup>7</sup> updated in 2013 regarding the liberal access of information which are of public interest, the content and objectives of communication in public administration are:

- authorities and public institutions must ensure the access to information which possesses a public appeal, said institutions having the obligation of organizing specialized subdivisions with the express purpose of informing the public and maintaining appropriate public relations or to assign people with prerogatives pertaining to these domains

- the authorities and public institutions are obligated to publish and update yearly an informational bulletin and to offer a periodic report of activity from their publicity office which shall be published in Monitorul Oficial al Romaniei:

- posting information which presents a general interest at the headquarters of authorities and public institutions, or publishing in Monitorul Oficial al Romaniei, in the media, in their own publication or on their own Internet page.

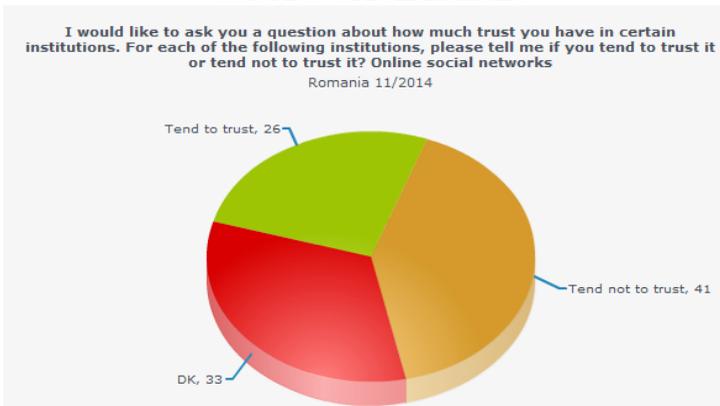
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<sup>6</sup> Bernard Miège, *Societatea cucerita de comunicare*, Ed. Polirom, Iasi, 2000, p.45

<sup>7</sup> Legea nr. 544/2001 updated in 2013 regarding the liberal access to information of a public interest, available at [http://www.ancpi.ro/images/legislatie/Legea\\_544.pdf](http://www.ancpi.ro/images/legislatie/Legea_544.pdf)

In the last few years, communication through the Internet has become more accessible through social-media channels, such as Internet pages, blogs and even the social-networking platform Facebook. However, even though Internet users in Romania are very open when it comes to social media, it is shown on the Internet page of the European Commission that at the moment that barometer polls in regards to the trust held by citizens in institutions and online social networks were held (the year 2014)<sup>8</sup>, only 26% of the population tends to have trust in said places, 33% is undecided, and those that tend to distrust this communication channel reaches 41%. (fig.1)

**Fig.1 Barometer poll in regards to the trust in certain institutions and online social networks in Romania**



Source: <http://ec.europa.eu>

Strategia Națională privind Agenda Digitală pentru România 2020<sup>9</sup> proposes as an objective identifying the socio-economical needs in regards to developing online public services and consequentially prioritizing their implementations, using an approach which has the citizen in mind. The new electronic systems which wish to be implemented are meant to ensure the continued improvement of services offered by the state's public institutions, the feedback coming from communication now being able to be transmitted

<sup>8</sup>[http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/cf/showchart\\_line.cfm?keyID=3904&nationID=29,&startdate=2014.11&enddate=2014.11](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/cf/showchart_line.cfm?keyID=3904&nationID=29,&startdate=2014.11&enddate=2014.11)

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.mcsi.ro/Transparenta---decizionala/Proiecte---2015>

through the online system itself or through the connections with online socializing platforms, if and when this is needed

The relationship between public institutions and citizens is a controversial one due to the fact that each and every one of the participants to the dialogue has reproaches to bring. This is a weak point in public organizations caused by issues such as public workers possessing a lack of professionalism, corruption, excessive bureaucracy, arduous procedures which the public administration must follow, and last but not least a lack of a properly informed public.

### **3. Conclusion**

Communication in any organization represents one of the main instruments through which many different kinds of changes, be they in regards to the internal and external environment, the shaping of attitudes, the way the organization tackles challenges and the changes that the future might bring, can be implemented.

Modern public institutions emphasize on developing relations with citizens through quality, consistent and up-to-date information. Increases in efficiency, improving the quality of services, raising the degree of transparency in public organizations – these are all directions which shall lead to important effects not only on the internal environment of public organizations, but on the external one as well.

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