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Codes of Ethics for Political Parties and Their Role in Communication (in the Time of Electoral Campaigns)

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Abstract: In elections, a multitude of players are involved, and there are winners and losers. Because the stakes are high, there is a great temptation to use unethical practices to gain more votes. Parties from different countries start to understand the importance of their ethical behaviour for winning voters' trust by reason of the fact they apply ethics in their programs. In this sense, parties are developing Ethical Codes, Ethical Commissions, and Ethical Committees. Some of the questions we tried to get an answer are the following: Are codes of ethics for political parties necessary? Are these more related to political ethics or political communication? Are the aims directed to make a more ethical campaign, or to gain more votes? Does a code of ethics for political parties have a role in the communication of political parties' values and does it help to show if a political party respects their promises? The purpose of this article is to observe if a tension between political marketing, as part of political communication, and political ethics theories exists when parties create and use a code of ethics. Also, we aim to understand the relationship between ethics and communication during electoral campaigns, and if these codes of ethics are a way of communication between political parties and their members, their voters, and other interested actors. One of our hypothesis is that the Codes of ethics in electoral campaign help political organizations to better communicate with different stakeholders and gain more votes. The second hypothesis is that the Codes of Ethics, used as a communication method, influence parties to have an ethical campaign. The third one is that the Codes of Ethics used in electoral campaigns by political parties, guide these actors to better communicate their message, their mission, vision and their goals.

Keywords: ethics, political ethics, code of ethics, political parties, political communication.

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Introduction

Over the years, we followed the political space, especially in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova (after 1989), we noticed that electoral campaigns have become more and more diversified. During electoral campaigns, in different countries, parties signed or joined a document in order to have a more ethical campaign, as part of their elections programs or as codes of ethics.

This research analyses the appearance of political parties' ethical codes by using political ethics theories and theories of political communication. The general theme of the current study regards the role of the codes of ethics in communication. In this regards, this paper focuses on ethical codes as a primary reference in the action which guides politicians and parties; and on understanding the moral principles that express the development of ethical communication in the political parties.

The current research is relevant from a scientific and practical point of view for various stakeholders: researchers, members and leaders of the political parties, public relations specialists, journalists, analysts, and so on and so forth. In this sense, the paper tries to bring into discussion the necessity of ethical codes for political parties, to analyse their role in communication during electoral campaigns, and to fill the existing gap in the research regarding this topic in the sphere of political parties. The current study is relevant also because it is appropriate for our days because more and more parties start to understand that ethical codes are crucial and if it will be adopted and applied it can increase the trust in the political parties. The paper is original by its idea of analysing the code of ethics of political parties in Romania and the Republic of Moldova, based on aspects from other researches in other domains, like economic, health, sports and NGOs.

This paper tries to answer to some of the following research questions: Are the codes of ethics necessary for political parties? The codes of ethics are more related to political ethics or political communication? The aim is to make the campaign more ethical, or to gain more votes? Does a code of ethics for political parties have a role in the communication of political parties' values and does it help to show if a political party respects their promises.

The purpose of this article is to observe if, a tension between political communication and political ethics theories exists when political organizations adopt and apply a code of ethics. Another purpose is to see if codes of ethics are a mode of communication between political parties and

its members, its voters, and other stakeholders. A first hypothesis is that the Codes of Ethics in the electoral campaign help political organizations to communicate better with different interested parties and attract more votes. The second hypothesis is that the Codes of Ethics are used as a communication method which influence the political organizations to have an ethical campaign. The third one is that Codes of Ethics in electoral campaigns used by political parties help to guide these actors to communicate better their message, their mission, their vision and their goals. The analysed cases are the codes of ethics of two political parties from Romania (Social Democratic Party and National Liberal Party), and Democratic Party of Moldova.

The primary research methods of this paper are the content analysis and the framework which will investigate the form and content of ethical codes (length, focus, thematic content, upright orientation, tone, comprehension aid, procedural content and target audience) and their effectiveness. After we apply the same framework as in other researches, as the analysis of codes of ethics for sports organizations, we have tried to obtain results that show on which themes the codes are focused and which type of phrases exist. We also tried to see if the codes are based on a negative or positive perspective.

