



3rd Economics & Finance Conference, Rome, Italy, April 14-17, 2015 and 4th Economics & Finance Conference, London, UK, August 25-28, 2015

## Civil Servants Motivation and Work Performance in Romanian Public Institutions

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### Abstract

In times of globalisation and continuous change, public institutions face the challenge of satisfying population' requirements having reduced resources at their disposal. In such a context, in order to be able to provide qualitative public services to the citizens, public institutions need to focus on the only resource that can help an organisation flourish and successfully achieve their mission - the human capital. However, building and maintaining a capable and competitive workforce has proved to be an important challenge for public organisations. Romanian public institutions deal with high levels of employee fluctuation as large numbers of civil servants are leaving the public sector for better paid jobs in private companies.

The objective of our research is to provide a comprehensive up-to-date analysis regarding the factors that motivate Romanian civil servants to efficiently and effectively perform their duties. The data analysed in our paper has been collected through a survey conducted between the 1st of July and the 31st of August 2013 in several Romanian public institutions. The questionnaire designed for this stage of our research contained six identification questions and ten items to be rated on a scale from 1 to 9 regarding the factors that influence civil servants' work performance. 120 civil servants filled in our questionnaire. The data has been analysed and processed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). We were interested to identify statistically significant associations among our research variables, and tested the existence of an association between control variables and dependent variables. The results of our research show that civil servants' workplace motivation is influenced by factors mainly related to day to day activity such as superior's leadership style, the content of the performed activity or the level of independence they enjoy in performing their attributions and to a lesser extent by factors related to professional development such as participating to professional training activities or career development opportunities. In conclusion, we can state that the persons who choose to work in Romanian public institutions are mainly driven by motivating factors such as work environment and conditions or the content of the activity performed.

Our paper brings into academic discussion the situation of human capital in Romanian public institutions where increased attention needs to be paid to creating a motivational and challenging work environment, to encouraging professional development and performance in order to be able to attain strategic objectives and improved institutional results.

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Peer-review under responsibility of IISES-International Institute for Social and Economics Sciences.

*Keywords:* human capital; motivation; work performance; civil service

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## 1. Introduction

In times of political change, globalisation and high societal demands, in order to achieve the desired outcome, public institutions need to direct their attention towards the most valuable resource at their disposal - the human capital. However, public organizations across numerous European countries face a series of challenges in the area of human resources, such as constant competition with the private sector organizations to attract and retain the best prepared professionals, frequent reorganizations and staff reduction, high levels of staff turnover. Only through highly prepared human resources can organizations develop and flourish in a period when their activity becomes more and more complex, more specific and changes continuously. In this context, public institutions management needs to identify the right solutions to motivate their employees to reach for higher performance standards, to consolidate their commitment to the organization, to encourage initiative and active participation in the workplace, so that the necessary premises for individual and organizational development would be created.

## 2. Literature review

Research in the area has shown that the factors that determine public sector employees motivation are different from the ones that influence the motivation of the persons who work in the private sector (Houston, 2000; Buelens, M. and Van den Broeck, H., 2007). Even if studies show that both public and private sector employees value meaningful work, private sector employees have been proved to consider high income to be an important job characteristic, while public employees find important chances for promotion, job security, followed by high income (Houston, 2000). Houston (2000) considers that for public employees the intrinsic reward of the work that provides the feeling of accomplishment is more valuable compared to extrinsic motivators such as high income or short work hours.

Furthermore, specialists state that public sector organizations tend to employ persons whose values and needs converge with the mission of the public organization (Perry and Wise, 1990; Perry, 1996, 1997; Camilleri, 2007; Wright, 2007). Perry and Wise (1990) associated the public service motivation with the "desire to serve the public interest, loyalty to duty and to the government as a whole, and social equity" and appreciated that "the level and type of an individual's public service motivation and the motivational composition of a public organization's workforce have been posited to influence individual job choice, job performance, and organizational effectiveness."

