

PROMOTION ACTIVITIES MANAGEMENT IN THE YOUNG POPULATION FOR THE MILITARY PROFESSION

Stelian PÂNZARU¹
Mihai-Bogdan ALEXANDRESCU²

Abstract: *The military domain is highly dependent on the quantity and quality of human resources. Demographic decline, socio-economic developments, a decrease in educational quality, strain on the medical system, unprecedented technological advancements, rapid and global dissemination of information, and, finally, the increasing demands and information awareness of the population, contribute to heightened competitiveness in all sectors and a chronic labor force deficit in certain segments. Therefore, this article aims to analyze the current context, both internal and external factors that directly or indirectly influence young individuals' decisions in choosing a military profession, and to propose strategies for the medium and long term to enhance the recruitment and selection of human resources in the Romanian Army.*

Key words: *military profession, military educational institutions, promotion strategies*

JEL Classification: M31, L25

1. Introduction

Nicolae Iorga's memorable speech from 1912, delivered in front of the officers and cadets of the Infantry Military School, is ingrained in history. In it, he expressed: “Why does someone join the ranks of officers? For

¹ *Spiru Haret University, Faculty of Juridical Sciences and Economic Sciences, Brasov, panzarus@gmail.com*

² *Spiru Haret University, Faculty of Juridical Sciences and Economic Sciences, Brasov, alexa2bogdan@yahoo.com*

the pleasure of wearing a uniform? No, because the uniform is made to be as unattractive as possible. No matter how beautiful the uniform may be, it must be accompanied by physical gifts that highlight it. For the remuneration? Officer pay is not one of the most tempting. So, for what other reason, if not for that high sense of honor, as he – and no one else – is called upon to give, at his own expense as an individual, to the detriment of his family, all the strength he possesses, both physical and moral, for the good of the country!” (Iorga, 1912). However, today, the increasing competition and geopolitical ambitions, migratory flows, economic crises, unprecedented environmental changes, and cyber risks create moral imbalances that lead to the professional disorientation of the younger generation. Nevertheless, young individuals who choose a military career have the chance not only to enjoy certain benefits but also to undergo professional and moral training suitable for their new social status (Pânzaru, 2006, p.134).

Over the past 20 years, the attractiveness of the military profession has experienced fluctuations reflected in the number of recruited candidates and their retention within the military system. Moreover, the attractiveness of the military profession is not entirely synonymous with the promotion of the military profession; the relationship is one of mutual enhancement. Drawing in motivated young individuals with the appropriate aptitude for the military profession can be achieved by adapting to the evolution of the national and European educational systems, responding to labor market dynamics, modernizing military education, refining career management, improving the quality of life, and implementing a military profession promotion strategy based on understanding the target audience and swiftly adapting to internal and external conditions of the military institution. This strategy involves utilizing all means provided by the digital era and employing marketing and communication techniques to convey elements that can differentiate and position the military profession in the job market.

“Given the crucial importance of human resources, a systematic approach to all activities related to planning, recruitment, selection, development, and career management of military and civilian personnel is necessary within the

military organization. The following objectives are pursued: human resources planning in correlation with the strategic defense goals, ensuring high-quality human resources, strengthening the status of military personnel, modernizing the military education system, and improving the quality of life for personnel.” (White Papers on Defense, p.43).

2. A Brief History of Military Profession Promotion Strategies

The term “strategic management” officially entered the vocabulary of management in 1973 during the first International Conference on Strategic Management, initiated by American professor Igor Ansoff at Vanderbilt University, USA. There is a certain consensus among some authors who consider that strategic management represents a modern form of leadership (Pânzaru, 2019, p.41).

The promotion of the military profession is how the requirements, standards, moral and professional expectations of the army, as well as what it has to offer, are made known and understood without cosmeticizing reality. By using appropriate techniques, promotion highlights the specific values of the military domain, making them visible, assimilable, and translating them into the emotional and cultural language of the digital generation.

It is noteworthy that the structures of the Ministry of National Defense, in the strategic management of military career promotion, implement what Rolf Buhner suggested, namely: investment-oriented personnel strategy, value-oriented personnel strategy, and resource-oriented personnel strategy (Buhner, 1994). As a result, the management of military profession promotion experienced significant revitalization starting in 2016, and the professional offer of the army became more visible, both in recruitment environments and in the mass media. The Ministry of National Defense has maintained its status as a valuable competitor in the market of educational and professional offers, given the increasing labor force shortage nationally.

