

# EXPLORING THE ROLES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE CIVIL SERVANTS WITH SPECIAL STATUS IN THE DETENTION UNITS IN ROMANIA. RECRUITMENT, TRAINING AND EVALUATION OF PRISON POLICE OFFICERS BETWEEN 2009-2021

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**Abstract:** In this article, we analyze the regulation of the special status of the civil servant in the penitentiary system in relation to the dynamics of recruitment, training, evaluation, and research of the human resource in the detention units in Romania between 2009-2021. With the help of the case study analysis and the empirical research carried out in 22 penitentiaries, on which occasion we interacted and interviewed a number of 74 penitentiary police officers (directors, surveillance officers, educators, psychologists, priests), we identified the representations of the prison police officers regarding the life in the detention units. This research highlights the staff shortages and the low level of training, evaluation, and research of civil servants with special status, an aspect that indicates a strong tendency to preserve roles and statuses in the penitentiary system. The prison management remains anchored in the objectives of reducing overcrowding and improving working conditions and deprivation of liberty, while the objective of modernizing and transforming the way of intervention and training of prison staff continues to be placed in the background.

**Keywords:** penitentiary policeman, special-status civil servant with special status, prison management, penitentiary, staff shortage

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## 1. INTRODUCTION. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: THE ROLES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE CIVIL SERVANTS WITH SPECIAL STATUS IN THE DETENTION UNITS

The detention units are represented in the scholarship literature as an alternative to the punitive spectacle of the public exposure of the forms of torture applied to the bodies of condemned persons (Foucault, 2005, 13; Chiş and Chiş 2015, 108). The penitentiary, however, remained "a total institution" (Goffman, 1969) where there is "a unique social order" (Sykes, 1974, 64) as a result of social dominance and exploitation (Useem and Piehl, 2008, 4).

The leadership and management of detention units have been evaluated in relation to the application of punitive measures (Garland, 2001; Wacquant, 2001) and reintegration (Morris and Tonry, 1990), overcrowding dynamics (Bleich, 1989; Tonry, 2001; Coyle, 2008; Pfaff, 2016), and improving detention conditions (Murdoch, 2006). In the background, studies on prison management have related to the recruitment, training, and evaluation of prison staff (Crawley, 2004; Bennett, Crewe and Wahidin, 2008).

Despite the fact that some studies have analyzed the evolution of the prison institution in the Romanian space in relation to the criminal legislation and the conditions of execution of the punishments applied to persons deprived of liberty (Rădulescu and Banciu, 1996; Mândru, 1998; Gheorghe, 2001; Ştefan, 2005; Durnescu, 2009; Dima, 2014; Chiş and Chiş, 2015; Ciobanu, Manea, Lazăr and Pârgaru, 2017), this research brings a genuine representations of the carceral universe using an analysis of the institutional resource of the penitentiary system.

The novelty and originality that this study brings into focus is represented by the analysis of the status and role of prison police officers - civil servants with special status, in relation to the dynamics of staffing, training, and evaluations in the period 2009-2021. We consider that an analysis of the institutional management of human

resources gives us a genuine representation of the capacity and capability of the penitentiary system to perform the functions of supervision, control, (re)education, and reintegration of persons deprived of liberty. In terms of investments in the improving detention conditions and reducing overcrowding in prisons, driven by the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), we identified and evaluated the changes that have occurred on the prison staff dynamics both at a legislative and institutional level.

This study aims to answer the following research questions: *What were the changes that occurred on the status, role, structure, and organization of the civil servants with special status in Romanian detention units between 2009-2021? To what extent has the prison staff remained a secondary component of the institutional management in the efforts to comply with the international detention standards in the matter?*

## 2. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK AND LIMITATIONS

The research hypothesis highlights that no significant progress has been made regarding the reduction of the staff deficit in the detention units in Romania between 2009-2021. In relation to the dynamics of staffing, personnel flow management, training, evaluation, and administrative research of human resources, the reality in prisons has not recorded major changes, which indicates that for institutional management, investment in human resources has remained a secondary component, following pressure to improve prison conditions and reduce overcrowding. However, there was an interest in regulating, at the legislative level, the status, role, and conduct of prison staff, currently referred to as "prison police officers".

