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# Points of View on the Functioning of Autonomy in the Local Public Administration. The Case of The Radauti Municipality City Hall Institution, Suceava County, Romania

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**Abstract**: Fundamental to the governance of local public administration, the principle of autonomy recognizes for those who manage the decision-making power in taking measures to solve the problems of the community. This paper has as main objective the analysis of the functioning of the principle of autonomy in the local public administration, with particularization at the level of the institution of the City Hall of Rădăuţi Municipality from Suceava County. By interpreting the perceptions expressed by public officials (including local councilors), civil servants, as well as contract staff working in this structure, the present micro-research highlights that the largest share of human resources surveyed: considers that the legislation in force covers the legal framework necessary for the proper functioning of the autonomy, declares that the limits of intervention and control of the central administration are largely respected, supports the importance of autonomy in the functioning of the City Hall institution. Regarding the right of initiative of staff and the freedom to decide on the execution of orders of the hierarchical superior, the results recorded show that most of the respondents adopted a neutral position. Also, regarding the degree of satisfaction of the questioned human resources in relation to the autonomy held in the position exercised, most of them declare neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the autonomy they have in the City Hall institution.

**Keywords:** *the principle of local autonomy, the current legal framework, limits of intervention and control, importance, right to initiative, freedom of decision and action, degree of satisfaction.*

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## 1. Methodological framework in carrying out micro-research

Whether it is a public opinion poll, a sociological survey or a field research, the questionnaire proves to be one of the most frequently used techniques in the socio-human sciences. (Chelcea, 2001) The role of this investigative tool is very clearly explained by Roopa S. and Rani M.S. from which we learn that "the questionnaire forms the backbone of any survey, its success being in the design of the questionnaire" (Roopa & Rani, 2012).

The questionnaire can be constructed only when we know very clearly how the studied problem is presented. Due to the complexity of social reality, we have to decompose problems along different dimensions. Each dimension must be broken down into indicators. Only as a result of this operationalization can we reach the measurement. Once we know what we want to measure, we will translate the indicators into questions that appear in the questionnaire (Şondor, 2020).

The main objective of the micro-research consists in the analysis of the functioning of the autonomy principle in the local public administration, with particularization at the level of the institution of the City Hall of Rădăuţi Municipality, Suceava County.

The micro-research will take place at the level of the aforementioned public institution, the questionnaire being intended for public officials (including local councilors), civil servants, as well as contract staff working within this structure. The investigation of the functioning of the autonomy in the local administration process will be carried out by interpreting the perceptions expressed by these categories of respondents that form the surveyed population, as follows (see Table 1): Whether it is a public opinion poll, a sociological survey or a field research, the questionnaire proves to be one of the most frequently used techniques in the socio-human sciences. (Chelcea, 2001) The role of this investigative tool is very clearly explained by Roopa S. and Rani M.S. from which we learn that "the questionnaire forms the backbone of any survey, its success being in the design of the questionnaire" (Roopa & Rani, 2012).

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**Table 1.** Respondent population

| **Sampling base** | | | **Sample** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Staff category** | **Total human resources** | **Percent** | **Total respondents** | **Percent** |
| **Public dignitaries** | 2 | 0.84% | 2 | 1.01% |
| **Local councilors** | 19 | 7.99% | 17 | 8.59% |
| **Leading civil servants** | 9 | 3.79% | 9 | 4.54% |
| **Execution civil servants** | 87 | 36.55% | 78 | 39.39% |
| **Contract leading staff** | 7 | 2.94% | 7 | 3.54% |
| **Contract execution staff** | 114 | 47.89% | 85 | 42.93% |
| **Total** | **238** | **100%** | **198** | **100%** |

Source: authors processing apud Organization chart of the City Hall institution of Rădăuți Municipality, Suceava County, https://primariaradauti.ro/primarie/organizare/organizare

For the collection of answers, we used the Google Docs platform, the respondent population thus completing the online questionnaire, and the period of collecting the answers being 15 days