Consequently, from year to year, there has been an increase in the number of candidates, both at the recruitment structures and at the military education institutions. Especially in the last 3 years, both competition and the occupancy rate of the places in the training plans and professional soldier/graded positions have increased. For example, in 2019, 35% more candidates were recruited compared to the previous year. In the period from January to August 2023, the total number of entries into the system exceeded the number of exits. Approximately 3,800 positions were filled during this period (including approximately 700 officers, 400 military masters, 1,100 non-commissioned officers, 1,000 specialist military personnel, and 600 contractual civilian personnel). All military personnel were appointed to positions at the base of the military hierarchy, in priority structures, especially in units consolidating their combat capabilities (Press Release of the Ministry of National Defense No. 362/25.09.2023).

The period from 2018 to 2023 was characterized by the intensification and diversification of promotion activities, especially in the online environment. From this perspective, the soldier/professional graded soldier training program ranks first in terms of attractiveness for the military profession, followed by officer training and military high school education. Additionally, three promotion campaigns were designed, two of which were completed, and the third is currently ongoing.

These campaigns were characterized by national coverage, their own visual identity, diverse means of communication with the target audience, message convergence, consistency, and transparency in providing objective and relevant information to project a realistic image of the military profession in the civilian environment.

The main channels used for disseminating promotion messages were direct contact with target groups, the Internet (social networks, websites), printed materials (leaflets, magazines, calendars, business cards, etc.), display (posters, panels, banners), and television, radio, and local publications were also utilized.

All materials produced centrally in the promotion campaigns had a unified design and unique identification elements (logo and slogan). In total, 7 poster models, 6 flyer models, brochures, magazines, and other types of materials were printed in an edition of approximately 618,000 copies, with dedicated messages and differentiated content for force categories and target groups. These were complemented by promotional materials multiplied or created by the recruitment structures in their own conception.

An increasingly pronounced emphasis was placed on using the online environment, which is the preferred means of information for the target audience. In February 2016, two RecrutareMApN pages were opened on the social media platforms Facebook and Twitter, and in 2020, a similar page was launched on Instagram.

The Facebook social network has been the focal point of military profession promotion in the online environment. The RecrutareMApN page, with 130,000 subscribers, has had a significant impact and is particularly popular among individuals aged 18 to 34, representing almost two-thirds of the total page subscribers.

Similarly, the official page of the Ministry of National Defense in the same social network consistently published numerous impactful video materials (commercials, testimonials, reports, live broadcasts, etc.), messages, and information aimed at promoting the military profession.

On a local level, military centers have created their own pages, mainly used for distributing messages promoting the military profession. Additionally, military units and educational institutions with military programs also have their own pages.

In 2016, the interactive website recrutare.mapn.ro was launched, registering nearly 1.7 million visitors. It provided the opportunity for the automatic routing of contact information and messages from those interested in a military career to the respective information and recruitment office.

Since 2018, interior and exterior displays have been used in public places frequented by a diverse and numerous audiences, such as train stations

and airports. With the permission of the Ministry of Transportation, several promotional billboards, banners, and posters were freely placed within the Henri Coandă International Airport and the North Railway Station in Bucharest.

One of the oldest and most appreciated initiatives for students in primary and secondary education, who are potential candidates for the military profession, is the Summer Camp for Scouts. This camp has been organized by the Ministry of National Defense in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth and Sports every year since 2004 (except for 2020).

3. Analysis of the Influencing Factors on the Managerial Process of Promoting the Military Profession Among Young People

The managerial process represents a set of interventions through which the manager forecasts, organizes, coordinates, makes decisions, and controls the activities of subordinates, aiming to achieve the organization's objectives (Dragomir, 2019, p.41). To fulfill the objectives of the managerial process of promoting the military profession among young people, “There are managerial means and methods, there are concepts and principles of management” (Drucker, 1969, p.5).

The approach and scope of activities promoting the military profession are correlated with recruitment policies. However, both promotion and recruitment are influenced by several factors, the singular or combined action of which can limit or hinder the achievement of proposed objectives. Therefore, the strategy for promoting the military profession must consider their existence and evolving trends.

A critical and synthetic review of the elements influencing the success of promotion, enhancing it, or limiting it provides insights into possible solutions to adopt and the obstacles/difficulties that may be encountered in their implementation.

The main impact factors, briefly analyzed below, include socio-demographic, economic, technological, and security environment factors.

a) Political Factor. According to the National Defense Strategy for the years 2020-2024, *the current security environment* is characterized by a high degree of dynamism and unpredictability, although the risk of a major armed conflict remains low.

On the other hand, the revitalization of geostrategic competition, the intensification of the arms race, technological development, including in the military sphere, the amplification of emerging risks, and terrorism are the main factors leading to an increase in insecurity and the escalation of risks globally.