Our argument explores the preservation of the role and status of prison staff in a closed environment, in which access to the system and definitization of the position are conditioned by a difficult path and the fulfillment of demanding requirements by the candidates. A necessary condition, the rigorous selection of future prison police officers is not complemented by efficient and transparent mechanisms regarding the evaluation of the human resource. In addition, there is a reluctance to change and to innovate, in situations where leadership and decision-making positions are occupied by conservative personnel who have remained faithful to the obsolete practices (based on the position of status and power) in the exercise of the function and the position in the hierarchy of the penitentiary system. To the extent that the transformation of the prison institution to serve the reintegration and (re)education of persons deprived of liberty and the improvement of detention and working conditions are not followed by changes at the level of human resources management, by taking over the good practices in the matter to dispose of personnel sufficient and qualified to the highest professional, ethical, and normative standards, the interaction between prisoners and staff will continue to generate tension, dissatisfaction, and an environment that is not conducive to post-detention reintegration.

The research methodology is based on a case study and co-participant observation (Garson, 2002) as a result of an empirical research in 22 detention units in Romania<sup>1</sup> (maximum security prisons, closed, semi-open and open regimes units). On this occasion, we interacted and interviewed more than 70 prison police officers (directors, operative officers, educators, psychologists, priests). To understand the carceral universe, we take into consideration the psychological aspects of power within a social group (Brass, 1984), the structure and dynamics of personal social relations (Davis and Leinhardt, 1972), complemented by the instances of personal ego (Everett and Borgatti, 2005).

The micro-level analysis of the role of the civil servants with special status in the penitentiary system has a prominent qualitative dimension (Miller and Yang, 1999; Ashworth, McDermott and Currie, 2019), focusing on analyzing the normative regulations in direct relation to the self-assessments of prison staff. The content analysis (Browen, 2009) helped us to identify the main changes occurring in the roles and functions of civil servants with special status, following the successive changes made by the Executive and the Legislative, based on the jurisprudence of the Constitutional Court and the minimum standards in the matter.

In order to have a genuine representation of the roles and functions of civil servants with special status, we integrated the qualitative analysis with data processed from the annual reports of the National Administration

<sup>1</sup> Between June 2017 and February 2020, we carried out research visits to the following detention units in Romania: Târgu-Jiu, Găești, Gherla, Rahova, Jilava, Târgșorul Nou, Tichilești, Mioveni, Galați, Tulcea, Bacău, Brăila, Ploiești, Focșani, Craiova, Mărgineni, Aiud, Bistrița, Slobozia, Satu Mare, Drobeta-Turnu Severin, Botoșani.

of Penitentiaries and the National Anticorruption Directorate, for the period 2009-2021. Quantitative analysis (Balnaves and Caputi, 2001; Gray, Williamson, Karp and Dalphin, 2007; Groeneveld, Tummers, Bronkhorst, Ashikali and van Thiel, 2015) helps us to identify, at a macro level, the main trends regarding recruitment, training, evaluation, and the administrative and criminal investigation of prison police officers for the reference period.

The methodological limitations arise from the omissions of seminal information and data from the annual reports of the National Administration of Penitentiaries, whose structure and content have changed between 2009-2021. Due to this aspect, we could not identify the annual number of petitions and complaints and the way of solving them, as well as the sanctions applied to prison police officers for disciplinary violations committed in the exercise of public office with special status.