Literature review

In this chapter, we will try to present both definitions of the concepts used in this research, and the discussions on other already conducted research on similar topics, from different domains, like economic, health, sport, public administration, public relations, NGOs (Sandu 2016). First of all, it is necessary the definition of the basic concepts and theories for a better understanding of the topic in order to find answers to the research's questions and for a future validation of our hypotheses. The concepts with which we will work are: code of ethics, ethics, political parties, electoral campaigns. Also in this part, we will present fundamental theories of political ethics and political communication. The general objectives of this paper are to offer answers to the research's questions and to validate or invalidate our hypotheses. The analysis will help to understand if codes of ethics are necessary and if their existence and implementation assists parties to have an ethical campaign, or it is a communication strategy to gain more votes?

A) Ethics, politics and political ethics

In the first part, we will present concepts which will be used in this research. We will start with ethics and political ethics. Political Ethics came from two terms, *ethics* and *politics*. The concept Ethics is a current topic in various domains, private and public, like the economy, state institution, society, NGOs, and in politics too. One of the major issues of these domains, in our case politics, is an ethical one. Etymologically, ethics is coming from the Greek term *ethos*, and it means a systematic way of life. Ethics represents „a set of rules, principles, and ways of thought which tries to guide the activity of the group" (Singer 1994, 3) and contributes to better learning and understanding on how we must live. Ethics is useful in various fields, and authors have different perspectives on it. Polin (1968, 101) defined ethics as a process which „mediates, defines and appreciates, regarding good and bad intentions, acts, and works of an individual in the relationship with himself or in the relationships with other people." Some of the Romanian authors that are using ethics in their research are Vasile Boari, Sandu Frunză, Mihaela Miroiu, and Adrian-Paul Iliescu, and others. Ethics, as Boari points it in an introductive course (2005), „aims the character building and modelling behaviour" and must contribute to „the formation of future politicians". According to Frunză (2012, 32),"the need for cultivation of ethical competencies and ethical expertise became a general feature today," and by using ethics we can observe a positive influence in society and at the level of organizational culture from the private and public sphere. The second term which needs to be defined is *politics*. By merging the definition of *politics* from two dictionaries (Littré and Robert), Boari, in the same introductive course (2005), defined politics as „science, art, and practice of the governance of human societies." *Politics* can be defined, according to Miller (2006, 575), as a „process by which a group of people with initially different opinions reach a collective conclusion that becomes a mandatory line of conduct for this group." Political ethics studies and analyses ideas and attitudes related to: the relationship between two terms: *ethics* and *politics*, the ethical-political paradigms, the issue of choice, responsibility and the duty of politicians (Boari 2005). Throughout history, according to Boari (2005), different ethical-political paradigms developed, such as Aristotelian (ethics is subordinate to politics), Kantian (politics is subordinate to ethics), Machiavellian (both are separated), Hegelian (form a unity). Political ethics became in the area of political space, a point of reference to counteract the problems of ethics like the lack of integrity, corruption, blackmail.

B) Postmodern ethics

The issue of ethics implementation in political practice, including through ethical codes, may be of interest in the postmodern context of knowledge-based society. We will continue to present a postmodern perspective on political ethics, also pointing to the issue of codding ethics as a deconstruction of duty and responsibility. According to Bauman (1993), the postmodern ethics is based on the moral actions which are related to the idea of acting for the other, rather than with other.

The postmodern ethics are based on the crisis of the authority in various institutions. In the postmodern era, building an image is more important than the reality, so in this case, parties and politicians are using different techniques and methods to build a good public image which will help them to win more votes in the elections (Lipovetsky 2012). According to the same author (1996), beginning with postmodernism, a post-duty era was developed, and the idea of personal happiness became more important than the community's goodwill. In literature, different ethical approaches can be discovered. Regarding the concept of postmodern ethics, centred on responsibility towards the other non-present, according to Scripcaru et al. (2014, 863), Kantian ethics „promotes respect for the personal freedom", whereas when utilitarianism takes „into account the public welfare and the precautions to eliminate the risk to the community". In this sense, authors try to put this two perspectives in contrast one to each other and try to develop a „meta-ethical perspective encompassing the idea of respect for the person concerned and the community's need for security" (Scripcaru et. al 2014, 863-864).