For Romania's security, crucial factors include national defense capability and membership in NATO and the European Union.

Of course, the security environment is very broad, encompassing defense, economic, technological, educational, demographic, climatic, cultural, informational dimensions, all of which can influence the stability, security, development of the country, and the quality of life of its citizens.

Regarding the defense dimension, the increase in military funding to 2% of GDP, army modernization programs, ensuring well-prepared personnel, a high level of interoperability with allied and partner armies demonstrate to the public that the Romanian Army is on its way to becoming a modern and credible military force.

b) The economic factor has a significant impact on the attractiveness of the military profession and the interest of young people in the educational and professional offerings of the army.

Periods of economic crisis favor military recruitment, while economic growth, through raising the standard of living, stimulating investments, and creating new jobs, leads to the emergence of numerous opportunities and competition in the labor market. Additionally, the following factors should be noted:

- ✓ Decrease and aging of the working-age population.
- ✓ External migration of young and qualified labor force.

- ✓ Offers from other employers in the defense, public order, and national security sectors, which may be more accessible and sometimes more tempting.

In recent years, Romania's economy has been on an upward trend, being the country with the highest economic growth in the EU. Even under these conditions, the military has largely achieved its recruitment objectives due to salary increases in the public sector, improvements in the status of professional soldiers and non-commissioned officers, the visibility of the military institution in the public space, its maintenance in the top of the population's trust in state institutions, and the intensification of actions to promote the military profession.

c) The socio-demographic factor is the one with a direct and immediate impact on the recruitment pool, and its effects are felt in the long term.

Statistical data reflects the continuation of trends from recent years, indicating a constant and irreversible demographic decline, as a cumulative result of the natural population growth decrease and increased external migration. Moreover, Romania is expected to experience one of the most abrupt demographic declines in the European Union.

According to a 2017 UN report, Eastern Europe will be the most affected by the reduction in birth rates, with the number of inhabitants potentially decreasing by over 15% in several countries, including Romania.

Based on data provided by the National Institute of Statistics (Table No. 1), we present the projected evolution of Romania's population for the period 2030-2070, starting from the values recorded in the year 2019. Thus, a population decrease of 31.7% is projected by the year 2070.

Table No. 1 presents the evolution of Romania's population until the year 2070, compared to the reference year 2019.

Table no. 1.

Evolution and distribution of Romania's population by major age groups, as a percentage of the total population recorded in 2019 and projected for the year 2070 (average scenario)

Population recorded on 1st of July 2019	Population projected for the year 2030	Population projected for the year 2040	Population projected for the year 2050	Population projected for the year 2060	Population projected for the year 2070	Diferences between the years 2070 and 2019	
	Thousands of people	Thousands of people	Thousands of people	Thousands of people	Thousands of people	Thousands of people	%
19.370,5	18.337	17.111,4	15.830	14.450,8	13.223,3	6.147,1	31,7

Source: National Institute of Statistics, 2020. *Projection of Romania's population by development regions and counties, at the time horizon of the year 2070*

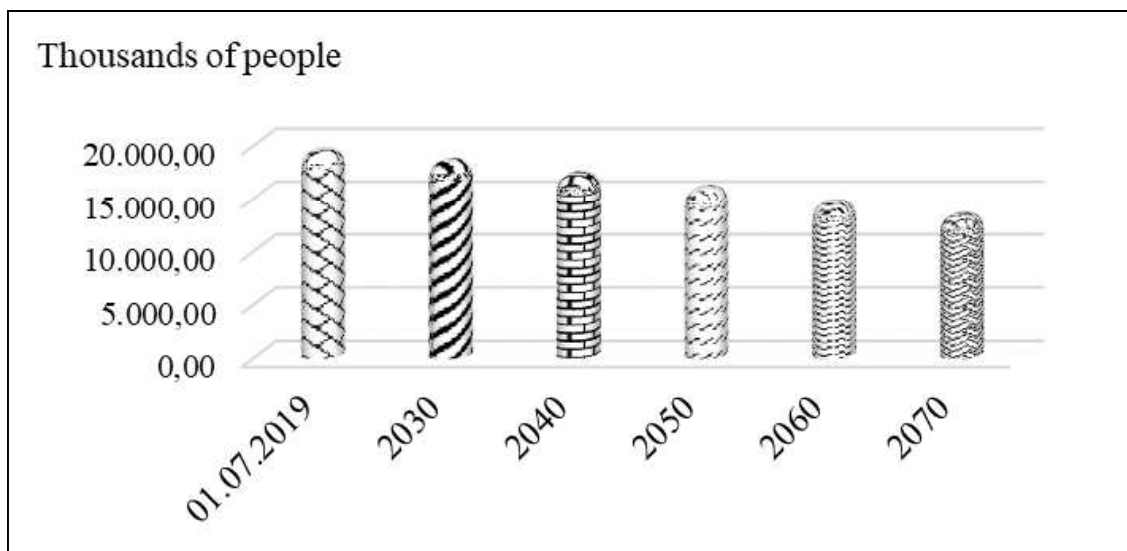


Fig. 1. *Projection of Romania's population by development regions and counties, at the time horizon of the year 2070*