### 3. VOCATION, PROFESSION AND CONDUCT OF CIVIL SERVANT WITH SPECIAL STATUS

"At the heart of any prison is the relationship between staff and prisoners" (Crewe, 2011, 455), in relation to which the institutional power is coordinated. A relationship based on a culture of mutual contempt and hostility (McDermott and King, 1988, 361; Crewe, 2011, 455) exposes prison staff to the discretionary and excessive use of authority and punitive mechanisms (Negoiță, 2015). Instead, the involvement, cooperation, and coordination of prison staff and persons deprived of liberty in activities focused on ensuring "dynamic security" determines the reconstitution of penal power (Crewe, 2009) and the diminishing of the power of prison staff (Crewe, 2011, 456). To create a positive organizational culture, new management of prison emphasizes effective leadership, motivation, and encouragement of persons deprived of liberty, while command and control are used as a last resort in conflict management (UNODC, 2010, 17, 55).

The good administration of penitentiaries is thus conditioned by the integrity, humanity, professional capacities, and skills of the penitentiary staff (UN, 2015, Rule 74). The mission of the penitentiary staff to perform "a social service of great importance" is the main criterion in relation to which the regulation of the special status of civil servant and the stability in the position requires to be correlated with the exacting nature of the work (UN, 2015, Rule 74). The general and special training of the newly recruited personnel, together with the continuous training for the improvement of knowledge and professional capacity (UN, 2015, Rule 75), is a premise of the adaptation of the prison institution to the good practices in the matter. Effective intervention in the resolution of conflicts between prisoners and their involvement in carrying out daily activities depends on a correct assessment of risks (static and dynamic), the optimal allocation of resources to maintain an effective level of control and security, supported by constructive relations between prisoners and penitentiary police officers (Murdoch and Jiricka, 2016, 87).

### 4. REGULATION OF THE SPECIAL STATUS OF THE CIVIL SERVANTS IN THE PENITENTIARY ADMINISTRATION SYSTEM

The National Administration of Penitentiaries and the subordinate units are part of the system of defense, public order, and national security which confer a special status on civil servants as a result of the special duties and risks represented by the nature of their duties. The special status is determined by the restriction of certain rights and the involvement of the prison staff in carrying out "guarding, escorting, surveillance and intervention missions", doubled by the possibility of using "the equipment, means and weapons provided, under the conditions of the law, in the implementation of the legislation on the execution of punishments" (art. 3 of Law no. 145 of 2019).

The particular activities in the detention units involve the exercise of professional duties through interaction with persons deprived of liberty, having an impact on social life and an exposure in relation to the support environment of incarcerated persons. The emotional and psychological impact represented by the daily activities in special working conditions, in a closed environment characterized by intimidation, aggression and physical, mental, verbal or sexual violence, requires a set of skills adapted to the criteria and methods of training, improvement, and continuous evaluation (psychological and based on professional performance). The involvement of the prison staff in the *arrangement of rewards* (visits, packages, additional permits applied at discretion), the verification of packages and sums of money received from the relatives of the prisoners (subject

to compliance with specific rules) and the approval of applications for conditional release, accentuates the risk of vulnerability and corruption of the civil servant with special status.

The prison institutional management regarding the recruitment from internal and external sources, the promotion, rewarding and sanctioning of the penitentiary staff is thus directly related to the efficiency of the personnel flow management mechanisms and the unitary application of the legal requirements regarding the integrity and professionalism of the civil servant with special status.

The regulations brought by Law no. 293 of 2004 with subsequent amendments and additions, Decision no. 1849 from 2004 and by Order of the Ministry of Justice no. 2794 of 2004, contributed to the organization and operation of the National Administration of Penitentiaries, as a result of the changes made to the process of selection and training of civil servants with special status and the integration of the rules of conduct, values and moral principles in the Code of Ethics uniformly applied in the penitentiary administration system. However, the Constitutional Court of Romania admitted the exceptions of unconstitutionality of the provisions applied to the prison staff through references to administrative acts, "in the absence of rules with the legal force of the organic law" (especially in relation to the procedure for applying disciplinary sanctions, which had lacunar and incomplete provisions, signaled by Decision No. 803 of 2015 and Decision No. 109 of 2018). At the legislative level, the Government's efforts to offer a new identity to civil servants with special status in the penitentiary system focused on redefining their status by changing the title of the position (known as prison police officers), integrating the rules of conduct and integrity, along with adapting the criteria and initial and continuous assessment methods (through Law no. 145 of 2019, with subsequent amendments and additions).