Regarding the autonomy from the Kantian point of view, Scripcaru et al. (2014, 865) point that it „requires goodwill and moral reasoning of the subject which allows him to make the best decisions in accordance with the knowledge he has. Goodwill asks the subject to follow good, not for personal welfare, but what is generally accepted as good, in other terms the good of the society, excluding selfish motivation but not good results for himself". Kantian ethics is based on the concept of duty, and it is named also deontological ethics, being also a rationalist one. Therefore, the action of a human being is moral if the maximum of our actions becomes a universal law, turning into a categorical imperative. Following logic, we should not make vain promises and lie, because we would not want this action to become a universal law. The basic concept of Kant's ethics is that of universal duty, and by fulfilling this universal duty the common moral good can be reached. This duty derives from the idea of a purpose in itself of the human being. According to Frunză (2016, 58), the development of

responsibility is a result of the deconstruction of duty, duty based on good (Kant 1972), not on selfish interest. From the Kantian point of view, Frunză (2016, 63), points out that „an action has a moral value if it is made out of duty", and as a „respect to law". Frunză (2016) also underlines that it is important to have ethics based on communication and responsibility by making a reference to Lipovetsky's point of view: ethics became a more consensual and developed duty towards the other.

From the perspective of Kantian ethics, we conclude that the breach of duty is a bad thing, so we must always fulfil the moral duty, to have moral actions. In this sense, our duty is to respect people at least as we respect ourselves.

C) Codes of Ethics

In the previous paragraph, we have presented what ethics, politics and political ethics are. Next, we will discuss the codes of ethics, focusing on the political parties' ones. Nowadays, more and more organizations, also political ones adopt a code of ethics, or at least take into consideration ethics in their electoral or political programs. More and more parties from different countries understand more and more and welcome a free and fair election and are committed to ensure an ethical electoral campaign by hoping that other parties will do the same and will have an electoral campaign based on integrity and honesty. Even if political ethics is more important today, the idea is ancient, because of philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, and others that discussed the concept of truth, motivation, justice, and controlling the appetite of material gain (Frede 2013). Codes of ethics also appeared in the idea of limiting the possession of the quality of member or a function of management or leadership by people with lack of integrity. According to Goodwin-Gill (1998), codes of ethics can contribute to a fairness management of electoral campaigns and elections and can be a supplement to rules and legislation. Only the existence of a code of ethics is not enough, so organizations need to have Ethical Committees, Ethical Commissions, which help to implement and put into practice codes of ethics. These became more and more mandatory in different public and private organizations. According to Frunză (2012, 33), code of ethics is an „instrument of professional optimization" and a „guide which helps civil servants to make a difference between Good and Bad" (Plant's synthesis on the code of ethics in Frunză 2012, 33). Using codes of ethics help to maximize the ethical standards, and through this, trust in the institutions. Another author who discussed the codes of ethics is Diaconu (2009) who considered that codes of ethics are part of organizational culture, these are

instruments of decisions, from prevention or solving conflict point of view, as tools of management of human resources, branding, and marketing. Codes of ethics based on principles which include moral values (Mureşan 2010) have a „unique impact on modelling the behaviour and decision-making" (Lewis and Gilman 2005, 192). In politics, the code of ethics represents a set of rules which have as primary aim the setting of neutral practices for those who are engaged in elections, like candidates, members of parties, and leaders of the parties, lobbyists, and mass-media and so on and so forth. In this sense, codes of ethics contribute to peaceful and well organized elections and to a promotion of an ethical behaviour by deterring abusive and unethical actions. The code of ethics can have a real impact on elections because it is a result of citizens' expectations related to the values that politicians must follow (Frunză 2012).