Following the review of a series of articles regarding the impact of financial incentives, job design, participation, and goal setting on employee and organizational performance in public, private and non-profit institutions, Perry et al. (2006) formulated a series of propositions regarding the afore mentioned elements of the traditional performance paradigm, as enunciated by Locke et al. (1980). The authors appreciate that individual financial incentives are ineffective in traditional public sector settings, while job design, participation and challenging and specific goals enhance to a certain extent employee performance. Moynihan and Pandey (2007) also suggest that helping employees feel as if they are meaningfully contributing to organizational goals reduces employee frustration and strengthens their commitment. However, the effectiveness of each of the four elements must be considered within organizational conditions.

Wright (2007) further develops on the goal theory and reaches the conclusion that it provides a strong theoretical foundation for understanding the independent contributions of task, mission, and public service to employee work motivation and performance. The author concludes that "public employees are more motivated to perform their work when they have clearly understood and challenging tasks that they feel are important and achievable". The intrinsic value identified by the employees in the mission of their organization influences their work motivation by increasing the importance they placed on their own work (Wright, 2007).

However, increased individual performance of the public sector employees also depends on their satisfaction with extrinsic rewards, such as financial benefits, professional development opportunities, challenging work environment.

Bossaert (2003) appreciates that a stimulating career development system is based on the existence of a promoting system founded upon merit recognition and individual performance reward, mobility opportunities, professional training and coaching.

Another important factor that generates increased performance compared to resources, regulation, market structure and organization are considered to be the managerial variables, including leadership style and expertise, organizational culture, HRM and strategy (Boyne, 2003; Moynihan et al., 2012).

Public sector employees motivation and, implicitly, work performance is influenced by a diversity of factors that are either intrinsic or extrinsic, by organizational culture and work environment, the content of the activity performed or the leadership style of their line manager. Through our paper, we intend to provide an analysis of the factors that specifically influence Romanian civil servants work motivation and to identify the characteristics that trigger a certain motivational behaviour.

### 3. Research methodology

The objective of our research is to provide a comprehensive up-to-date analysis regarding the factors that motivate Romanian civil servants to efficiently and effectively perform their duties. The data analysed in our paper has been collected through a survey conducted between the 1st of July and the 31st of August 2013 in several Romanian public institutions.

The questionnaire designed for this stage of our research contained six identification questions regarding respondent's position within the civil service (management, executive level, special attribution position), highest academic qualification (high school degree, bachelor degree, master degree, advanced studies diploma), civil service seniority (less than 3 years, between 3 and 5 years, between 5 and 10 years, between 10 and 15 years, more than 15 years), area of activity, public institution dimension (less than 50 employees, between 51 and 100 employees, between 101 and 150 employees, between 151 and 300 employees, more than 301 employees) and administrative level (central, territorial or local public administration).

The research instrument contained ten factors that influence civil servants' work performance, such as the content of the performed activity, level of independence and responsibility, institutional impact on society, workplace safety, salary level etc. Our dependent variables, the motivational factors, were measured by asking the respondents to appreciate their influence upon motivation and work performance using a scale from 1 to 9. As mentioned by Andersen and Kjeldsen (2010), this is a common measure of job satisfaction used by most of the previous studies of in the area of PSM and job satisfaction.

The questionnaires were distributed within institutions of central public administration, territorial agencies and local public administration, both in electronic format, using <https://docs.google.com> platform, and in hard copies. 120 civil servants filled in our questionnaire. The percentages of respondents from each administrative level (central, territorial and local), as well as other respondents characteristics, are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Respondents' Profiles

Variable	Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Public institution administrative level	Central public administration	37	30.8
	Territorial public administration	10	8.3
	Local public administration	73	60.8
Civil service position	Management position	13	10.8
	Executive position	84	70.0
	Special attribution position	23	19.2
Highest academic qualification	high school degree	12	10
	bachelor degree	36	30
	master degree	59	49.2
	advanced studies diploma	12	10

Civil service seniority	less than 3 years	24	20.0
	between 3 and 5 years	14	11.7
	between 5 and 10 years	29	24.2
	between 10 and 15 years	30	25.0
	more than 15 years	22	18.3
Public institution dimension	less than 50 employees	7	5.2
	between 51 and 100 employees	8	6.0
	between 101 and 150 employees	10	7.5
	between 151 and 300 employees	56	41.8
	more than 301 employees	39	29.1

The questionnaire was addressed to civil servants, in general, persons who occupy either managerial, executive positions or who occupy a public manager position - civil servants with specific attributions in the area of public administration reform, according to the Romanian legislation in the area of civil service, and who have benefited from specialised training in this purpose.