The selection and evaluation of prison police officers (officers and agents) by the National Administration of Penitentiaries and subordinate units, for management and execution functions (from internal and external sources), is centered on psychological, medical testing, and the acquisition of legal knowledge, training, and specialization (Law no. 145 of 2019). The initiation and training of prison police officers is decided by the annual evaluation of the activity and professional performance, necessary tools to have adequate legal training and effective prison management in all detention facilities (art. 17, 33 and 63 of Law no. 145 of 2019).

In practice, the difficult process of accessing the system and finalizing the position constituted a premise for maintaining the staff shortage, while periodic reconfirmation contributed to preserving the role and status of the already existing staff (Foucault, 2009). The overregulation of the status and the post-placement, in an institutional environment characterized by the accentuated hierarchization and the reduced level of transparency and access in the system, the administrative transformation, and change at the management level are prone to become dependent on top-down decisions (Foucault, 2009). The innovation and adaptation of the measures to the particularities of each detention unit are limited, in order not to affect the order and application of the measures for the execution of the sentence. For this reason, the profile of the civil servant with special status and their professional performance are defined by using "working (over) time, material and financial resources of the institution efficiently and rationally" (art. 6 of the Order of the Ministry of Justice no. 2794 of 2004). "Acting in any situation as good servants" (art. 6 of the Order of the Ministry of Justice no. 2794 of 2004), prison police officers actually carry out their activity in an environment where resources are limited, and the pressures exerted on them are accentuated by institutional rigors and the conduct of persons deprived of liberty.

The status and duties of the prison police officer need to be understood, first of all, in relation to the importance of the field in which they operate. The regulation of access to the system, suspension from office, and the termination of service relationships sought to limit the inflows and outflows of employed personnel, an aspect that highlights the importance given to human resources. Investments in professional training and qualification, together with the need to effectively manage financial resources, have guided the institutional management of detention units according to the principle of "entrances - *in*" and "exits - *out*" from the system in conditions of inevitable situations (emergencies, retirements, death, final convictions). A good example is represented by the additions made in the context of the coronavirus pandemic and the establishment of the state of emergency, situations in which the work relations of the prison police officer could not be terminated (by resignation, retirement, and non-placement) during the state of emergency, siege, mobilization, and in time of war (Emergency Ordinance no. 36 of 2020). Secondly, the particularities of the prison environment, determined by the need to limit access to the system and to manage interaction with persons already sentenced, influence



the way in which administrative complaints are resolved (between 2020-2021 - 16 disciplinary investigations were carried out, and 12 administrative complaints were settled as unfounded). In this context, the sanction – putting an end to work relations- was applied as a counter reaction to the activity undergone by the National Anticorruption Directorate and finally court decisions.

## 5. DYNAMICS OF RECRUITMENT, TRAINING AND EVALUATION OF PRISON POLICE OFFICERS

The allocation of civil servants with special status in the central unit of the National Administration of Penitentiaries and in the 36 penitentiaries, 4 prison-hospitals, 2 detention centers, 2 educational centers (National Administration of Penitentiaries, Subordinate units in 2022), highlights one of the major problems of this system which is the lack of staff and the unequal distribution of human resources in relation to the main sectors of activity (operational, economic-administrative, education, and psychological assistance). Between 2009-2021, no significant progress was registered in terms of human resources, the only notable difference being represented by the decrease in the number of prisoners by 14%, felt by the decrease in the administrative burden (Table 1).

