



TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF CLUJ-NAPOCA

ACTA TECHNICA NAPOCENSIS

Series: Applied Mathematics, Mechanics, and Engineering
Vol. 66, Issue II, June, 2023

EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS THROUGH THE LENS OF COMMUNICATION QUALITY MANAGEMENT AT THE LEVEL OF A CENTRAL PUBLIC AUTHORITY

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Abstract: *High-performance management requires measures that take into account efficiency and effectiveness. Public authorities must provide efficient public services to citizens, but government budgets are reduced year by year, and investments in new technologies are postponed due to a lack of funds. Civil servants must identify solutions to streamline their work, adapt to the connectivity needs imposed by telework and respond to citizens' demands effectively.*

Key words: *efficiency, effectiveness, central public administration, communication, public management.*

1. INTRODUCTION

I consider that efficiency and effectiveness are two of the most important concepts for the quality management of communication regarding a central public authority. For any central public authority, including the Ministry of Culture, the main objective is to implement government policy according to its strategies developed by the specific fields of activity. Certain public services available to citizens remain unchanged, while others must adapt to the economic and social realities.

”Facing decreasing budgets and growing populations for whom to provide services, government must find ways to increase the capability of its agencies, to maximize its available fiscal and human resources, and to increase both effectiveness and efficiency”. [1]
„Management of an organization will require information for determining how well these objectives have been achieved. This focuses on two factors:

- Whether the goals have been met (effectiveness);
- Whether they were able to provide products and services with minimal nonconformities (efficiency)”. [2]

In this context, government strategies and policies should be elaborated so that public

services respond to the two concepts considered the foundation of quality management: efficiency and effectiveness. At the level of the central public administration, I consider that special attention was yielded, in particular, to the efficiency of communication, in the sense that the objective of increasing the number of press releases published on the ministry's website and the institution's official Facebook page was achieved, by using -minimum resources. ”IT can improve the effectiveness of decision makers by getting them the right information at the right time and in the right format”. [3]

”Informatization causes changes in the way they are used knowledge from different fields. The more efficient procedures of collection, storage, transmission and use of information influence cost reduction and product quality improvement”. [4]

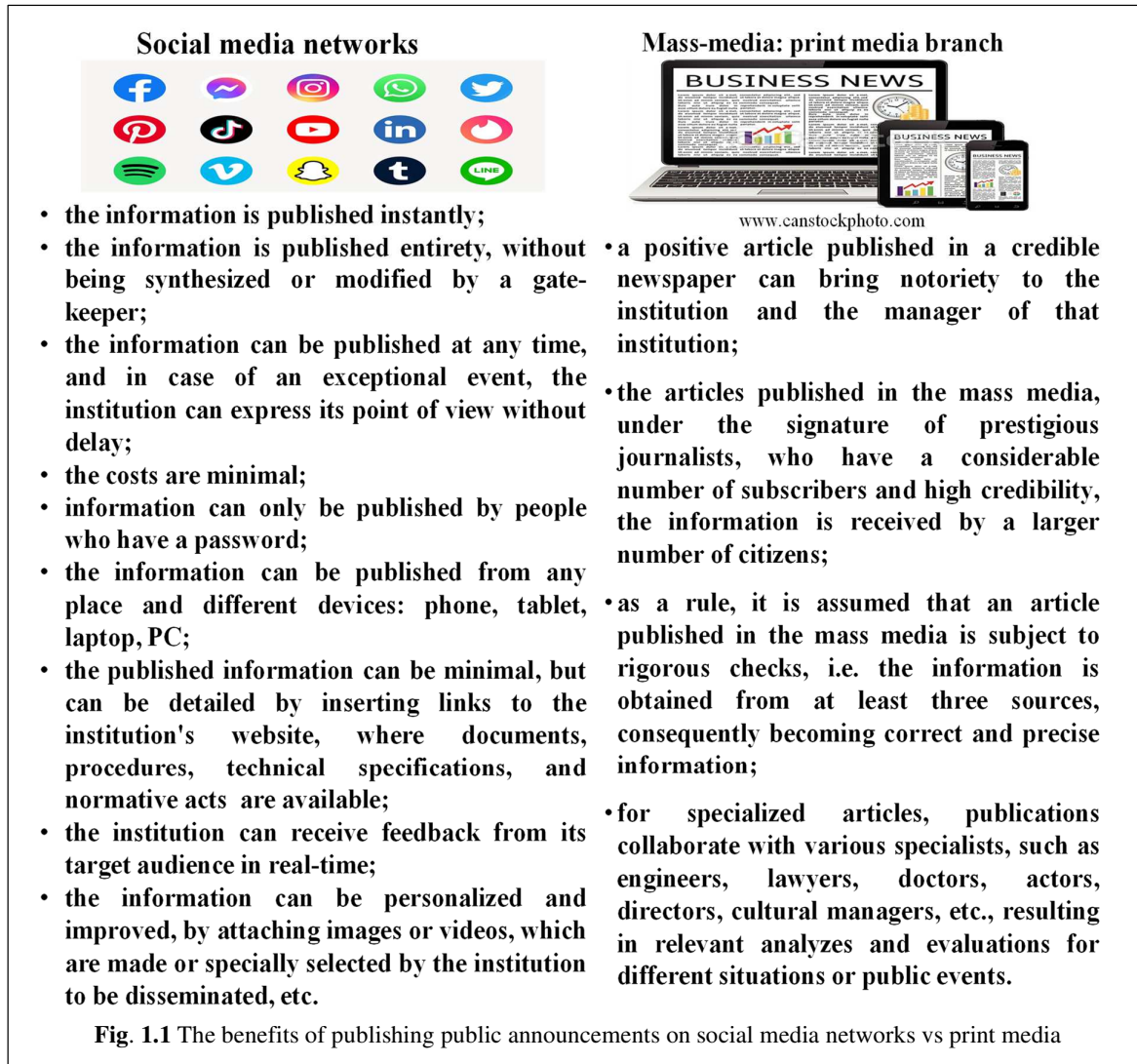
Since the citizens tend to use predominantly social media networks to obtain information the government requested the ministries, in the context of decision-making transparency, to adopt using these communication channels, especially Facebook, to disseminate press releases and public announcements. Thus, by using minimal resources, such as:

- the human resource, which is already employed at the level of communication

structures, not having to hire PR specialists for the preparation of press releases;

- the technological resource:

Consequently, efficiency, from the perspective of external communication, can be achieved through the "outputs" of published



- an Internet connection, which is provided at the level of each public institution and does not require a specially purchased package;
- a laptop, phone or desktop, which are available at the level of each communication structure within any ministry;
- free social media channel, such as Facebook, which is accessible to any organization;
- a public institution has the opportunity to disseminate press releases and public announcements in considerable numbers.

public information, i.e. reaching a certain number of press releases and public announcements, which was agreed upon by the institution's management.

However, the efficiency of a public institution's communication, which assumes that the objective of publishing an "n" number of press releases has been achieved by using minimal resources, cannot be synonymous with effectiveness. While efficiency represents the evaluation of one's activity and the achievement of one's objectives regarding external communication, effectiveness assumes that the communication process is relevant to the target audience, so the information searched by the

citizens wanted to obtain was mainly disseminated.

„Efficiency means doing a task correctly (“doing things right”) and getting the most output from the least amount of inputs. Effectiveness means “doing the right things” by doing those work tasks that help the organization reach its goals”.^[5] “Effective teams are those that produce desired results”.^[6] “Government agencies are under constant pressure to improve their efficiency, effectiveness, and responsiveness”. A central public authority is subject to various types of constraints, mainly economic, but also social, and must manage its activity as efficiently as possible, taking into account the following factors:

- the use of limited technological and financial resources;
- the fulfilment of the objectives assumed by the government;
- providing public services to as many citizens as possible.^[1]

Effectiveness through the lens of communication quality management at the level of a central public authority can be accomplished by analyzing the degree to which the institution succeeds in communicating what is relevant to its target audience. For most public institutions, it is difficult to achieve the measure of effectiveness since it is necessary to develop specific strategies regarding communication, and most public institutions do not have such a strategy.

I believe that the rigorous analysis and evaluation of what the citizen wants to be communicated to him requires a process, arduous, of continuous research and documentation, which very few public institutions can implement.

At the same time, the trend observed, over the years, at the level of the top management of public institutions is to order an increase in the number of press releases and the publication of information about the events in which the management of the institution took part, regardless of whether those events are related or not with the institution's specific activity or if this information coincides with citizens' needs to obtain information.

Dissemination of information in large numbers does not ensure that those messages are important to citizens. In this context, I consider that it is important to analyze, for example, the feedback or likes received by the institutions on their Facebook page. At the same time, it is possible to analyze, for example, for the Ministry of Culture, which of the information published on social media networks was the most appreciated to establish the categories of communications that most attract the target audience.

It is possible to analyze, for example, for the Ministry of Culture, which of the information published on social media networks was the most appreciated, to establish the categories of communications that most attract the target audience:

- those presenting announcements regarding a new theatrical or opera premiere;
- information about the organization of thematic exhibitions within museums;
- information about the participation of Romanian writers at international book fairs;
- publication of congratulatory messages for people of culture, on the occasion of celebrating birthdays, etc;
- information regarding the participation of the Minister of Culture in various cultural events, etc.