The sample of our research was built using the random sampling technique. Any available civil servant was invited to answer the questionnaire especially designed for this stage of the research. As shown in Table 1, the persons who filled in our questionnaire occupy either management positions (10.8%), executive positions (70%) or are civil servants with specific attributions (19.2%).

The majority of our respondents are working in public institutions of Romanian central and local public administration with a large number of employees: 29.1% of them are working in a public institution with more than 301 employees, 49.3% of them are working in a public institution with 101 to 300 employees. The other 18.7% of our respondents are working in a public institution with less than 150 employees.

Their areas of activity are varied: budget, finance and public investments; public policy; human resources; European funds administration; organisational management etc.

The data has been analysed and processed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). We were interested to identify statistically significant associations among our research variables and tested the existence of an association between the control variables of our research - independent variables and the motivational factors - dependent variables.

#### 4. Results and analysis

The questioned persons have been asked to evaluate to what extent a series of motivational factors influence their workplace motivation and performance level using a 9 point scale from 1 - no influence to 9 - very high influence. The motivational factors evaluated by our respondents are: the content of the performed activity, level of independence and responsibility, work environment and conditions, institutional impact on society, superior' s leadership style, salary level, professional training opportunities, career development opportunities, workplace safety, results of the individual performance appraisal process.

In order to obtain clearer and more eloquent results we processed the collected information in two stages. First, we established a correspondence between the data collected using the 1 to 9 evaluation scale and an 1 to 5 Likert scale where 1 equals no influence, 2 - minor influence, 3 - moderate influence, 4 - high influence, 5 - very high influence. In this stage, the motivational factors for which our respondents checked the answers 1 or 2 have been qualified as having no influence upon their work motivation and performance level (1), answers 3 and 4 have been qualified as having little influence (2), answers 5 have been considered to produce moderate influence upon their work motivation and performance level (3), answers 6 and 7 have been qualified as having high influence (4), answers 8 and 9 have been considered as having very high influence upon civil servants work motivation and performance level (5). Secondly, we put together the number of answers entered in the category of factors that produce high and very high

influence upon civil servants work motivation and performance level and determined the percentage of respondents whom are significantly influenced by the above mentioned factors.

Figure 4 below shows that the factors that produce significant influence (high and very high influence) upon a larger number civil servants motivation and performance level are: superior' s leadership style, work environment and conditions, the content of the performed activity, level of independence and responsibility, workplace safety.