**Table 1. The distribution of prison police officers according to the fields of activity**

Year	Positions occupied	Prescribed position	Operative	Education and psychological assistance	Economic-administrative	Deficit of prison police officers
2021	12.505	16.041	-	-	-	3.536
2020	11.783	-	7.456	734	-	-
2019	12.502	-	7.889	773	-	-
2018	12.843	-	8.085	818	-	-
2017	12.734	16.041	8.037	795	2.102	3.307
2016	12.143	15.041	7.676	693	2.051	2.898
2015	12.657	15.074	7.988	625	2.313	2.417
2014	12.575	15.076	7.916	667	2.312	2.501
2013	12.471	15.033	7.874	659	2.262	2.562
2012	12.405	15.555	7.808	636	2.265	3.150
2011	12.247	15.500	7.718	637	2.196	3.253
2010	12.223	15.470	7.660	650	-	3.247
2009	12.437	-	7.657	641	2.403	-

Source: National Penitentiary Administration, "Annual activity reports for the period 2009-2021".

The shortage of prison police officers continued to represent a recurring problem for the prison system, from 2009 to the present day, registering, on average, a weight of 20% of the total number of posts provided (Table 1). This aspect was signaled by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT), following the visits made to Romania in 2018 and in 2021, which identified problems, including in relation to the distribution of personnel in the two fields of activity. For staff and persons deprived of their liberty, an inadequate proportion of human resources to persons serving custodial sentences is a premise to generate an unsafe and prone to ill-treatment environment to the extent that staff are inadequately recruited and trained (CPT, 2022, 70-72).

The recruitment of new personnel, especially from an external source, was an outcome of the "waves" of retirements, without producing a direct impact on the reduction of the personnel deficit. The decision to conduct recruitment competitions at national level, depending on the job particularities, profile, and vacancies, was a useful measure for a uniform assessment of the candidates' knowledge; however, it contributed to the long

duration of the recruitment period. The opening of positions to competition by the National Administration of Penitentiaries constituted a reactive approach, in a crisis context, to solve the general challenges at the level of the penitentiary system (retirement, the need for medical personnel in the context of the pandemic). For this reason, the initial post-competition training program for candidates was shortened (CPT, 2022, 70-72). Another characteristic of institutional management in the penitentiary environment is represented by the low share of service terminations for other reasons (different from early retirement), whose average annual value is 24% of the total "exits" from the system and 0.78% of the total number of occupied positions (Table 2).

**Table 2. Dynamics of prison police officers between 2009-2021**

Year	Recruitment of personnel from an external source	Internal recruitment (schools)	Retirement	Ending work relation for other reasons	Total admissions	Total termination of service	Personnel fluctuation in relation to the total number of prison police officers from the previous year
2021	1.613	312	1.056	147	1.925	1.203	722
2020	85	271	987	88	356	1.075	-719
2019	104	312	653	104	416	757	-341
2018	174	358	347	76	532	423	109
2017	1.385	332	1.048	79	1.717	1.127	590
2016	1.052	341	1.826	81	1.393	1.907	-514
2015	1	339	186	72	340	258	82
2014	28	328	164	88	356	252	104
2013	1	299	150	87	300	237	63
2012	10	351	92	106	361	198	163
2011	71	203	133	123	274	256	18
2010	20	257	398	93	277	491	-214
2009	411	117	274	114	528	388	140

Source: National Penitentiary Administration, "Annual activity reports for the period 2009-2021".

In order to have an unitary recruitment and training of personnel in the prison system, the CPT has repeatedly recommended that an analysis be carried out regarding the staffing situation before the addition of personnel in order to identify the necessary directions for each category of intervention separately, correlated with the dynamics of the number of prisoners (by crimes, punishments, the profile of the punishment execution regime, the state of physical and mental health) (CPT, 2022, 70-72).

