



## HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN ROMANIAN ORGANIZATIONS AND THE SPECIFICITY OF THE NATIONAL DEFENCE SYSTEM

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This paper is written from the contextual perspective of understanding and reviewing the processes associated with human resources management (HRM) in organizations. Consequently, the purpose of this paper is to explore the trends of HRM practices in order to identify the specific characteristics of Romanian organizations and to establish its specificity in the national defense system. In the first part of the paper we will refer to the research framework and point out the evolving and conceptual benchmarks that are of importance to this approach. The characteristics of human resources management in Romanian organizations are established by comparisons with other countries, while the central axis of comparison is represented by the member states of the European Union (EU). Starting from the results of this analysis, the particularities of HRM that are defense-related, identified through the study of the regulatory framework and comments regarding the current guidelines are made. In the conclusions, the paper will present main ideas resulted, personal contributions, issues addressed and research limitations.

**Keywords:** human resources management; organizations; Romania; defence; particularities; guidelines.

In a globalized world based on the interaction between states/organizations/individuals and in a European Union which is concerned with the integration of diverse members, understanding the dichotomy and identifying points of convergence between human resources management in civil and military organizations is an issue of interest when it comes to promoting collaboration, avoiding conflicts and maintaining lasting peace. For example, if a given organization has a specific approach to human resources management which is very different from trends at global/European level, and the foreign organizations with which it collaborates guide their actions in line with established guidelines rather than those that it already practices, deficiencies and difficult situations may occur.

### Research gap

Although the issue of the particularities of human resources management in military organizations has been dwelled upon in articles published in our country and falls within the research concerns, I was not able to use them to the

highest degree because the analysis of the military HRM in relation to trends in the civil environment, which are established at international level, was missing from these scientific approaches. Taking into account my personal interest in the issue of transforming military HRM, which, at national level, is seen as one of the main directions for developing defence abilities for the next 3 years due to its ultimate objective: ensuring high-quality staff able to meet the system's strategic need to face the new challenges of the security environment – I have decided to address this gap. This is related to the fact that researchers in the field acknowledge the need to explore how HRM practices manifest themselves in organizations in different countries in order to understand the comments on the specificity of the HRM in organizations, so that ideas applicable in relevant contexts can be extrapolated.

### The general framework of the research

An expanding field in HRM is the extension of the interest from the analysis of theories and practices from a universal perspective to their contextual analysis. Taking these aspects into consideration, this paper fits in the debate "convergence versus divergence", from the point of view of the general scientific framework. This falls within the qualitative research, and the article covers a thematic analysis (it provides

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conceptual and evolutionary frameworks and highlights the timeliness of the thematic approach), a comparative analysis and an empirical one through the observation and study of the specific regulatory framework. In order to reach this, the first part of the paper focuses on the comparative analysis of the trends reported by the organizations from the European and non-European space, and the objective is to highlight how Romanian organizations are, in terms of the practices specific to the HRM-associated processes. In the light of this context, in the second part of the paper, we will describe and explain the general specificity of HRM in the Romanian military organizations, through the bibliographic study of the specialized papers and of the normative framework in force. Therefore, the premise of this work is that a good understanding of the guidelines for HRM applied in Romanian organizations, in relation to those in the European and non-European space, can be useful to explore the specific HRM in military organizations and to review some topical guidelines that allow it to operate at the highest level. Naturally, I believe that it is difficult to conceive a project in order to transform the human resources management in the Romanian army, a project which is not based on the understanding of its specific characteristics and its development in accordance with the current trends, but at the level allowed by the specific characteristics of the mission assigned to it. Consequently, through this approach, the article is intended to be an early step towards a serious study aimed at identifying the most appropriate instruments, actions and processes needed to be adopted for the transformation of the HRM in the Romanian army, in accordance with the strategic objectives established.

Therefore, by writing this paper, my aim is to do the following: highlight the organization-specific HRM practices in Romania compared to organizations in the EU area and highlight the specificity of the HRM in military organizations, with implications for future research and applications (e.g. the aspects that can be revised for the transformation of HRM in the national defence system). From the point of view of the results that are expected, this paper aims to capture the successful trends of HRM at the level of the organizations in other countries, the characteristics of Romanian organizations, the specificity and possible guidance for the national defence system,

by referring to methods, instruments, processes and actions relevant to the field.