## 2. Autonomy in the context of legislation and of limits of intervention and control

As can be seen in the following figure, most of the surveyed human resources within the City Hall institution of Rădăuţi Municipality (70.71%) consider that the legislation in force covers the legal framework necessary for the proper functioning of the autonomy of the local public administration. On the other hand, only 5.05% of respondents say that the legislation in force covers to a small extent the proper functioning of autonomy. For almost ¼ (24.24%) of the respondent staff there is a passive attitude in this regard, stating that neither to a small nor a large extent the existing legislation covers the legal framework necessary for the proper functioning of autonomy (see Figure 1):

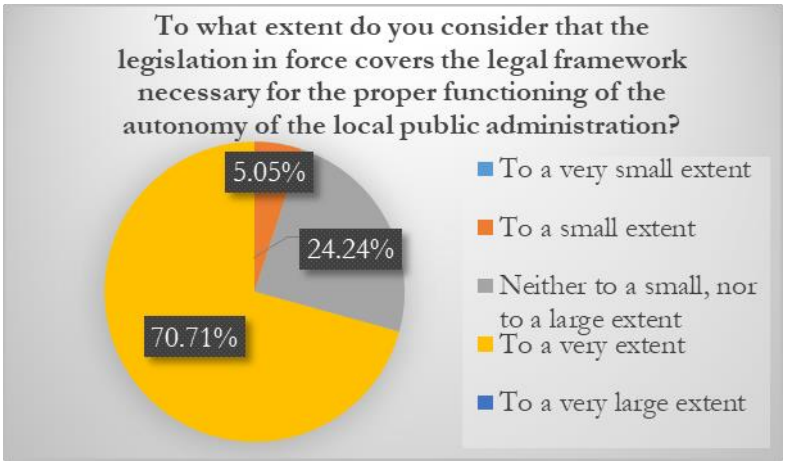



**Fig. 1.** Protection of autonomy in the current legal framework
Source: Author's own conception

According to the following graphic representation, more than half of the respondent staff (59.09%) declare that the limits of intervention and control by the central public administration authorities over the City Hall Institution of the Rădăuți Muncipality are largely respected. This result highlights the fact that the central public administration recognizes the autonomy at the level of the local public structure, limiting its intervention and control. However, 40.91% of the surveyed human resources consider that these limits are met neither to a small nor a large extent, a situation that

could be remedied and rather denotes a neutral position of the respondents (see Figure 2):

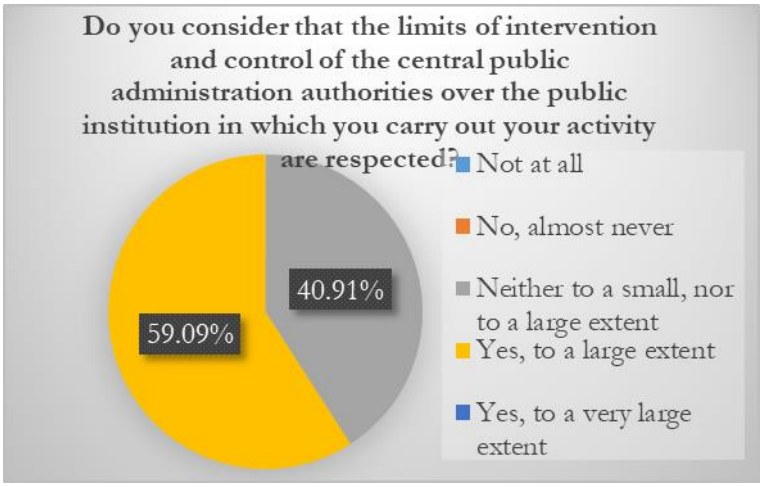



**Fig. 2.** Respecting the intervention and control limits of the central public administration authorities over the local public institution
Source: Author's own conception

## 3. The role of autonomy in the good functioning of the city hall institution

From the view of the following figure it is observed that the largest share (89.40% = 61.62% + 27.78%) of the staff of the Rădăuţi City Hall that was surveyed is of the opinion that autonomy is important and very important for the good functioning of the local public institution. For a percentage of 10.5% of the respondents, the autonomy does not influence the functioning of the institution in which they carry out their activity (see Figure no. 3).

Taking into account these results, it can be appreciated that the respect of autonomy within the institution determines the staff to fulfill their tasks and responsibilities at the maximum possible level, which consequently implies the proper functioning of the City Hall Institution in Rădăuți Municipality.