Even more concerning, however, is the projected decrease in the population aged 0-14 by approximately 48%, as seen in Table No. 2.

Table no. 2.

The evolution and distribution of Romania's population across major age groups, as a percentage of the total population recorded in 2019 and projected for the year 2070.

	2019		2070	
	Thousands of people	%	Thousands of people	%
Total	19.370,5	100,0	13.223,3	100,0
0 – 14 years	3.032,3	15,7	1.951,0	14,8
15 – 64 years	12.706,3	65,6	7.489,7	56,6
65 years and more	3.631,9	18,7	3.782,6	28,6

Source: National Institute of Statistics, 2020. *Projection of Romania's population by development regions and counties, at the time horizon of the year 2070*

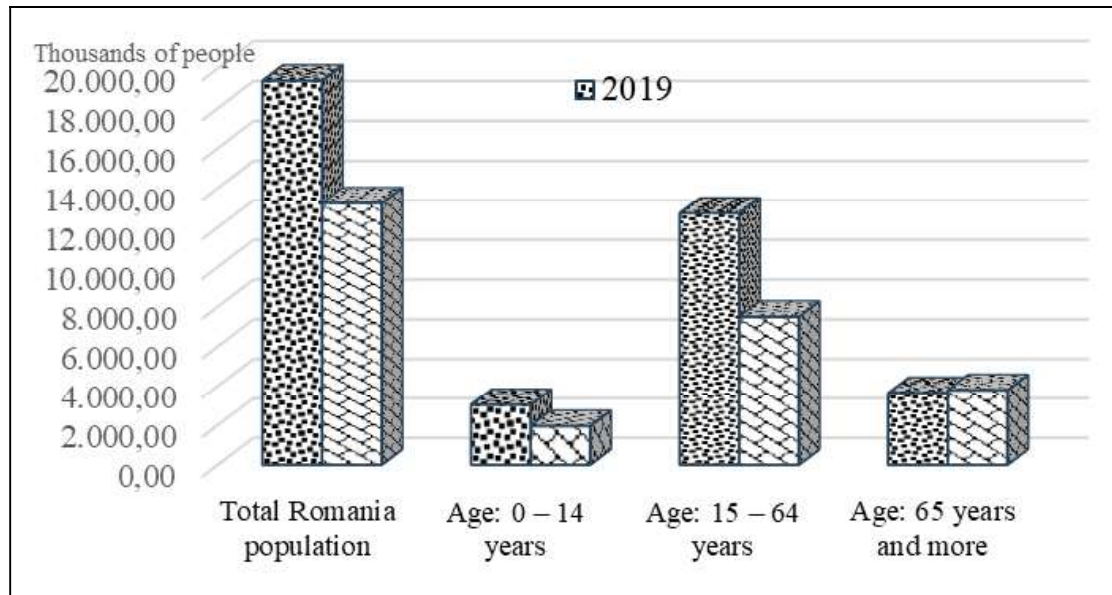


Fig.2. *The evolution and distribution of Romania's population across major age groups as a percentage of the total population recorded in 2019 and projected for the year 2070.*

Viewed from a recruitment perspective, all these data are worrisome, especially as the following aspects can be highlighted:

- ✓ Inherent risks of practicing the military profession in a dynamic and unpredictable security environment.
- ✓ Diversity of educational offerings both domestically and internationally.

- ✓ Sometimes unrealistic public perceptions regarding the military profession (such as guaranteed job stability and mandatory service until retirement age), compared to the current realities in the military.
- ✓ Demonetization of some traditional values and norms of society and the military due to globalization.
- ✓ Growing prevalence of the spread of false information, especially through the Internet – the main means of information for young people.

According to INS data, the proportion of the population aged 15-24, in the total resident population, is decreasing from year to year, and this is a crucial age group for the target audience.