Thus, to achieve effectiveness at the level of a central public authority, it is necessary to develop strategies that specify what is to be communicated, concerning the types of target audience. Afterwards, it is necessary to monitor and carry out a permanent evaluation of all the aspects that can be extracted from an analysis of the communication process, and according to these data, to establish what are the necessary changes or adjustments so that a process of communication to become not only efficient but also effective.

Another essential element worth to be analyzed from the point of view of the management of the quality of communication at the level of a central public authority is that relating to the communication with the beneficiaries of public services, respectively citizens and organizations under public or

private law. At the national level, communication with the beneficiaries of public services is regulated through two normative acts: Ordinance no. 27/2001 [7], which describes the steps that must be taken to resolve petitions, and Law 544/2001, which presents the resolution process for requests aimed at the information of public interest. [8]

Thus, all central public authorities should communicate, to the citizens, an answer to the requests addressed to the institution within a predetermined period. In the situation where an authority does not submit a response, it can pay, following a sentence issued by a court of law, including moral damages to the person who formulated the petition or request and did not receive feedback.

In this context, the efficiency of communication requires that the public institution must develop the ability to increase the degree of solving all requests and petitions which were sent by the petitioners. The higher the degree of resolution of petitioners' requests, the more it can be considered that the authority carried out a communication activity that corresponded to the measure of effectiveness.

Graphic representing the efficiency of the degree of resolution of REQUESTS regarding free access to INFORMATION OF PUBLIC INTEREST - MINISTRY OF CULTURE

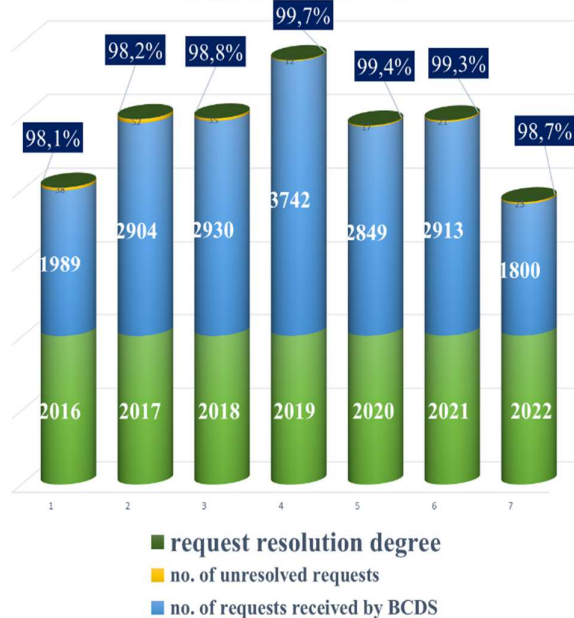


Fig. 1.2 Graphic representing the efficiency of the degree of resolution of requests regarding free access to information of public interest - Ministry of Culture.

At the level of the Ministry of Culture, how the efficiency criteria are met, from the perspective of communication, can be represented graphically through the figures, which have as their source the data published in the reports published on the institution's website, under the legislation in force.

Graphic representing the efficiency of the degree of resolution of petitions - MINISTRY OF CULTURE

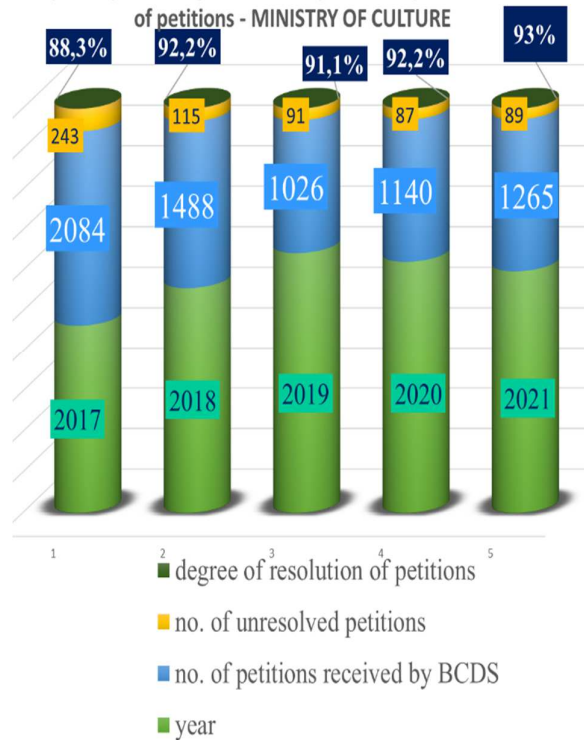


Fig. 1.3 Graphic representing the efficiency of the degree of resolution of petitions - Ministry of Culture

In terms of effectiveness, from the perspective of communicating with the target audience through petitions and requests, central public authorities, as a rule, do not have a special database to record the addresses relayed by citizens to request additional information. There are situations in which citizens return with addresses, as a result of incomplete or unexplained answers received from the institutions.