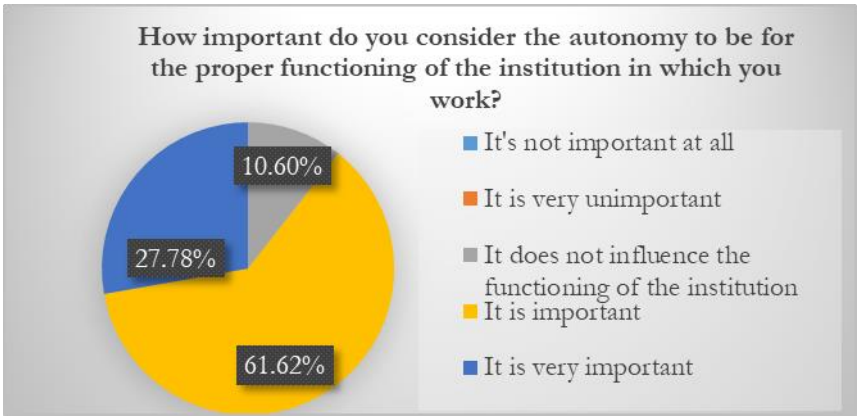



**Fig. 3.** The importance of autonomy for the proper functioning of the public institution

Source: Author's own conception

## 4. The degree of autonomy in fulfilling the duties of the function held

Another aspect to be considered for the efficient functioning of the institution is the right of initiative of the staff. This right is indispensable for the improvement of the activity at the level of the public institution, as its recognition determines the personnel to carry out their tasks in a proactive and productive way.

As can be seen in the following graphic representation, half of the respondent staff (50%) consider that sometimes their right of initiative is respected, and other times not, choosing the option "neither to a small, nor to a large extent". A percentage of 12.12% (11.11% + 1.01%) of the surveyed human resources state that this right is respected to a large and very large extent in the exercise of the duties of the function held. By contrast, a share of 37.88% of respondents appreciates that their right of initiative is respected to a small extent (see Figure no. 4). These answers can be justified in terms of the function held, the number of public executive functions and the contractual executive functions being considerably higher than the number of leading functions.

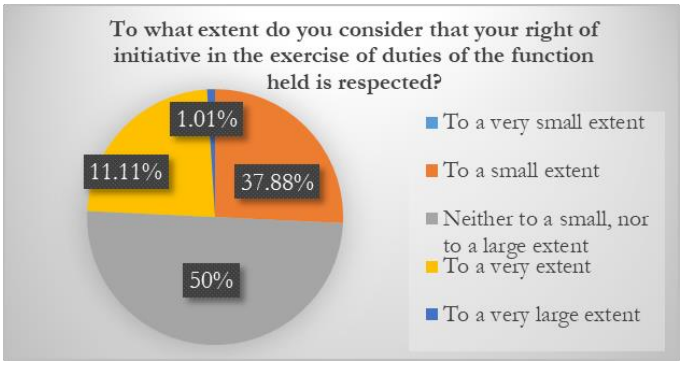



**Fig. 4.** Respect for the right of initiative
Source: Author's own conception

Regarding the freedom to decide on the execution of orders received from the hierarchical superior, the following graph shows that most of the respondents (65.66%) state that they have this freedom only in certain situations. Almost ¼ (23.74%) of the surveyed staff appreciate that they can decide how to execute the orders of superiors in most situations, while only 10.60% of the responding human resources consider that they are almost never offered this freedom (see Figure no. 5). These results can be explained by the fact that at the level of the City Hall the hierarchical superiors send clear orders and instructions, being recognized for the executive staff the freedom to decide how to apply them only in certain situations.

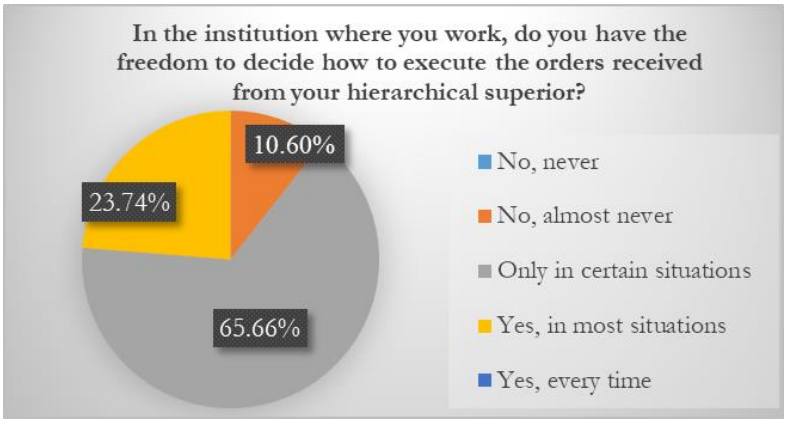



**Fig. 5.** Freedom to decide on the execution of orders received from the hierarchical superior; Source: Author's own conception

