

## ROMANIAN POLICE MAJOR PROBLEMS OF HUMAN RESOURCES AND COMPARATIVE MODELS

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### ABSTRACT

*The Romanian Police, as the primary law enforcement institution in Romania, faces persistent structural and human resource (HR) challenges that affect its operational efficiency and public trust. Despite post-1989 reforms and the transition to a civilian institution, the system continues to exhibit characteristics of centralization, bureaucratic rigidity, and limited modernization of HR management practices.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Romanian Police, Post-1989 period, Efficiency, Progressive transformation, Incomplete transformation*

**J.E.L. Classifications:** J24, J45, M54, H11, P51

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The efficiency of the Romanian Police after 1989 was characterized by progressive but incomplete transformations. The specialized literature emphasizes that the process of police democratization in Central and Eastern Europe was often fragmented and dependent on the political and institutional context (Marina Caparini and Otwin Marenin, 2004). We try to use the term reform as little as possible (and we say efficiency) because for us, rightly, reform has sometimes become a term synonymous with the destruction, the demolition of something that worked (not rarely better without reform), for example, the Romanian school, or the institution of the sectorist within the police and the examples would be numerous.

### 2. SYSTEM SIZE AND PERSONNEL DEFICIT

The Romanian Police faces an estimated deficit of approximately 13,400 positions ( $\approx 20\%$ ), while the Romanian Gendarmerie has approximately 20,000–23,000 employees. These data point to a major structural problem, where the loss of staff is faster than replacement capacity. The

Gendarmerie has valuable people, very well trained, but rarely and ineffectively used, in the Police they could show their worth much more.

### **3. EUROSTAT COMPARATIVE DATA**

According to Eurostat data, Romania has approximately 300 police officers per 100,000 inhabitants, a level comparable to the European average (Aggregated data from MAI reports and staff shortage analyzes (2023–2024).

Police Country / 100,000 inhabitants

**Romania ~300**

**Germany ~300**

**France ~320**

**Poland ~250**

**Hungary ~290**

**Czech Republic ~400**

The interpretation of these data indicates that Romania's problem is not the total number of police officers, but their distribution, the loss of experienced personnel. Apparently it seems that we are integrating into the European context, but does it depend on what we say the police represent? They are counted as police officers employed in administrative and logistical structures, from different structures ("Agents" Anti...) whose activity is much more similar to popularization, information NGOs, distributing leaflets and posters than the activity of operative police forces.

### **4. INSTITUTIONAL FRAGMENTATION**

The Romanian system is characterized by the coexistence of the Police, the Gendarmerie and the Local Police. This structure generates overlaps and inefficiency, being considered suboptimal in the specialized literature (Robert Reiner, 2010). Who can afford to maintain institutions of tens of thousands of employees "in the spirit of tradition" and national culture when the same activities and missions could be done with specialized structures of the Police? Overcoming the reality that the former military Security units took over the tradition and portfolio of the Gendarmerie at full speed.

We don't discuss the Local Police here anymore, being often assimilated to a private police of the local officials (in Iași they also dealt with the pursuit and monitoring of a mayor's mistress) with duties perceived as exclusively with spoliation, punishing the population through fines and car seizures. And here, however, there is a human capital with great potential that could be used much better!

It is obvious, however, that this fragmentation generates:

- overlapping skills;
- confusion for citizens;
- operational inefficiency;
- coordination difficulties in critical situations.

For example, in the management of protests or urban public order, responsibilities, powers (and accountability), coordination and cooperation are often unclearly divided between the Police and the Gendarmerie.

## **5. THE DUALITY OF THE POLICE-GENDARMERIE**

Romania maintains a rare dual model in the region. Most states in Central and Eastern Europe have adopted unified systems.

Relevant examples: Austria (unification, 2005), Belgium (integrated reform, 2001), etc.

Austria is a relevant example, as it carried out a major reform in 2005:

What happened? The federal police, gendarmerie and other structures were unified. Only one structure was created: the Austrian Federal Police.

Results: reduction of bureaucracy; increased efficiency; clarity in skills; budget savings

This model can often be invoked in Romania as a possible reform direction.

In what other countries was unification achieved? Complete unification is not frequent, but there are examples:

Belgium: Reform in 2001; The police was reorganized into an integrated system (federal + local); The gendarmerie was abolished as a separate structure.

Netherlands: Unified National Police System; There is no separate gendarmerie (with limited military exceptions).

Ireland: One national police force (Garda); No gendarmerie type structure.

There are still many countries with a dual system, but those who have integrated, unified think it is much better.

Bayley argues that integrated systems provide a better fit for modern security requirements (David H. Bayley, 1994). We thus try to appeal to the opinions appearing in the specialized literature, not to issue subjective opinions.