Parties from different countries, including Romania and the Republic of Moldova develop and adopt codes of ethics to offer solutions for counteracting the ethical issues regarding corruption, distortion of money in electoral campaigns, irresponsibility and negative PR. Next to moral codes, we must bring up for discussion the Ethical Commissions, Ethical Committees, ethical advisors, and to show their role in the electoral campaign and between elections. Radu Nicolae et al. (2010), pointed that the role of ethical advisors is to provide consulting and assistance towards the respect of rules of conduct, monitoring the application of codes of ethics and presenting a report. The codes of ethics can be grounded and justified from various points of view like utilitarian, Kantian, virtue theory – as theories of ethics – and from political communication theories as well. According to Verbos et al. (2007), the codes of ethics are present in different domains, but their impact needs to be analysed. As Kaptein and Wempe (1998, 189) underline, the codes of ethics help „to increase the moral resistance of an organization." According to Menzel (2007, 69), if a code of ethics integrates into the creation of organizational culture it will help it to become more ethical. Authors had an increasing interest in analysing the code of ethical conduct in various domains and different countries, mostly in the economic sphere, but in the public and political sector this topic was limited for discussing (Svensson et al. 2004). According to Stajkovic and Luthans (1997), the code of ethics represents a key factor that can influence the ethical behaviour of members in particular and of the organization in general. As Mureşan (2013, 13) pointed out, in Romania, the codes of ethics exist but „they are non-functional in general" because this codes „were multiplied by imitation and lack of professionalism and are not part of an ethical infrastructure." If political parties use ethical frameworks and ethical

theories as a background, it may reduce the divergence between political parties. It is interesting to see if we can apply political communication or political marketing to build such codes and if by doing so, political parties will experience some benefits.

In conclusion, the codes of ethics can help the internal and external communication of political organizations. As Lewis and Gilman (2005), mentioned that the codes of ethics can increase ethical conduct in the organization, trust in the political organization, and help leaders of the political party to take an ethical decision.

D) Electoral campaigns, communication, political communication

In the next paragraph, we will discuss about electoral campaigns, communication, and political communication. Reviewing the literature on electoral campaigns, we observed that this theme is analysed from various perspectives: political communication, political marketing and political sciences. The electoral campaign conducted in a civilized manner represents an important point of the political culture and for the development of a responsible political elite. Elections contribute on the one hand to the changes in the composition of the leadership of State`s institutions, and on the contrary contribute to increasing competition between parties, but also hostilities, manoeuvring, and political propaganda. As Solomon pointed, political parties are one of the fundamental elements of a democratic society; these „play an essential role in the representation and expression of the political interests of the citizens" (2014, 78).

Regarding the political communication, it is a „planned and sustained action designed to ensure the climate of goodwill and understanding between organization and public" (Ghilezan 2000, 197). Rus (2005, 95) pointed that political communication „is a form of information transfer, through which it is intended and directed to send messages with political content." According to Beciu (2009, 126), it is a „strategic interaction regulated by legal norms, rituals, values, symbols, technologies, organizations, networks, and practices." According to Kotler and Kotler (1999), political parties and candidates need to understand the electorate`s needs. Regarding the ethical consumption, many entities have an interest because this offers them new opportunities to expand; this is also the present situation in the political parties' sphere. Numerous studies suggest that the public concern for ethical issues is increasing (Harrison et al. 2005). In this situation, political parties need to apply political communication strategies to ensure that what they offer is compatible with the values of their voters, and in this case, it is necessary the creation of a code of ethics

for the political party. Codes of ethics become more and more important when ethical policies can influence voter decisions. In this sense political organizations need to monitor public concerns and to use political communication as a tool. The usage of negative PR by some political marketers in political campaigns, becomes unethical because it can develop voter cynicism, apathy, and manipulation (Banker 1992, 843).