The following graphic representation shows the respondents' opinion on the degree of freedom in relation to what they do and how they do in the function held by each respondent.

Regarding the statement "someone else decides what to do and how to do in the function held", the most surveyed human resources (65.15%) adopted a neutral position, choosing the answer option "neither agree nor disagree", more than ¼ among the respondents (28.79% = 9.10% + 19.69%) express their strongly and partially agree regarding the mentioned statement, while the disagree is expressed by only a percentage of 6.06% of the responding staff.

The human resource from the Rădăuţi City Hall institution expressed its opinion regarding the statement "I have some freedom to decide what to do and how to do in the function held" as follows: 43.43% (1.01% + 42.42%) of the surveyed staff chose the answer variants "strongly agree" and "agree", an almost identical percentage (46.47%) of respondents ticked the option "neither agree nor disagree", and the disagree is expressed by a share of 10.10% of the surveyed human resources.

The respondent staff also expressed their choice in connection with the statement "I decide what to do and how to do in the function held", the answers collected being: more than half of the human resources surveyed (56.06% = 53.54% + 2.52%) have chosen the answer options "disagree" and "strongly disagree", approximately 1/3 of the respondents (33.84%) opted for a neutral position, choosing the option "neither agree nor disagree", while only a percentage of 10.10% (9.09 % + 1.01%) have strongly and partially agreed (see Figure 6):

Based on these results, it can be stated that at the City Hall of Rădăuţi the staff has the freedom to decide what to do and how to do in the function held to some extent, taking into account the degree of difficulty of the decision or task.

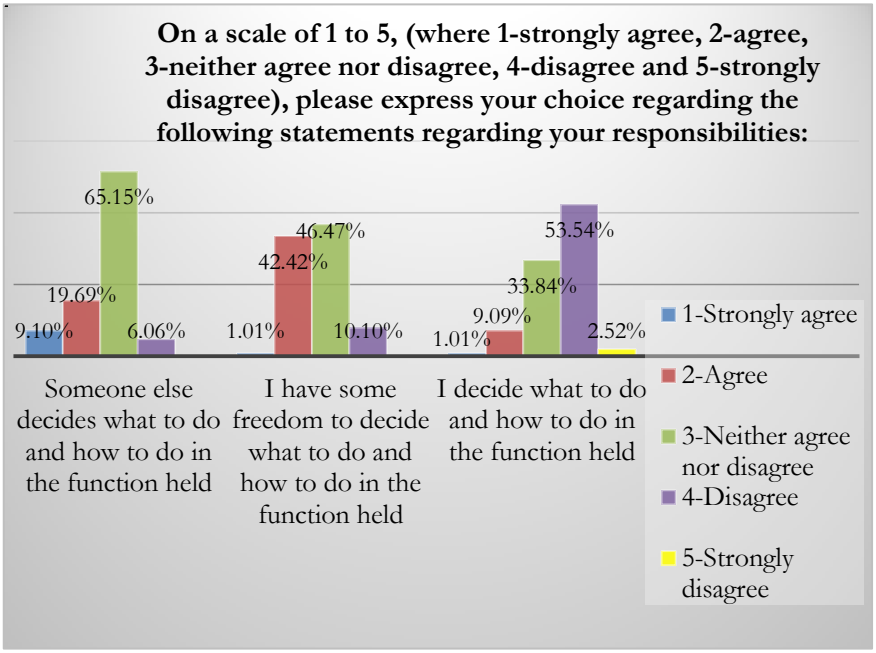



**Fig. 6.** The degree of freedom about what they do and how they do in the function held

Source: Author's own conception

## 5. The satisfaction regarding the autonomy held in the exercised function

The following figure highlights the degree of satisfaction of the surveyed human resources in relation to the autonomy held in the function exercised. Thus, most of the respondents (43.43%) say they are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the autonomy they have in the City Hall institution. A close percentage (40.91%=1.01% +39.90%) is registered for the staff that expresses their strongly and partially agree regarding the satisfaction generated by the autonomy held in the function they hold. By contrast, are dissatisfied and very dissatisfied with the function exercised in relation to the degree of autonomy they have in the institution a percentage of 15.66% (14.14%+1.52%) of the total human resources surveyed (see Figure 7):