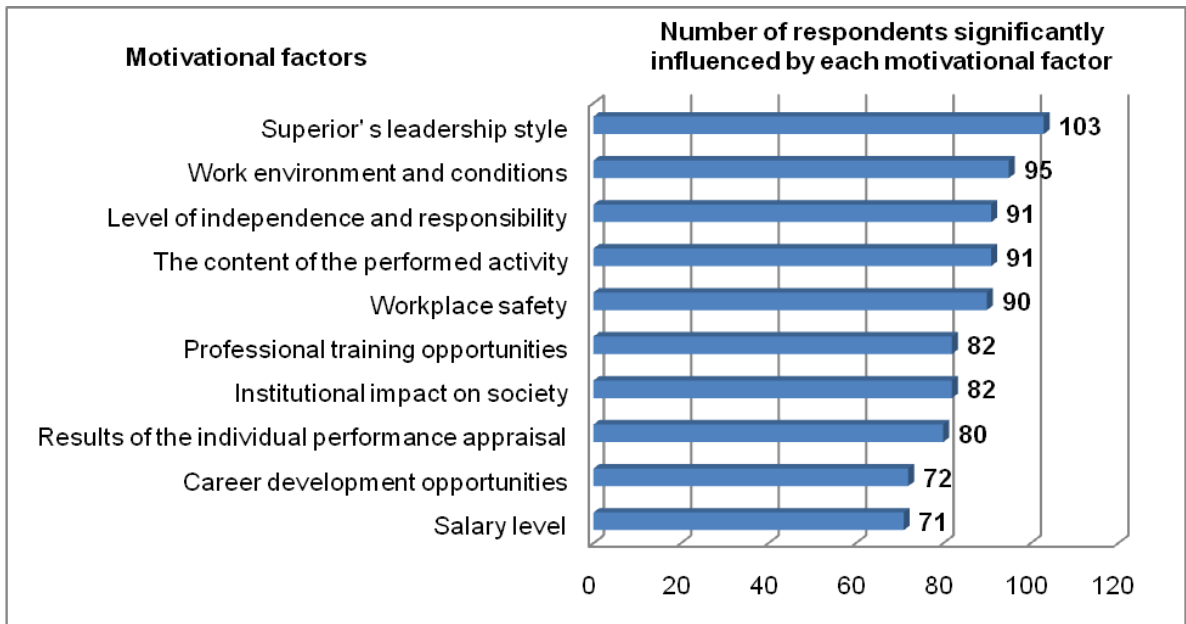


Fig. 1. Factors that produce a significant influence on civil servants' performance level

Based on the research results illustrated above, we can state that the most important factor in determining Romanian civil servants motivation and work performance is their superior' leadership style. In line with other research in the area (Van Wart, 2005; Yukl, 2002; Fernandez, 2010), our study shows that the leadership behaviour plays an important part in determining subordinate and, implicitly, organizational performance. In order to be able to achieve departmental and institutional outcomes or to identify the right solutions for crisis situations, the persons who occupy managerial civil service positions need to use their interpersonal abilities to build relations based on trust with their subordinates, to delegate and assign tasks, to encourage learning and development among execution civil servants.

Our research shows that aspects connected to work environment and conditions and workplace safety or the nature of the activity performed, the level of independence in performing job attributions, the level of responsibility assigned by line managers represent the factors that produce increased influence upon civil servants work performance. At the other end of the hierarchy presented in the figure above, there are the aspects connected to professional training opportunities, civil service career development or the results of individual professional appraisal process. The fact that civil servants are not motivated in performing their duties by aspects related to professional development might be explained by the inconsistency and formal implementation of human resources policies in this area that characterize Romanian public institutions. As shown by Androniceanu and Ciobanu (2014), performance appraisal takes place only on paper as managers do not use this opportunity to discuss with their subordinates the results of their professional activity or to assess and identify their training needs. The inappropriate implementation of civil servants individual performance appraisal limits significantly the positive consequences this activity should produce upon civil servants motivation as effective reward of high performing employees and improvement of individual professional performance cannot be founded upon inefficient performance evaluation. With regard to the career development process, previous

research and analysis have shown that the increased importance granted to the number of years spent on a certain position and the lack of professional development opportunities based on the performance results, as well as the fact that the promotion system depends on the results of a formally conducted performance appraisal system negatively impact upon the quality of the career development system.

Unlike other studies in the area (Perry, J. L. and Wise, L. R., 1990), the results of our research show that Romanian civil servants are not primarily driven in performing their duties by their wish to contribute the provision of public services. Even if specialists in the area consider that the persons who chose to work in the public sector are mainly determined to do so by their wish to serve public interest, the hierarchy of the factors that motivates them in achieving a certain performance level at their work place changes.

It is important to note that the remuneration level is the least stimulating factor of the ones enunciated above. Even if it highly motivates 59% of the persons included in our sample (71 respondents), the salary level does not represent such a strong incentive for Romanian civil servants as superior's leadership style does. During the last years, civil servants payment system in Romania underwent numerous changes and, at the moment, it is characterised by the differences in the payments received by civil servants as well as a low payment level. In this context, the current remuneration system represents rather an dissatisfaction reason among public sector employees who require either the complete implementation of the *Law regarding unitary remuneration* or the introduction of a new performance based payment system (Androniceanu and Ciobanu, 2014).

Table 2 illustrates the inter-correlations identified among the 10 motivational factors rated by our respondents - which have been established as dependent variables and five independent variables (public institution administrative level, occupied civil service position, highest academic qualification, civil service seniority, number of employees of the public institution) obtained using Pearson correlation.