### **Evolutionary and conceptual benchmarks on HRM**

The importance of developing the theory and practices of using people in organizations has gradually become more acknowledged, as phenomena with a global impact on labor market activities emerge. The industrial development at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century drove both the increase of employers' interest in staff-related activities and the development of first scientific research on people's work. In that case, the Taylorist<sup>1</sup> versions reflect quite well the rationalization of work organization in the industrial environment, the emergence of the concept of administrative operation highlighted the importance of "planning, organizing, commanding and controlling the activities of groups of people"<sup>2</sup> for the success of businesses, and the development of the bureaucratic model by Max Weber did not only refer to staff for the first time, but it emphasized the role of specific activities of recruitment, selection and promotion of employees. The economic crisis that followed the First World War led to new responsibilities in terms of staff, and the studies showing the importance of individual relations at the workplace over productivity stood out<sup>3</sup>. The post-industrial economy after the Second World War led to the awareness of the status of a critical competitive resource for staff, and thus to the dissemination of the term "human resources"<sup>4</sup> and the emergence of independent functions specific to human resources management, such as selection, training, compensation and performance evaluation<sup>5</sup>.

As a result, in line with the reasoning on the importance of focusing the HRM on those approaches and practices that contribute to the achievement of the desired results, in the current context, the path followed by researchers and practitioners continues to focus on identifying those ideas and tools that match the objectives of the business, which have the ability to improve organizational performance in a market associated with innovation, speed and adaptability. In literature, there are several relatively similar approaches to the concept of human resources management. In order to capture the timeliness of the topic, this paper refers to the comprehensive approach to human



resources management according to which it "represents the process of achieving organizational objectives by attracting, keeping, developing, removing and using human resources correctly in an organization"<sup>6</sup>.

In other words, in this paper, I will take into consideration the analysis of specific processes of recruitment, selection, training and evaluation, from the perspective of the practices used (tools, processes, actions) in organizations – considered to be "a group of people working together"<sup>7</sup>.

### **Trends in HRM and the characteristics specific to Romanian organizations**

In this part I will analyze, from a comparative perspective, the international trends and the characteristics of human resources management practiced in Romanian organizations. In order to validate this analysis, I took into consideration the examination of the data provided by the last study published by Cranet, while also taking into account the literature in the field.

Cranet is a globally-known network for benchmarks provided in relation to the evolutionary aspects of international human resources management implemented by the employing organizations in Europe and countries in other parts of the world. Coordinated by the Cranfield School of Management in the United Kingdom, Cranet – a network based on the collaboration of over 40 universities and business schools located on six continents – was established in 1989 to respond to the need for information regarding the practice and performance of HRM in Europe and now in the world<sup>8</sup>. The Cranet research is based on data collected between 2014 and 2015, which was detailed in the report published in 2017. Using Cranet data, we will identify general trends, focusing on the data provided in general by organizations from countries integrated in the European Union, considered to be the main focus of the analysis.

Assuming that the Romanian HRM has some distinct features, we will analyze the approach of the organizations in our country in relation to the general trends reported by the other states participating in the study, with the focus on the organizations included in the main analysis axis.

In the report published in 2017, the Cranet research focused on a total of 35 countries: 21 of the

27 European Union Members (except for Poland, Bulgaria, Ireland, Portugal, the Czech Republic and Malta), 6 countries that are not part of the European Union (Iceland, Norway, Russia, Serbia, Switzerland and Turkey) and 8 non-European countries (Australia, Brazil, China, Indonesia, Israel, Philippines, South Africa and USA). The investigation tool used was a questionnaire divided into six sections, namely: the overall HRM activity in the organization, human resources practices, employee development, compensation and benefits, employee relations and communication, organizational details – and this addressed the HR managers of organizations with at least 100 employees.