Codes of ethics can be seen not just as a simple document, but also as a communication method between members of an organization and between members and other individuals or institutions. For example, a code of ethics for a political party can be seen as a simple document, or as a dialog between members. By creating and respecting this code of ethics and its principles, or through communication between the party and their voters, a code of ethics can show to voters what these principles represent. Voters can take this document and show that one member violated his party code of ethics. The same situation can happen between parties and mass-media. According to Olson (1998), a code of ethics „increase ethical sensitivity and judgment, strengthens support for individual' moral courage, and helps to hone an organization's sense of identity." Codes of ethics are written by specific groups for specific groups. Each group or type of organization has their specific needs, in this case, multiplying the codes of ethics from one group to another can make them useless or incongruous. Codes of ethics need to be a reflection of the morally standards of conduct of an organization, and need to reflect the virtue of the group. When a code of ethics is written it needs to be a group task, not just an individual, by doing so, each member of an organization will fill and will identify themselves as a group member, and this will strengthen the effectiveness of the code of ethics. The codes, according to the Online Codes of Ethics Project, can be placed into three groups according to their length: briefly model, principles model, and relationship model. When a political party creates a code of ethics it needs to take into consideration the type of language which it will use for a better understanding of the organization by other people that will read it, but also the content that is very relevant. As the same author has pointed out (Olson 1998), codes of ethics need to be „changed with time by taking into consideration the variations in the society, in the organization and a desire to improve the effectiveness of the code." A large number of studies are related to the existence and effectiveness of such ethical codes (Helin and Sandstrom 2007; Kaptein and Schwartz 2008; Sandu 2012). Kaptein and Schwartz (2008) agree that it is relevant to study the content of the code and its relationship with unethical behaviour.

In conclusion, from the literature review, the primarily used methods are both quantitative and qualitative. The instruments present in previous studies on codes of ethics are content analysis (different perspectives and modes of analysis), interviews, secondary data or polls. The code of ethics is a method of internal and external communication which can help to increase ethical conduct of members and leaders of political parties and to enhance the trust of people in political organizations and politicians. Some previous studies on the code of ethics establish an association relationship between codes of ethics and ethical behaviour and show the effectiveness of these types of documents. Adams et al. (2000) found that members of organizations with a code of ethics rate themselves more ethical. Somers (2001) founds that codes of ethics show less unethical behaviour and Schwartz (2001) found that codes of ethics influence the ethical behaviour of the members and leaders of organizations, but these need to be implemented and monitored.

Methodology

The methodological part will presents the research design (research questions, hypothesis, and description of the way the research methods and research instruments are used, and how the most important aspects are analysed), the results and discussions. The current study has started from the following research questions: Are codes of ethics necessary for political parties? Are these codes more related to political ethics or political communication? Their aims are to make the campaign more ethical, or to gain more votes? Does a code of ethics for a political party has a role in the communication of values and does it helps to show if a political party respects their promises? Based on the research questions, this study has tried to validate some hypothesis:

H1. Codes of ethics in the electoral campaign help parties to build a better communication with different stakeholders and gain more votes.

H2. Code of ethics used as a communication method can influence political parties to have an ethical campaign.

H3. Code of ethics used in the electoral campaigns by political parties help to guide these actors to communicate better their message, their mission, their vision and their goals

H4. More communication of the code of ethics, less unethical behaviour in the political party.

After reviewing the literature, the used research instruments, in previous studies in different domains on various types of organizations

(public or private), are content analysis, interviews, secondary data, and polls. This study focuses on content analysis and a framework used in *Ethical codes in sports organization* (De Waegeneer et al. 2016) adjusted to our cases of codes of ethics analysis of different political organizations from Romania and Republic of Moldova. The first research instrument of the current study is the content analysis. It has been used in various domains: sociology, linguistics, history, anthropology, communication sciences as well as political sciences. Content analysis is first of all a „systematic, replicable technique, by compressing many words into fewer content categories based on clear coding rules" (Agabrian 2006, 20), and second of all it is a non-reactive method, the studied subjects do not know that they are researched, by using secondary data and documents. According to Budge et al. (2001), content analysis was used for the first time in early 1930 in the USA as a research instrument in communication, and then in the political sphere. In this sense, content analysis became a crucial tool; mainly through the codification of these categories and their standardization the results can be compared. According to Budge et al. (2001), content analysis represents a bridge between the quantitative and qualitative research. Through the application of this first analysis method, we can observe how similar or not are the codes of ethics between countries and between parties.

In the current study, the second research instrument is a framework of analysis of ethical codes by investigating the form and content and its effectiveness. Based on the adjustment of De Waegeneer et al. (2016)'s framework for the sports organization to political organization, our framework includes as well the length (both number of pages and number of statements,) as well as the focus (number of themes). The third point is the thematic content, seconded by upright orientation (deontological and consequentialist oriented statements) tone (inspirational vs. regulatory; positive vs. negative); comprehension aids (checklists, FAQs, and Q&A); procedural content (reporting and sanctioning); target audience (internal and external stakeholders). Regarding the framework, we will discuss all these elements, and we will understand if they are necessary for the development of ethical behaviour, and we will make some assumptions regarding their effectiveness on ethical behaviour of a political organization. We need to take into account, when we make a content analysis, that just one variable is not enough for our research. For example, taking into account just the length of the code of ethics for political parties is not sufficient, because we cannot observe which is the granted attention to each theme.