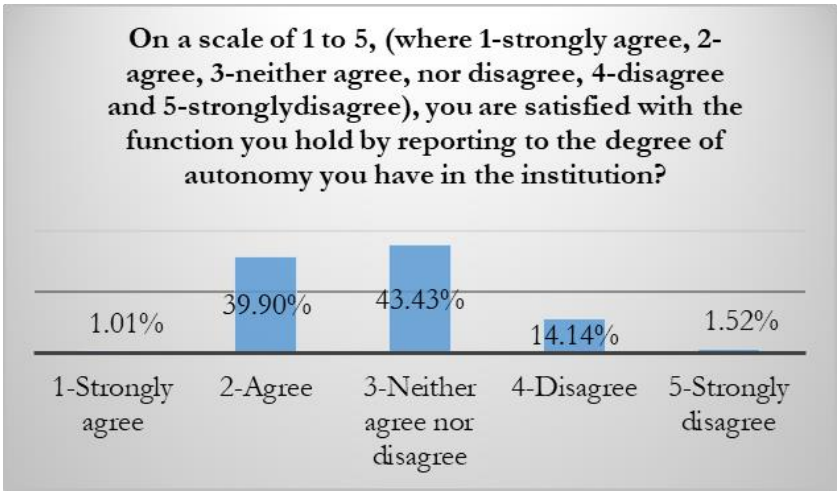



**Fig. 7.** The degree of human resources satisfaction in relation to the autonomy in the function exercised

Source: Author's own conception

## 6. Conclusions

Having as support the data recorded and interpreted in the previous lines we can conclude that the micro-research conducted made it possible to analyze the functioning of the principle of autonomy in local public administration, with particularization at the level of the City Hall institution of Radauti Municipality in Suceava County.

With regard to *the protection of autonomy in the current legal framework*, most of the surveyed human resources (70.71%) within the City Hall institution consider that the legislation in force covers the legal framework necessary for the proper functioning of the autonomy of the local public administration.

Concerning *respecting the intervention and control limits of the central public administration authorities over the local public institution*, more than half of the respondent staff (59.09%) declare that these limits are largely respected at the level of the City HallInstitution of the Rădăuți Municipality.

Regarding the *importance of autonomy for the proper functioning of the public institution*, the largest share (89.40%) of the staff of the Rădăuți City Hall that

was surveyed is of the opinion that autonomy is important and very important.

With reference to *the right of initiative of the staff*, half of the responding human resources (50%) consider that sometimes this right is respected, and other times not, choosing the option "neither to a small, nor to a large extent".

Regarding *the freedom to decide on the execution of orders received from the hierarchical superior*, the results show that most of the respondents (65.66%) state that they have this freedom only in certain situations.

Referring to the item *someone else decides what to do and how to do it in the function held*, most of the surveyed human resources (65.15%) adopted a neutral position, choosing the answer option "neither agree nor disagree".

The human resources from the City Hall institution of Rădăuți Municipality expressed its opinion in connection with the statement *I have some freedom to decide what to do and how to do in the function held*: 43.43% of the surveyed staff chose the answer variants "strongly agree" and "agree" , and an almost identical percentage (46.47%) of respondents ticked the "neither agree nor disagree" option.

The respondent staff also expressed their choice in connection with the statement *I decide what to do and how to do in the function held*, the answers collected showing that more than half of the human resources surveyed (56.06%) have chosen the answer options "disagree" and "strongly disagree".

Regarding *the degree of satisfaction* of the surveyed human resources in relation to the autonomy held in the function exercised, most of the respondents (43.43%) say they are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the autonomy they have in the City Hall institution.

Finally, we can conclude that autonomy is an indispensable principle of organization and functioning for the administration process of the local community.

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