Although the participating countries sent a total of 59.156 questionnaires, after removing the missing data, an overall response rate of 10,3% resulted. Compared to the EU response rate of 21,27%, Romania had a substantially lower rate of 7,76%. As regards the sectorial distribution of the sample, it is noted that around 70% of the responses came from private organizations, 20% from public ones and 10% from non-profit or mixed ones. This shows not only the greater interest of the private sector in such studies, but also the fact that there is consensus if we say that the specific tendencies of the HRM nowadays have their roots in the practices and policies of civil organizations. In the light of the scientific considerations on the concept of HRM, we will consider the following topics for the analysis of the data in the Cranet report: the recruitment and selections process, training and development of human resources and assessment from a performance-oriented perspective.

As regards recruitment and selection processes, the results appear to be converging.

Firstly, most companies prefer to recruit their managers from internal sources, and a key role is played by their own websites. Other popular methods are job trading sites and recruitment agencies, while social media are becoming more popular in EU countries, especially in the UK, Belgium and the Netherlands. The picture is easily diversified in the case of recruitment of the other categories of professionals, for which the organizations prefer, in addition to the aforementioned methods, verbal recommendations and social media, used by more than 20% of the participating organizations. Secondly, the most

frequently used methods of selecting managers and professionals are references and interview, competency, psychometric, technical, calculation tests and many more, and the online process is used less frequently. In addition, social media are used in the selection process in all countries, but they seem to be more widespread in Northern European countries, Belgium, France, the Netherlands and Sweden. For other categories of employees, selection methods such as recommendations, interviews, application forms and tests are widely used.

In this respect, the responses provided by the Romanian organizations show that the methods of recruiting managers are similar to those of European companies. For the recruitment of professionals and other staff, the most commonly used methods are verbal recommendations, websites of the companies and job agencies. Newspaper ads remain a method still used for recruiting staff other than managers and professionals. In the selection process of all staff categories, Romanian organizations stand out because the most frequently used method are job application forms, adjacent to verbal recommendations, one-on-one/panel interviews and competency/psychometric tests.

The second topic is the importance of training and developing human resources for the provision of employees with skills that they need in order to achieve their organizational objectives and to create a competitive advantage. Thus, giving a strategic role to the process of training and development of human resources is a key trend in today's HRM. On average, the vast majority of EU, non-EU and non-European countries (62,2%; 66% and 68%) have a written strategy in the field of training and development of human resources. Moreover, there is a very small percentage of companies in all countries, ranging from 3 to 6%, that completely outsource the training and development process, most of which make significant use of internal providers in such programs. In addition, investment in training and development of human resources amounted, on average, to 3,21% of the annual salary budget in EU countries, 3,34% in non-EU countries and 4,47% in non-European countries.

At the level of the organizations in our country, we can see a higher rate of investment in training and development than the average of EU countries by about 1,29% and a ranking in the top of those countries that have spent the most on training.

In general, organizations rely heavily on the assessment process in order to determine the training and development needs of human resources. On average, 74% of the companies in EU countries use their assessment systems to determine the needs for training and development. However, there are significant differences between the member countries. For example, while France, the Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom rely on this approach (89%, 85%, 87%, 86%), Sweden, Hungary, Finland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Cyprus are at the opposite pole (45%, 48%, 60%, 62%, 63%, 62%, 61%).

As regards the techniques used in order to assess the effectiveness of the training and development processes, about 70,2% of the organizations in the EU countries use the evaluation at the end of the programs. Other popular assessment methods are: informal feedback from line managers, informal feedback from employees and the degree of achievement of targets (66,6%, 64,7%, 66,9%). The assessment methods used very rarely are: job performance before and immediately after the end of the training period, i.e. a few months after the completion of the training period, the number of training days and the viability of the investment (20,9%, 29,2%, 48,7% and 14%). Unlike this, in organizations in non-EU countries, the informal feedback from line managers is the most frequently used technique.

In comparison to the other UE countries, the Romanian organizations report that they prefer to use the following techniques: training days, assessment immediately after the completion of the training, the degree of achievement of targets and informal feedback from line managers (65,8%, 50%, 48,3%, 37,8%).

Ultimately, the responses of the organizations from EU countries show that, regarding the methods of career development for employees, most of them use the following ones: on-the-job training, teamwork projects, coaching, mentoring, special tasks (90%, 84,5%, 73,4%, 71%, 72,9%), with less emphasis on training in development centers (35,9%).