Only through an analysis of the motivation that was the basis for the return of the petitioners with addresses can the degree of effectiveness be established, e.g. the degree by which the beneficiaries of public services received the information they requested, which they needed and which conformed to their expectations.

At the same time, it is important to mention another aspect, namely the fact that there is a

Table 1.1. The costs of postage fees

	A	B	C	D= B+C	F= A*(B+C)
year	no. of responses sent via email	value postage/ receipt confirmation/ over 101g average weight per envelope	price self-adhesive envelope A4/1 pc. 0.5 lei	value of postage + value of A4 envelope minimum	saving price (year value*number of addresses, expressed in lei)
2020	1307	10,7	0,5	11,2	14.638
2021	1420	10,7	0,6	11,3	16.046
2022	1274	12,3	0,8	13,1	16.689

category of citizens who return with addresses to the institutions, even though they have received an answer, just because they believe that civil servants must be "put to work", so should respond multiple times to the same request. In this case, effectiveness is impossible to achieve, since the petitioner does not want to establish real communication with an authority, but his objective is to make himself heard.

Following the analysis of the activity reports prepared for the Ministry of Culture in 2020, 2021 and 2022, could be concluded that the efficiency of the activity within the communication structure at the ministry level also had a significant financial impact, as the costs of postal charges.

Thus, according to the legislation in force, for any petition and request for information of public interest, the public authorities must send a response to the requester.

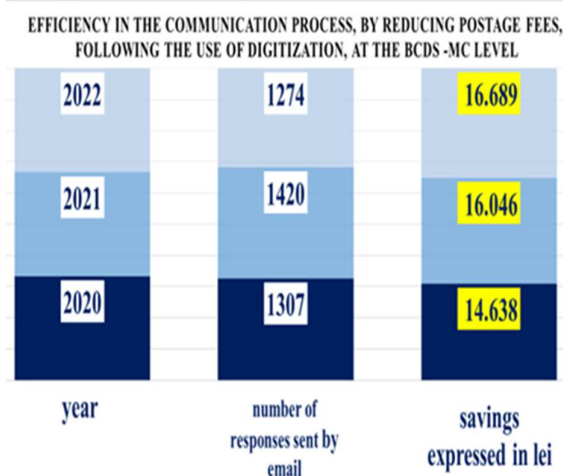


Fig. 1.4 Efficiency in communication process, by reducing postage fees, using digitalization

As a rule, at the level of the Ministry of Culture, the correspondence transmission services offered by the Romanian Post and the Special Post (but which are used only for communication between public institutions) are used. To streamline the activity at the BCDS level within the ministry, the responses to petitions and requests, after they are signed by the minister, are digitalized, respectively they are scanned and transmitted, in electronic format, to the applicants. In this way, the answer reaches the addressee immediately, and the costs of sending addresses are considerably reduced, resulting in an economy for the state budget, calculated only at the BCDS level, as represented in table no. 1.1 and figure no. 1.4.

According to the information included in table no. 1.1, in 2020, 14,638 lei were saved for several 1,307 addresses. In 2021, for several 1420 addresses, 16,046 lei were saved, and in 2022, for several 1274 addresses, several 16,689 lei were saved.



Fig. 1.5 The rising trend in postage fees

Another important analysis is presented in Figure 1.5, where the increasing trend of the cost of postage fees is represented in the graphic by the orange-colored line. In this context, central public authorities can reduce the expenses generated by the transmission of documents by digitization and may increase the coefficient of efficient services.

2. CONCLUSION

Efficiency and effectiveness can be achieved at the level of central public administrations through use of the digitization, respectively the use of the SaaS platforms, such as Dropbox, Google Drive, or email server, are cloud application services, easy to use, no need to install them, and they are free. In the context in which a public institution must adapt to the new technological realities without having budgets that allow a real adaptation to these demands of citizens, the use of SaaS platforms is a solution that can make the activity more efficient by reducing costs and can be, at the same time, effective, because they harmonies to the requests of the target groups.

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Eficiență și eficacitate prin prisma managementului calității comunicării la nivelul unei autorități publice centrale

Managementul de calității se bazează pe măsuri care să țină cont de eficiență și eficacitate. Autoritățile publice trebuie să ofere cetățenilor servicii publice eficiente, dar bugetele guvernelor se reduc de la an la an, iar investițiile în noi tehnologii sunt amânate din lipsă de fonduri. Funcționarii publici trebuie să identifice soluții pentru a-și eficientiza munca, să se adapteze nevoilor de conectivitate, impuse de munca la distanță, și să răspundă în mod eficient așteptărilor cetățenilor.

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