## **6. HOW IS PUBLIC ORDER ORGANIZED IN FORMER SOCIALIST COUNTRIES?**

The comparison with what is happening in other states can be even more conclusive, not with Western states where the material possibilities would be different, but with former communist states:

Poland: Civil Police + Military Gendarmerie (but with a limited role); There is no separate civil gendarmerie as in Romania.

Hungary: Unified police force; No separate gendarmerie.

Czech Republic: Civilian National Police; Simplified structure, without gendarmerie.

Slovakia: Model similar to the Czech Republic.

Bulgaria: National Police + Special Forces. No classic gendarmerie.

Croatia: Unified Police. special units for interventions.

Comparative conclusion: Most former socialist states abandoned the dual model (Police + Civil Gendarmerie) and adopted unified police, special internal structures (not institutionally separated).

Romania is, thus, an exception in the region.

## **7. IT WAS ABLE TO IDENTIFY A SERIES OF ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST THE UNIFICATION OF THE POLICE AND THE GENDARMERIA**

Advantages:

- elimination of overlaps;
- cost reduction, especially in conditions of budgetary pressure;
- operational clarity;
- single command in crisis situations (in a popular expression one could say that "fewer bosses, fewer secretaries and personal drivers, more work".)

Disadvantages:

- institutional resistance, the invocation of tradition;
- cultural integration difficulties (military vs civilian);
- risk of excessive centralization.

## **8. THE PROXIMITY POLICE AND THE SECTORIST'S PROBLEM**

The concept of "sectorist" was abandoned in favor of the community policing model, of the proximity policeman, but its implementation in Romania remains incomplete and, let's face it, ineffective.

The sectorist provides direct and continuous knowledge of the community, which enables early identification of problems and prevention of crime, not just reaction to it.

Through his constant presence in an area, he contributes to increasing citizens' trust in the police and improving institutional communication.

In addition, the sectorist facilitates the collection of relevant information and rapid intervention, being a key element of the modern model of community policing.

Practically, by abolishing the sectorist institution, the Romanian Police largely disconnected from the reality of the street.

Goldstein emphasizes that modern policing must be oriented toward solving community problems (Herman Goldstein, 1990).

## **9. RETIREMENT AGE – EUROPEAN COMPARISON**

Romania allows frequent early retirement (47–55 years), while most European states maintain ages between 60 and 65.

This difference represents one of the biggest structural vulnerabilities of the system.

To take the best people out of the system, the most experienced, the most independent who could devote themselves to the profession, amounted to a coup d'état against national public order and safety. In addition to the extremely important fact that the young employees, who had just entered the institution, no longer had anyone to learn from.

## **10. IMPACT OF EARLY RETIREMENT**

Early retirement generates:

- loss of experience
- increasing costs
- lack of staff

According to Manning (2010), accumulated experience is a “critical organizational capital” and its loss destroys the effectiveness of the institution. He also defines this phenomenon as a loss of "institutional capital" (Peter K. Manning, 2010). Human capital is essential in any field!

## **11. RE-USE OF RETIRED STAFF**

There are approximately 105,000 MAI pensioners in Romania. Western models demonstrate the effectiveness of using retired staff in:

- vocational training
- analysis and intelligence
- community police
- administrative functions

This practice is insufficiently used in Romania.

## **12. BASED ON THE ANALYSIS AND COMPARISONS MADE, SOME EFFICIENCY DIRECTIONS CAN BE DISTINGUISHED (WE EXPLAINED WHY, EVEN IF WE ARE EXAGGERATING, WE WOULD NOT WANT TO USE THE TERM OF REFORM TOO OFTEN ANYMORE) FOR THE ROMANIAN POLICE**

The reintroduction and operationalization of the sectorist institution. The police must have the relevant information and control over the reality on the ground.

Institutional reorganization: serious consideration of unifying or redefining roles, reducing fragmentation. Absorption of the Gendarmerie and possibly the Border Police.

Professionalization: merit-based recruitment, modern continuous training, depoliticization.

Digitization: integrated IT systems, interconnected databases, the use of artificial intelligence.

Increasing transparency: public reporting: generalization of video cameras for interventions, independent control mechanisms, transparency and outsourcing of contests to eliminate vassalage and political involvement.

Conclusions. The analysis highlights that the Romanian Police is facing a systemic crisis determined by:

- Wrong reform measures (abolition of sectorists);
- institutional fragmentation (the Gendarmerie, the Local Police and the Border Police are too little involved);
- shortage of staff (~20%);
- early retirement.

Eurostat data confirms that the problem is mainly structural, not numerical.

The reform must aim at institutional integration, the modernization of human resources and the return to some aspects that have demonstrated their effectiveness, the effective use of professional experience and human capital.

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