By applying this framework we had made a content analysis of ethical codes of political organizations from Romania (PNL; PSD), and the

Republic of Moldova (PDM). The form and substance characteristic of the Codes of Ethics were tested in order to observe their impact on the upright climate in political organizations. After applying the same framework as in the research on sports organizations, we have tried to gain results that show on which themes the codes are focused and which is the effectiveness of the Codes of Ethics (positive or negative significant effect). Ervwin (2011) pointed that the public availability of the document (code of ethics) seen as a content variable, while De Waegeneer et al. (2016) affirm that it is a matter of communication. According to De Waegeneer et al. (2016), a creation of a framework is crucial for the analysis of the content of the codes of ethics. This framework can help us understand which elements need to be present in a code of ethics in order to have an effect on the ethical behaviour. Violations of the moral code (Webley and Werner 2008), as well as the perception of members of the organization (Singh 2006) are not sufficient to see the effectiveness of the Code of Ethics. The political parties are different from sports, business, health organizations, NGOs and so on and so forth that is why the simple transfer of results from one field to another, for example from business to politics, is not easy and nor enough.

Content analysis of the code of ethics by applying the framework

We start our content analysis of the code of ethics by comparing its *lengths*. In this sense, the code of ethics of the Social Democratic Party from Romania (PSD) extends over eight pages, the code of ethics of the National Liberal Party from Romania (PNL) stretches over five pages and the code of ethics of the Democratic Party from the Republic of Moldova (PDM) extends over six pages. Regarding the *number of statements* presented in these codes of ethics the results are the following: 78 statements in the PSD's code of ethics, 48 statements in the PNL's code of ethics and 68 statements for PDM.

In the content analysis, another variable is the *focus*, operationalized by many themes, presented in the chapters of each code of ethics. Regarding the number of sections of each code of ethics the results are the following: PSD's code of ethics consists of nine chapters (Preamble, Objectives; Conduct and integrity criteria for PSD candidates; Social contract; Rules and good practices in political and administrative activity; Rights of the members and sympathizers; Members duties; Sanctions; Rules of application); in the case of *PNL*, there are three chapters (Preamble, Purpose and implementation sphere; and Principles of the ethical code); regarding the code of ethics of the PDM, there are ten chapters (Preamble, Objectives; Values and general principles; Rights of the members and sympathizers,

Member duties, Conduct and integrity criteria for PSD candidates; Good practices in political activities; Use of patrimonial assets of the party; Sanctions; Final provisions).

A comparison between the name of chapters of PSD's and PDM's codes of ethics shows that the names of 7 sections are almost identical. By reading the codes of ethics of these two parties (PSD adopted its code of ethical conduct in 2015 and PDM in 2017) we observed that a big part of these two Codes is identical.

After the content analysis of this three codes of ethics (PSD, PNL, PDM) we discovered that the central themes of these codes of ethics are the following: political integrity, honesty, responsibility, professionalism, respect, correctness, loyalty, transparency. The next variable is the upright orientation of the code of ethics for political parties. In this sense, some codes of ethics are more deontological or consequentialist oriented (Getz 1990). In the first case, respecting the rules is the base, and the consequences or possible consequences are of secondary importance (DeSensi and Rosenberg 2010). In the second case, consequentialist oriented code of ethic is based on the outcome of the activities and the consequences of unethical behaviour. The codes of ethics analysed in this study are a mix between deontological and consequentialist oriented code of ethics, based on principles, rules, and sanctions.

