

## **CHALLENGES IN THE SYSTEM OF PUBLIC ORDER AND SAFETY. ANALYSIS OF MAJOR RISKS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The article analyzes the main legal and institutional challenges in the public order and safety system in Romania, with an emphasis on the selection of human resources, professional motivation and systemic risks.*

*Numerous empirical observations from practice are used to highlight current dysfunctions and the effects of insufficiently substantiated reforms. The study proposes a critical approach to the phenomenon of "abuse of reforms" and emphasizes the need for a coherent policy of human resources and institutional modernization.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Public order; human resources; intrinsic motivation; extrinsic motivation; institutional reform; systemic risks; public trust; corruption; legal security*

**J.E.L. Classifications:** H11, H83, J24, D91, P48, G01, D73, K42

## **1. THE IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN RESOURCE SELECTION, REFORMS AND CONSEQUENCES**

### **1.1 MAJOR CHALLENGES AND RISKS. REFORMS AND THE ABUSE OF REFORMS**

#### **1.1.1 ARGUMENT**

The public service of public order and public safety is governed by fundamental principles of administrative law: legality, efficiency, continuity, adaptability and satisfaction of the public interest.

Any institutional change must be assessed in light of the impact on these principles. More and more it is found that some reforms were carried out just for the sake of reform, the idea of a real abuse of reforms is taking shape.

The foundation of this article starts from an essential finding: certain institutional decisions have negatively affected the efficiency of the system by weakening prevention mechanisms, losing professional capital and diminishing control over the criminal environment.

## **1.1.2 SYSTEMIC AND OPERATIONAL RISK ANALYSIS**

### **1.1.2.1 THE RISK OF OPERATIONAL CAPACITY DEGRADATION**

The most significant risk is the chronic staff shortage. Waves of mass retirements are seen as an unintended attack on public safety.

The decrease in the attractiveness of the profession, combined with premature retirements, led to a dilution of professional competence. The lack of mentoring and transfer of experience accentuates this phenomenon.

The direct consequence is the risk of operative and judicial malpractice. There have been situations where graduates have been coordinated by less experienced staff than them.

Example: situations reported in police union reports regarding the lack of staff and the overloading of agents (e.g. Europol Union, 2022-2024 communications). A deficit of approximately 8,000 employees in the Romanian Police is estimated. Source: Europol Union, official releases and analyzes regarding the shortage of personnel in the Romanian Police.

### **1.1.2.2 THE RISK OF CORRUPTION AND INFILTRATION**

The vulnerability of staff to organized crime is a major risk. Non-competitive pay, relative to the financial resources of criminal groups, creates the conditions for corruption.

This risk manifests itself through information leakage, institutional protection and institutional capture at the local level.

Example: cases of police officers investigated for supporting drug or people trafficking networks ("live meat" trafficking), reflected in DIICOT files (e.g. files regarding drug trafficking in the port of Constanța). Source: DIICOT – official releases and activity reports.

### **3. The risk of safety and health at work**

The risk of aggression against the police has increased significantly. The lack of modern equipment places the policeman in a vulnerable position.

There is also a major psychosocial risk: burnout, depression and, in extreme cases, suicide.

"Although there is no uniform official statistic regarding insult crimes directed exclusively against police officers, the corroboration of data from the reports of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Public Affairs indicates an estimated annual volume of between 700 and 1,000 such crimes. The trend is an upward one, the phenomenon being characterized by a high frequency in the operative activity of police officers (MAI, 2023; SNPPC, 2026)."

## **2. THE RISK OF LEGISLATIVE UNPREDICTABILITY**

The instability of the normative framework generates uncertainty and fear to act. The policeman fears that a legitimate intervention may later be reinterpreted as abuse.

Example: the successive amendments to the Criminal Code and the decisions of the Constitutional Court regarding abuse of office have generated different interpretations in practice.

### **5. Technological risk**

The technological gap with criminals is obvious. Lack of investment in IT infrastructure and specialists limits responsiveness.

Example: difficulties in investigating complex computer crimes compared to the capacities of European structures.

## **3. THE RISK OF LOSING THE CITIZEN'S TRUST**

The biggest risk remains the loss of citizen trust. When public perception associates the police with incompetence or corruption, there is a rupture in the social contract.

After a certain threshold, citizens look for parallel solutions: bribes, illegal collectors or other forms of informal justice. In this context we can talk about the concept of "captive state".

Example: highly publicized cases such as Caracal or May 2, which affected the public perception of the institutions.

## **4. DECREASE IN THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE POLICE PROFESSION**

Competition for admission has decreased dramatically. If in the past there were 15-20 candidates per seat, now their number is close to the number of seats.

The main causes are:

- non-competitive salary

- working conditions
- degradation of social status
- system rigidity
- the unpredictability of pensions

A young person can earn a similar salary in the private sector without the risks of the profession. The institution's image has been damaged by high-profile cases, which discourages worthy candidates.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

The public safety and order system may be at the crossroads of big choices. To choose correctly depends on moral virtue which, according to Aristotle, means "the ability to choose by a rule what a man endowed with practical wisdom would determine to be the middle way between two extremes", considered to be vices.

"From the perspective of the public sector, the importance of organizational culture, of the environment with which young people who enter public positions come into contact, must be emphasized. Institutional construction, as well as managerial decisions, must always bear in mind the limitation of the possibility of elements that present a risk from the perspective of ethical norms to negatively influence the operation of the institution. They are truths discovered by the ancient Greeks that must only be applied. (Radu, L. et al. (2013). Ethics. Bucharest: Publishing House Didactics and Pedagogy.)

The public order system in Romania faces profound structural challenges. Solutions cannot come from superficial reforms, but from coherent policies, oriented towards human resources and legislative stability. Regaining public trust must become a strategic objective.

In this context, the evolution perspective of the system must consider an integrated approach, in which the human resource is placed at the center of the reform. It is not enough just to fill vacant positions, but it is essential to increase the quality of the selection, by introducing real mechanisms for evaluating moral, psychological and professional skills. Continuous training, authentic mentoring and the valorization of professional experience must become basic pillars of institutional functioning.

Also, legislative stability is a fundamental condition for the efficiency of police action. A predictable, coherent and correlated regulatory framework with the realities on the ground will

reduce the risk of hesitation in decision-making and strengthen the legal authority of the police officer. At the same time, it is necessary to develop institutional protection mechanisms that support the staff in the exercise of their duties, especially in borderline situations.

Another essential direction is technological modernization and adaptation to new forms of crime. Investments in digital infrastructure, data analysis and specialist training must become real priorities, not just declarative goals. Without them, the gap between the institutions and the criminal environment will continue to deepen.

Last but not least, regaining the citizen's trust must be the result of an authentic process, based on professionalism, transparency and consistency. Trust cannot be imposed, but is built over time, through every interaction between police officer and citizen. In this sense, organizational culture and professional ethics become determining factors.

In conclusion, the future of the public order and safety system depends on its ability to make fair, balanced and responsible choices, in the spirit of that "middle way" that Aristotle spoke of, but adapted to contemporary realities.

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