Table 2: Correlation Analysis – Pearson Correlations Matrix Correlations

		Public institution administrative level	Occupied civil service position	Highest academic qualification	Civil service seniority	Number of employees of the public institution
The content of the performed activity	Pearson Correlation	<b>.280**</b>	-.078	-.054	-.014	-.139
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.409	.571	.882	.141
	N	113	113	113	113	113
Level of independence and responsibility	Pearson Correlation	<b>.325**</b>	-.019	-.160	.037	<b>-.317**</b>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.843	.090	.698	.001
	N	113	113	113	113	113
Work environment and conditions	Pearson Correlation	.129	-.087	.013	-.068	-.158
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.168	.351	.891	.470	.090
	N	116	116	116	116	116
Institutional impact on society	Pearson Correlation	.073	-.054	.022	-.183	-.129
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.443	.570	.817	.051	.173
	N	114	114	114	114	114
Superior's leadership style	Pearson Correlation	<b>.260**</b>	-.032	.056	-.132	-.141
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	.734	.550	.157	.129

	N	117	117	117	117	117
Salary level	Pearson	-.043	.012	-.090	-.012	-.175
	Correlation					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.646	.896	.340	.900	.061
	N	115	115	115	115	115
Professional training opportunities	Pearson	<b>.272**</b>	-.049	-.022	.047	<b>-.192*</b>
	Correlation					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.601	.820	.616	.040
	N	115	115	115	115	115
Career development opportunities	Pearson	-.075	<b>.212*</b>	-.020	<b>-.247**</b>	-.041
	Correlation					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.420	.022	.831	.007	.660
	N	117	117	117	117	117
Workplace safety	Pearson	<b>.211*</b>	-.055	-.169	<b>.266**</b>	-.064
	Correlation					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.022	.554	.069	.004	.492
	N	117	117	117	117	117
Performance appraisal results	Pearson	-.094	<b>.204*</b>	-.150	-.155	.085
	Correlation					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.330	.033	.118	.105	.378
	N	110	110	110	110	110

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The Person correlation revealed that there can be established statistically significant relation among the factors that influence workplace motivation and performance and the dependent variables.

The following 5 motivational factors were found to be positively related to the public institution administrative level: the content of the performed activity, level of independence and responsibility, superior's leadership style, professional training opportunities, workplace safety.

The following two tables show the distribution of the answers received based on the administrative level of the public institution for two of the most important motivational factors identified according to our study.

As show by table 3 below, most of our respondents from local public administration are highly and very highly influenced by their superior's leadership style (a total of 92.9%), while only 50% of the respondents from territorial public administration are significantly influenced by this motivational factor. Regarding civil servants in central public administration, 62.2% of the respondents are highly influenced by their superior's leadership style in their work performance and 27% are strongly influenced by this factor (a total of 89.2%).

Table 3: Cross tabulation between Superior's leadership style \* Public institution administrative level Crosstab

			Public institution administrative level			
			central administration	public territorial administration	public local administration	public administration
			Total			
Superior' leadership style	s Little influence	Count	0	4	2	6
		% within Public institution administrative level	.0%	40.0%	2.9%	5.1%
	Moderate influence	Count	4	1	3	8
		% within Public institution administrative level	10.8%	10.0%	4.3%	6.8%
High influence	Count	23	0	17	40	
	% within Public institution administrative level	62.2%	.0%	24.3%	34.2%	
Very high influence	Count	10	5	48	63	
	% within Public institution administrative level	27.0%	50.0%	68.6%	53.8%	
Total	Count	37	10	70	117	
	% within Public institution administrative level	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

The data presented in table 4 below shows the distribution of the respondents influenced by the level of independence and responsibility in performing work duties based on the administrative level of the public institution they pertain to. The level of independence and responsibility in performing work duties is an important stimulating factor especially for the civil servants working in local public administration - 86.7% of our respondents are highly and very highly influenced by this factor, and for those working in territorial public administration - 80% of our respondents are highly and very highly influenced by this motivational factor. Regarding civil servants in central public administration, a total of 68.6% of the respondents are highly influenced by the level of independence and responsibility in performing their duties.

