



Emerging Markets Queries in Finance and Business

# Unethical aspects and the recent manifestation of corruption in Romanian public administration

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## Abstract

This paper attempts to set some conceptual boundaries and presents corruption as a social phenomenon, which is produced and re-produced in society. Manifested at all levels of Romanian society, petty or grand corruption seriously affect the political, legal, local and central administration domains, thus preventing a normal evolution of society. At the institutional level, a specialized agency was set up to investigate corruption. The paper deals with the deep signification and meanings of corruption. A general valid definition for the phenomenon is difficult to offer and the normative approach to define it is not enough. Under the most general terms, corruption is seen as abuse of power. Several definitions have been proposed for corruption seen as a social phenomenon. The main objective is to analyze corruption in a quantitative way and to examine the evolution of the phenomenon in Romania. Also, a comparative analysis has been made, based on the results of the National Anticorruption Department annual reports.

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## 1. Introduction

The need to eradicate corruption and improve the ethical standards of elected officials and public servants has become a major issue on the public agenda.

“Unethical behavior is one of the most dangerous ills of modern governance, with the potential to damage public trust in government and the foundations of democracy” Beeri et al. 2013.

The corruption phenomenon, which has existed ever since ancient times, has always been considered one of

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the most severe and widespread forms of behavior which perverts the administration of the public sector. As Small states, “forms of malpractice in business and administration were as common in Greco-Roman times as today” Small, 1993: 293.

This scourge severely affects the social moral values, undermines the citizens’ trust in the necessity of the rule of law, of democracy and of the respect of human rights, while endangering the human social and economic progress. Corruption is a phenomenon which becomes attached to the legal and economic mechanisms of society, affecting its genetic code as a ‘cancer’.

In terms of **methodology** we used the secondary analysis of many reliable data provided by official national statistics and the theoretical approach of the recent evolution of corruption phenomenon in Romania. We performed a comparison of the last years regarding: the number of cases judged by the National Anticorruption Department (Direcția Națională Anticorupție - DNA), the number of corruption crimes and the number of convictions for corruption crimes.

The main **objective** was to analyze corruption in a quantitative way, to examine the evolution of the phenomenon in Romania and also to reveal the role of National Anticorruption Department.

The first part of the paper is an overview of the concept of corruption, seen from different perspectives: normative, political and social.

The second part of the paper is a comparative analysis of the state of corruption in Romania, as follows from the annual reports issued by the National Anticorruption Department – a specialized structure in fighting corruption.

## 2. Literature Background

The United Nations tried to draw the attention of the international community, more than a decade ago, upon the issue related to professionalism and ethics in the public service. As our paper deals only with ethics in the public service, this concept refers to broad norms that delineate how public servants should exercise judgment and discretion in carrying out their official duties United Nations, 2000, p1.

The recent literature on public service pays much attention to ethical values. Public service values are classified in three categories: ethical values (e.g., integrity, fairness), democratic values (e.g., impartiality, the rule of law), and professional values (e.g., effectiveness, service).

As Omurgonulsen and Oktem point out, although ethical values take place within the core public services values, it is questionable how such values can become operational and to what extent they can be influential in combating unethical conduct (2009, p.153).

Values evoke emotional responses and create the disposition toward certain kind of conducts. We shall analyze corruption as a deviation from ethical values.

From a conceptual point of view, corruption is a type of behavior which deviates the normal obligations related to a public authority or which violates the legal norms forbidding the exercise of certain forms and types of influence.

From an etymological perspective, the concept of ‘corruption’ designates a deviation from morality, from duty, from correctness Cherciu 2004. The term comes from the Latin „corruptio”, characterizing the behavior of the clerk who, in exchange of money or other undue advantages, trades the attributes of the function invested in him Mrejeru et al. 2000. Committing such deeds endangers the deployment of the state activity and of all sectors of social life.

To corrupt means to deviate from the norm of the morale, being the equivalent of depravation, bribery regarding ideas, social phenomena, feelings; of losing integrity, purity, distinction, of deformation and degradation Coteanu et al 1998: 230. Considering morality and ethics as a whole as the starting point of the definitions of corruption, things become even more complicated as corruption is, at the same time, a public evil, for us as a society but also a “private good” for the corrupted Dorinica et al. 2005.

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