The CPT recommendations need to be understood in relation to the constant decrease in training and improvement sessions; in 2021 the number was 7 times lower than in 2009 (Table 3), an indicator that reflects the premises of a stagnation in continuous professional development which should be oriented toward the promotion of good practices in the matter. The concentration of resources mainly on the training of new personnel contributes to different approaches in the performance of duties by prison police officers, whose qualification and guidance was carried out in different periods. On the other hand, the increase in the number of annual psychological evaluations, approximately 3 times in 2021 compared to 2009 (Table 3), highlights the increase in interest in filling positions from an external source put out to competition, but at the same time confirms the difficulty of access in a system contrary to the maintenance of a shortage of personnel necessary to fill more than 3,000 positions (Table 1).

The good order of a penitentiary is ensured, in the light of the CPT recommendations, through an approach centered on the beneficial intervention of the prison staff, by resolving conflicts "with a minimum recourse to force", as a last resort after trying to defuse the tense situation through intervention "based on the principles of legality, necessity, and proportionality" (CPT, 2022, 70-79). In order to push for the redefinition of the role and status of the prison police officer and to replace punitive measures with educational, psychological and religious assistance, between persons deprived of liberty and prison staff, it is necessary to have and operate a system of complaints and administrative investigations that provide trust, predictability, and ensure objectivity and promptness in solving them (CPT, 2022, 79). The use of pretexts such as the lack of paper, writing instruments, and the lack of spaces specially designed for the complainants in some detention units, together with the pressures exerted by the prison staff (threats of transfer, change of the regime of execution of the sentence or physical violence) contribute to the inefficiency of the tools for complaints and complaints (CPT, 2022, 79).

The low number of work events, administrative investigations, and final convictions indicates a high level of integrity and professionalism of the penitentiary staff (Table 3). However, the "immaculate" image of the body of prison police officers is projected in the context where the prison universe has internal informal practices that filter and solve incidents between prisoners and staff and offer them, de facto, immunity (Negoiță, 2015), and public information is carried out rather in borderline crisis situations, which arouse a higher interest from the media (Table 3). In the absence of mechanisms to guarantee transparency and cooperation in the resolution of notifications and complaints, we cannot outline a faithful representation of the misconduct of prison police officers in the exercise of their duties (exceeding their duties, illegal interference to satisfy personal interests or that of a third party, inappropriate behavior towards by persons deprived of liberty, blackmail, bribery).

**Table 3. The training, psychological evaluation and research of prison police officers between 2009-2021**

Year	Initiation/ improvement courses	Total psychological evaluations	Evolution of work events	Administrative research	Sent to trial	Sentenced by final judgment
2021	1.047	15.501	77	5	0	1
2020	514	2.960	75	11	0	0
2019	1.515	11.363	175	10	0	0
2018	117	12.978	134	9	0	0
2017	-	16.685	113	17	0	0
2016	-	14.353	126	10	0	1
2015	2.792	6.862	130	7	0	1
2014	2.827	8.016	121	4	0	2
2013	3.287	3.282	128	5	0	0
2012	3.617	3.918	105	18	1	0
2011	4.659	4.431	101	0	1	0
2010	-	4.813	-	4	2	0
2009	7.679	5.945	-	4	1	0

Source: National Penitentiary Administration, "Annual activity reports for the period 2009-2021"; National Anticorruption Directorate, "Annual activity reports for the period 2009-2021".

## 6. THE REPRESENTATIONS OF THE PRISON POLICE OFFICERS REGARDING THE LIFE IN THE DETENTION UNITS

In an environment where "time flows differently" (Satu Mare penitentiary), and "inmates have reversed values, being in a closed unit" (Satu Mare penitentiary), in a "primitive commune" (Târgșorul Nou penitentiary), the detention units remain "an x-ray of society, which has particularities of local values" (Satu Mare penitentiary).