Comparatively, most Romanian organizations report that the most frequently used methods in employee career development are: on-the-job training, coaching, mentoring, teamwork projects and learning-enhancing projects (97,8%, 95,6%, 76%, 73,8%, 82,2%, 79,1%).



As regards the evaluation of the human resources, this takes into account the importance that companies attach to issues such as: providing performance-based rewards/remuneration/other pecuniary benefits and using methods of direct communication with employees.

Compared to the levels reported by the Cranet survey between 2008 and 2010, in the study carried out in 2017, we can see that performance-based wage provision is generally more frequently used in most countries. Thus, we note that salary variability according to individual or collective performance ratings is much more frequently used (64%, 61%), compared to the possibility of being financially engaged by taking a percentage of the profit (30%), with a significant increase in this trend compared to the period 2008-2010. The survey also shows that this is done especially for key staff and less for the other staff categories.

As regards the ways in which pecuniary benefits are linked to performance, we notice a similarity between the target groups of the survey and a different approach as far as Romanian organizations are concerned. This discrepancy in the methods chosen by Romanian organizations is most likely based on cultural differences related to the reluctance to accept these forms of variable payroll, as well as normative regulations, suggesting that there is an approach which is less oriented toward performance-based remuneration.

Compared to the average rate of the organizations in the EU countries that communicate information on business strategies, job performance and organization of the work of professionals and other staff categories (51,3%), only 25% of the Romanian companies have such an approach. As a rule, in the majority of organizations among target groups of countries, employees communicate their views to their supervisor directly. Other "bottom-up" communication methods are meeting and providing information via electronic means.

Although Romanian companies generally converge to trends specific to the EU countries, we can notice that there are some distinct aspects which are most likely related to cultural typology, the institutional framework inherited from the period before '89, the degree of technological development, the infrastructure or some regulatory determinants which have a bearing on the way in which organizations work nowadays—in the context

of an economic environment in transition towards the West, which is supposed to be completed and continued with a process of perpetually shaping society<sup>9</sup>.

On the one hand, convergence can be attributed to a large part of the high number of multinational companies, usually from economically dominant countries at the EU level and more, which infuse specific HRM mechanisms and practices. On the other hand, by analyzing the data provided by the Cranet survey, we can see that, in relation to Western organizations, there is a certain rigidity about moving towards an informal approach to HRM practices. There are general staff strategies in the Romanian organizations, but the frequency of specific recruitment, instruction or training strategies is visibly reduced.

Another important aspect is the decentralized responsibility for human resources. In fact, the cooperations of the HRM department with the line managers in Romanian organizations is subsequent, with the staff structure being responsible for the decisions related to employees, and with the communication still being marked by the formal hierarchical authority. In terms of recruitment and selection processes, even though organizations still use traditional methods such as job application forms, a trend towards using technology-based ones has been noticed, such as social media networks.

From the point of view of the assessment, there is a lack of correlation between the results of the professional assessment and the establishment of the training needs, but also an openness of organizations to use very popular training methods such as mentoring and coaching. After all, we are in agreement with the ones presented in this section if we assert that the HRM practices reportedly used in Romanian organizations have good prospects of orientation towards optimizing performance at organizational level.

Therefore, from the contemporary perspective of the HRM, contextualization remains particularly important when considering research of some issues related to human resources management, as the continuous large-scale changes in the economic, technological, social, political and legal climate involve changes in the relation between the main parties. Therefore, the development of a scientific approach regarding a human resources management issue in military organizations

requires specific identification, both in terms of the aforementioned trends and characteristics and in terms of the specific nature of the armed forces' missions.

**HRM in the national defence system  
Particularities and guidelines derived  
from the HRM specific to Romanian  
organizations**

Although the relation between civil and military organizations was established by the divergent nature of the strategic missions in society, the changes had an inherent impact on conflict scenarios as well also marked the internal connotations of the armed forces. As a result, military organizations, like their civil counterparts, had to review their strategic approach in order to adapt to the uncertain security environment, strengthening their status and effectiveness at national and other levels.