Regarding the consequences of unethical behaviour, in the PSD case, there are four possible sanctions: withdrawal of political support; suspension from a public function; suspension of the membership; exclusion from the party. In the case of PNL, „non-compliance with the provision of the ethical code represents misconduct, and PNL Statute sanctions it." Moreover, in the case of PDM three penalties are presented: withdrawal of political support; suspension of the membership; exclusion from the party. The difference between the sanctions, introduced in the codes of ethics of PSD and PDM, is that in the case of PSD the suspension from the public function is included. Referring to the tone of the codes of ethics (Gaumnitz and Lere 2004), our analysed codes of ethics are more regulatory/ prescriptive and are more constituted from negative statements. The comprehension aids (FAQs, Q&A) are almost inexistent in the analysed codes of ethics. After reading and explaining the procedural content (Erwin 2011), sanctions are present in all analysed Codes, but more specifically in the case of PSD and PDM, having a particular chapter for sanctions and member duties. The next variable for our framework is the target audience that is mostly internal (members and sympathizers). In our case, two parties,

PSD and PDM, have distinguished chapters regarding rights and duties of the members and supporters.

Conclusion

During electoral campaigns, political organizations can face different types of ethical issues, and the adoption of an ethical code can help parties to solve this problems or dilemmas. In this sense, the analysis of the Codes of ethics' role became an interesting topic of research in almost all domains, but less in the political parties' sphere. In the last years, in different countries, more and more parties start to have an ethical code, but not all of them are effective. There is a lack of knowledge when it comes to their form and content and their influence on the ethical behaviour. Organizations turn to these instruments for the promotion of ethical conduct, for the communication of their commitment to ethical practices as well as for the reprimanding of internal unethical behaviour. This paper provides some starting points for further research on the codes of ethics' role for the political parties by applying the content analysis of political parties' ethical codes. The current study made a contribution to the understanding of the role of a code of ethics in communication and ethical behaviour of leaders, members, and sympathizers. The current study examined a major organizational communication of the code of ethics across one party from the Republic of Moldova and two political parties from Romania. When we look at the length of the code, the classification is the following: (PSD= 8 pages, 9 chapters, 78 statements; PDM = 6 pages; 10 chapters, 68 statements; PNL = 5 pages, 3 chapters, 48 statements). All three codes are a mix between consequentialist and deontological oriented codes, two out of three codes of ethics had specified sanctions (4 in the case of PSD, and 3 in the case of PDM, and a general sanction in the case of PNL). Most statements were deontological, and a small were consequentialist (PSD= around 5% consequences, and 95% deontological statements; PNL = 2% consequences, 98% deontological; PDM = 4.4% consequential statements, 95.6% deontological). The tone of the codes of ethics is mostly regulatory/ prescriptive and are formed out of positive and negative comments (more than 95% of the Codes of ethics). Comprehension aids were not present in the code of ethics analysed in this study, and the members and the sympathizers are the primary target audience of all three codes of ethics. From the analysis made in the current study, the code of PSD (adopted in 2015) and the code of PDM (passed in 2017) have very similar statements. Some parts of the Code of Ethics are 100% identical: the name of the party

are changed, the number of principles are reversed or some of them are deleted.

Regarding the role of the codes of ethics and their effect, the efficient and ethical communication of the Code of Ethics is the key to its success. The effectiveness of the code of ethics focuses on effective communication (internal and external). It needs to integrate into the organizational culture for counteracting the ethical problems. It offers solutions regarding the exclusion of corruption, of money distortion effect in the time of electoral campaign and the exclusion of negative PR. At the same time with creation and adoption of codes of ethics, political organizations need to take into account the creation of *Ethical watchdogs* like: ethical advisors, Ethical Commissions, Ethical Committees.

As a final remark of the current study, we would like to conclude with a question of Lazăr (2015): „ Political parties without such code of ethics is like a driver without a driver's license and it is worthy to enter into such a car driven by such a driver?", however, do not forget that the simple idea to have a code of ethics is not enough, and the next important step is to apply this code of ethics when it is necessary.

In future studies, we propose to make a more detailed content analysis, with more codes of ethics of other political parties from Romania and the Republic of Moldova. In our future research we will apply other research instruments, like interviews, secondary data, polls, or the Ethical Climate Index (ECI) created by Arnaud (2006). This Index emphasizes on moral judgment, motivation, sensitivity, character and is a valuable and adequate indicator of ethical behaviour in an organization (Arnaud 2006).

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