"As an institution, it is a special living environment, another way of assuming the norms of social coexistence by a specific group of people, being a life experience for staff and inmates who combine different lifestyles. A place with people with different lifestyles, forced to live together, according to certain norms and rules imposed" (Drobeta Turnu Severin penitentiary), where "the balance is given by the tranquility of the penitentiary" (Aiud penitentiary) and by the experience and quality of human resources. "If the air is clean for the prisoners, it is also clean for the penitentiary staff" (Focșani penitentiary), and the option to use "sugar instead of the batons" defines the desire or reluctance for change. On the one hand, the penitentiary staff complain that "they are suffocated by bureaucracy, that there is not enough time to work with the prisoners" (Drobeta Turnu Severin penitentiary). On the other hand, innovation and adoption of new procedures represent an important aspect in overcoming financial constraints and staff shortages by creating "new and modern rules by an open-minded management" (Ploiești penitentiary).

Based on the co-participant observation carried out in 22 detention units in the country and on the interaction with the prison staff (directors, educators, psychologists, priests, officers), we identified three main typologies (diametrically opposite) that illustrate the positions of status and power (in relation to persons deprived of liberty and hierarchical superiors), namely: (1) Dominant personnel, who place themselves in a superior position by using the punitive instruments at their disposal and capitalizing on status and power inequalities; (2) Cooperating staff, for whom the position in the prison universe is understood in relation to the dimension of education and (re)integration of vulnerable people, without using their superior position for situations where it is not necessarily imposed and is not the only option; (3) Disinterested staff, for whom the prison universe no longer generates emotions and personal stakes, an attitude observed in exceptional situations. The professional dimension of prison police officers (assessed in relation to the moral, professional dimension, and the integrity of the penitentiary staff) contributes significantly to the definition of the prison universe, giving it its own identity and dynamics.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

This article aimed to clarify the roles and functions of civil servants with special status in the detention units in Romania between 2009-2021. The measures and investments regarding the reduction of overcrowding and the improvement of detention and working conditions, in response to the ECtHR's jurisprudence on the matter, were strictly limited to the recurring problems attributed to the Romanian prison system for not meeting the minimum standards regulated at the international level (the Mandela Rules). We have identified that this approach overlapped with the tendency to preserve statuses and power roles within the penitentiary system, an aspect that accentuated the position of prison police officers whose activity became conditioned by their personal intentions and their vocation to maintain public order and contribute to reintegration of persons deprived of liberty.

The low level of transparency specific to a detention unit, together with the shortcomings between the high standards applied in the selection of candidates through mechanisms that allow the rigorous recruitment of future prison police officers (at least in theory Morris and Tonry, 1990; Garland, 2001; Wacquant, 2001; Foucault, 2005; Chiș and Chiș 2015; Pfaff, 2016) and the lack of effective and transparent tools regarding staff evaluation and research (on based on performance and integrity indicators), places the functioning of the prison system in direct relation to the informal practices and unofficial culture promoted, accepted or imposed by management, staff and prisoners. The personalization of the prison universe in relation to the quality of the human resource contributes to the application and interpretation of criminal legislation differently, depending on the specifics of each prison universe. Stereotypes, perceptions, and self-images of prison police officers fuel detention culture and generate discrepancies in sentencing in different facilities. The evaluation of the activity of penitentiary police officers is often limited to the quantitative dimension of the events and activities in which the staff and prisoners are involved, without a transparent analysis of their quality.

In conclusion, to effectively contribute to reducing recidivism and supporting the complex process of reintegration (of which prison officers are a part), institutional management regarding the human resource dimension regarding the civil servants with specific status needs to be equally prisoner- and staff-centered. Investments in improving working conditions and deprivation of liberty constituted an important direction, in order to meet the minimum standards in the matter. However, it is necessary that the change of the prison



system does not remain limited and anchored exclusively in the material representation of the penitentiary system. It is the human dimension that produces real change, for inmates, staff, and society as a whole.

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