Analyzing the evolution of the HRM in the Romanian army, we note that it has followed a gradual path, similar to the international process, from the management stage promoted by the traditional school to that of staff management, continued with the entrepreneurial and post-entrepreneurial phase, which also marks the maturity of the concept in the '90s, and followed by the strategic approach<sup>10</sup>.

From a broad perspective, we can say that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the specific nature of HRM in military organizations continues to originate in the general mission of the armed forces to legitimately manage national and collective defence. Despite this, it is noted that this character has been getting softer, as the armed forces have been more able to tolerate a more flexible typology from the organizational point of view and the processes associated with HRM – as a consequence of technological development and increased transparency in order to respond adequately to the challenges of the international security environment.

Furthermore, it is important to bear in mind that this development requires special features inherent to the defence systems of individual states which, in order to represent the complexity of the phenomenon and to issue rigorous analytical considerations explaining them, can be analyzed from the perspective of concepts and provisions that shape important aspects of the HRM.

By virtue of this aspect, today's Romanian army is the product of the successive transformation of

the defence system since the '90s, as a *sine qua non* condition of the need to adapt to the imperatives of the development of the international environment and to integrate into the Euro-Atlantic security architecture, by elaborating new strategies, doctrines etc., the modernization of force structures, the attention given to the use of financial funds, preparation improvement and so on. Inherently, all of these changes have made their mark on the HRM.

Moreover, the characteristics of HRM in the defence system will be determined in accordance with specific national regulations and possible guidelines will be spelled out in light of the general specificity identified in the previous sub-chapter and of NATO's guidelines.

Firstly, the recruitment and selection processes are carried out on the principles of matching a person and an organization (abbreviated P-O), i.e. matching the individual's skills/attributes and the requirements of a job (abbreviated P-J)<sup>11</sup>, which seek to keep, out of a large number of candidates, only those who prove the potential to perform the next phase in terms of intellectual, commitment to the role, character and the ability to join the values of a reference group to particular through the tasks assigned. In this respect, recruitment takes into account having a diploma attesting the secondary educational training. Research<sup>12</sup> carried out by the research group coordinated by Giuseppe Caforio on European officers from 10 countries (Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden and Switzerland), points to some major trends in recruitment. The first one refers to the decline in the recruitment of officers strictly from internal sources, which implies greater convergence with civil organizations. Like this phenomenon, the national defence system relies on recruitment from internal sources, even if the attraction of candidates from the civil world is increasingly successful, especially in the fields of administrative and technical studies.

In the selection process, the following methods are used: medical examination, physical training examination, proficiency and skill tests (psychometric, technical etc.), personality tests and, frequently, and interview. As a rule, these tests produce scores according to which the hierarchy of those occupying one of the positions open for competition is established. In short, the selection of



military personnel is based on a two-dimensional examination: past education achievements in relation to future potential and consideration of medical, physical and mental conditions and some basic knowledge needed for the future role at the time of the "current" assessment.

Because a key aspect of this section is the changing nature of the military HRM, we can note that even though the process of personnel recruitment and selection keep conventional elements such as internal sources of incorporation in their institutions or retention methods, the military can focus on integrating specific instruments and civil organizations. For example, using technologies to promote their offers and recruitment through social networks, so that the army remains competitive in attracting well-educated candidates.

Secondly, if we take a brief look at the action lines mentioned in the security strategy<sup>13</sup>, for the defence area, we note that providing a high-quality resource is linked to the architectural adaptation of the force structure in a step-by-step manner and the adaptation of the training process to the challenges of the current and anticipated security environment.

Generally, a possible summary description of the specific nature of the military training process can be its focus on structuring doctrine concepts in order to create an optimal relation between the conventional and professional approach – based on "mobilizing resources in order to manage talent and skills"<sup>14</sup>. In other words, the training process is assimilated with training "performed by the army to achieve the capacity of the personnel/forces to perform specific tasks/missions by using the equipment"<sup>15</sup>. According to NATO-specific references, this includes the development of the knowledge, skills, competencies and critical attributes that are necessary to fulfill common basic tasks, those with physical requirements and those associated with military expertise.