Table 4: Cross tabulation between Level of independence and responsibility \* Public institution administrative level Crosstab



			Public institution administrative level			
			central administration	public territorial administration	public local administration	public Total
Level of independence and responsibility	No influence	Count	2	0	1	3
		% within Public institution administrative level	5.7%	.0%	1.5%	2.7%
	Little influence	Count	1	0	1	2
		% within Public institution administrative level	2.9%	.0%	1.5%	1.8%
	Moderate influence	Count	8	2	7	17
	% within Public institution administrative level	22.9%	20.0%	10.3%	15.0%	
	High influence	Count	19	4	23	46
		% within Public institution administrative level	54.3%	40.0%	33.8%	40.7%
	Very high influence	Count	5	4	36	45
		% within Public institution administrative level	14.3%	40.0%	52.9%	39.8%
Total		Count	35	10	68	113
		% within Public institution administrative level	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Career development opportunities and performance appraisal results were found to be positively related to the occupied civil service position; career development opportunities and workplace safety were found to be negatively, respectively positively related to civil service seniority, while the level of independence and responsibility and professional training opportunities were found to be negatively related to the number of employees of the public institution. No statistically significant relationships were identified between the motivational factors and the highest academic qualification.

The results of our research showed that the factors that contribute to settling a certain internal environment (such as the work environment and conditions), the nature of the activity performed by the civil servant, their independence and responsibility in performing their attributions and, most importantly, their superior's leadership style produce a higher impact upon civil servants' motivation than aspects such as career development or professional training opportunities and salary level do. In a centralized civil service system such as the Romanian one, where the framework of the civil servants' remuneration or the career development system is established by national legislation, the results of our research revealed that civil servants' performance level are mainly influenced by the institutional internal environment and by organizational culture. Based on these results we can conclude that civil servants' motivation to remain in the public sector and to reach for higher performance level in the workplace depend on the quality of their work environment.

### 5. Conclusions

The results of our research show that civil servants' workplace motivation is influenced by factors mainly related to day to day activity such as superior's leadership style, the content of the performed activity or the level of independence they enjoy in performing their attributions and to a lesser extent by factors related to professional development such as participating to professional training activities or career development opportunities.

Given the significant impact of the leadership style upon civil servants work performance, we can conclude that line managers' abilities to motivate, commit and engage their subordinates into achieving high performance levels represent decisive elements in building a competitive civil servants body. In this context, Romanian public institutions need to focus their efforts towards consolidating management civil servants leadership abilities for, as mentioned by the European Commission in a recent report on the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of European Social Fund interventions in administrative and institutional capacity building across 10 EU Member States (European Commission, 2011), a lack of competence and skills is manifested at all levels including the level of civil service management. During a period when individuals prepared to undertake all sorts of tasks represent valuable assets for the organization, public employers should pay more attention to creating an appropriate work environment that would enhance civil servants' commitment to the organization and motivation to reach higher performance standards.

In conclusion, we can state that the persons who choose to work in Romanian public institutions are mainly driven by motivating factors such as superior's leadership style, work environment and conditions or the content of the activity performed.

Our paper brings into academic discussion the situation of human capital in Romanian public institutions where increased attention needs to be paid to creating a motivational and challenging work environment, to encouraging professional development and performance in order to be able to attain strategic objectives and improved institutional results. However, given the limited sample of our survey, the facts ascertained based on the results of our research do not necessarily reflect the situation in any Romanian public institution. We consider that further research in the area needs to be undertaken and that the research sample should be designed in a stratified manner, taking into consideration the number of the Romanian civil servants from all administrative levels and the percentage of persons who occupy managerial, executive or civil service positions with special attributions. In addition, we consider that, starting from the conclusion that the leadership style of the line manager represents the factor that produces the highest influence upon civil servants work motivation, further research needs to be undertaken regarding the type of leadership that generates a positive impact upon individual performance. Another point for further research would be the causes why professional aspects such as career development and remuneration level do not produce a significant impact upon Romanian civil servants motivation.

## Acknowledgment

This paper was co-financed from the European Social Fund, through the Sectorial Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2007-2013, project number POSDRU/159/1.5/S/138907 "Excellence in scientific interdisciplinary research, doctoral and postdoctoral, in the economic, social and medical fields -EXCELIS", coordinator The Bucharest University of Economic Studies

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