As for the guidelines, NATO's design of changing the armed forces through the transforming dimensions of the training process is aimed at individual training, which, in addition to the institutional dimension, is becoming more and more effective in terms of self-development. This is also supported by the use of technologies, which extend and improve conventional learning methods. One of the most important trends is the

provision of distance learning, which, by using digitalized tools with synchronous, asynchronous and mixed interaction, joins NATO's intention to provide "learner-centered" training when and where necessary, increasing and supporting training in full force, regular army and spare part<sup>16</sup>. In this respect, e-training is gradually developing in our Romanian military organizations and is supported by digital platforms, but the way in which digitalized tools influence the achievement of training objectives and what actions need to be taken to manage performance at organizational level still need to be analyzed.

As regards evaluation, we believe that, similar to the civil environment, the results depend on drafting the objectives in terms of analyzing future skills needed, the methodological approach and the tools used to carry out the training process itself in line with the goals. The evaluation process in the national defence system is characterized by highlighting objectives, expectations, rules and values by translating them into measurable criteria, i.e. taking decisions as regards individual progress, rewards, sanctions, ranking and selection. Theoretically, this approach should focus on increasing the attention paid by the soldiers evaluated to the goals they have to achieve and on empowering the evaluators, who have the fundamental task to link performance standards to the tasks of their subordinates and the clear results expected. In essence, the transition from the annual assessment based on performance standards to the ongoing one is a possible forward-looking approach with multiple benefits in terms of organizational performance.

Therefore, the conventional approach continues to remain the fundamental attribute when looking at the specificity of the HRM in military organizations. Although in this section we have noted the limitations of convergence with civil organizations – as a consequence of the determinism of the culture and the missions of the military, the role of the parties involved, the dynamics of the security environment and the regulatory framework in examining variations in the processes associated with the management of military personnel, it is clear that there are also key similarities with current and future guidelines that arise when referring to technology and performance.

## Conclusions

The processes associated with the HRM in Romanian organizations are largely converged with the specific characteristics of the EU countries, while the distinct characteristics are part of the gap in the recognition of the specific guidelines, of the review in line with them and of the transformation as new concepts and technologies emerge.

In terms of human resources management in military organizations, the military admits that people are the most valuable asset, and the adjustment of the specific processes, preferably as soon as the slightest impact of external changes on the performance of missions is noticed, is essential for the completion of missions. It is generally important to bear in mind that such an approach requires particularities inherent to the national defence system, but it has a number of characteristics and guidelines similar to those of different organizations, in the context of integrating instruments that facilitate access to information, employability, personal development and performance. In light of this aspect, it is unlikely that all conventional practices in the HRM spectrum will work, and the key is to harmonize them with new approaches and tools that are institutionally strengthened, so that the army remains a viable option in competing for attracting and keeping high-qualified human resources and building a defence system capable of responding adequately to the challenges of the current security environment.

To summarize, the paper provides the following personal contributions:

- approaching the field of methods of analysis of HRM characteristics at the level of Romanian organizations, as compared to organizations in other countries (predominantly members of the European Union) – an approach that has a complementary character as regards previous papers conceived from the perspective of the exploration of theory, macro-level observations of practice, examination of national models, systems (public, private, military) etc.;

- raising the problem of the specificity of HRM in national military organizations in the "convergence versus divergence" vision, pointing to the specificities and the current guidelines.

The paper presents research limitations due to the following aspects: the comparative analysis of the data included statistical generalizations (from

2015), which captured only general characteristics and trends, defined by combining data gathered from several individuals in organizations, but not related to specific reference standards, which may be less appropriate for those concerned by the issue; much of the regulatory framework specific to the management of national defence system staff is not made available to the general public, which has not allowed the creation of a highly accurate picture of the specificities and guidelines identified.

Finally, the main issues addressed are: deepening the overall scientific framework approached in the work; extending research into the analysis of the characteristics of HRM to military organization in other states, so that ideas applicable in relevant contexts can be extrapolated to understand "the best practice"; the development of comprehensive studies reflecting how the processes are associated with HRM and why, through appropriate adaption of the research methods.

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