However, in the Press Release of the Ministry of National Defense no. 362/25.09.2023, it is mentioned that “From the perspective of the recruitment of the Romanian Army, if we take the year 2019 as a reference point (before the pandemic and the significant change in the regional security situation), we find that, in absolute value, for the year 2023, the figures corresponding to the recruitment of officers and non-commissioned officers are higher, and for non-commissioned officers and SGP (professional soldier/graduate), they remain approximately the same. The General Staff of Defense aims to maintain institutional vitality through increased enrollment figures and recruitment campaigns for SGP positions, which are at the highest levels in the last 10 years.”

In the conditions analyzed above, there are, however, several advantages of a military career that increasingly attract young people, such as:

- Stability and the role of the military institution throughout history, its unique mission, and specificity.
- High level of trust from the population in the military institution.
- Sometimes unsatisfactory job offerings for graduates in civilian education.
- Increasing youth unemployment.
- Rising cost of education.

- Discrepancy between the training of young people and the job market.
- Growing economic and financial difficulties for entrepreneurs and investors in the private sector.
- The free nature of professional training and the high quality of military education.
- Integration of cutting-edge technology in the military equipment.
- Job placement upon completion of training.
- Well-established and transparent rules and criteria for career progression, providing a clear perspective on professional future.
- Material benefits associated with the military profession (free equipment, monthly food allowance, right to service accommodation or monthly rental compensation, etc.).
- Guaranteed income, above the average salaries in the civilian sector, and others.

d) Among all the factors analyzed, **the technological factor** is the one that has the most positive effects on the promotion and recruitment of candidates for the military profession.

With technology, digital marketing has developed, becoming the most efficient promotion method aimed at users dependent on the online environment. Digital campaigns are cheaper than traditional ones, easier to measure and correct, and go straight to the target (Alexandrescu, 2010, p.25).

The new technology offers extremely interesting and useful means of communication with maximum impact on young people. Audiences from traditional media have migrated to the digital space, and the Internet has become the most commonly used means of information by young people. Consequently, the battle for human resources has shifted from mass media to new media, on recruitment websites, and on social networks.

More and more people looking for employment use the Internet and mobile technologies. The virtually inexhaustible virtual space, suitable for using the most appropriate marketing methods, has become the preferred recruitment environment for both candidates and employers.

As the Internet has become the preferred meeting place for young people, social media platforms have transformed into channels for the rapid promotion of ideas, concepts, programs, events, products, or services. From this point of view, there is currently enormous potential in Romania for the fields of marketing and advertising. Communication unfolds more easily in the virtual environment.

Social media is an ideal promotion environment due to the interconnection of social networks, leading to the rapid spread of the message, impossible to achieve by print or audio-visual media.

Another trend in the digital world is represented by the dominance of mobile devices, greatly increasing the possibilities of accessing the Internet. The fact that the Internet can be accessed anywhere and anytime, especially by young people, represents an opportunity for promoting the military profession.

It should also be mentioned that, at the level of the Ministry of National Defense:

- There is a network of specialized structures for promoting the military profession locally – the information-recruitment offices, part of the zonal/regional/sector military centers;
- A specialized structure operates in the production of multimedia materials, the production of radio and television shows, as well as a publishing house and a printing house;
- There is an in-house structure for sociological investigations, which can conduct studies on the target group and evaluate the effects of promotion campaigns;
- Protocols of collaboration in the field of promoting educational and professional offerings have been concluded with the Ministry of

Education, the Ministry of Labor, and some associative structures of military reservists and war veterans, among others.

4. Analysis of intrinsic factors in the military environment with a negative impact on the management of military profession promotion activities

However, this analysis has the duty to emphasize the intrinsic factors within the Ministry of National Defense that may lead to a reduction in the number of young people willing to pursue a military career, such as:

- Lack of a budget allocated to military profession promotion activities;
- Unequal and insufficient technical-material endowment of the information-recruitment offices;
- Reduction of the periods for conducting local military profession promotion actions;
- Reduction in the number of staff from the information-recruitment offices traveling to recruitment environments to meet potential candidates;
- Insufficient production of promotional materials;
- Inadequate involvement of military educational institutions and other directly interested structures in the development of materials for informing candidates, including in the online environment;
- Minimization of the real importance of marketing and advertising for recruiting candidates for the military profession;
- Lengthy, complex, and demanding process of recruiting, selecting, and admitting candidates, compared to other institutions using the same recruitment pool;
- Lack of specialization for newly recruited personnel in the information-recruitment offices before starting their activity in these structures;
- Frequent changes in the applicable regulatory framework.

Although at first glance, the elements favorable to the promotion of the military profession, namely strengths and opportunities, seem more numerous than the elements that can hinder or limit this activity, the qualitative analysis shows that the absence of a budget for carrying out promotion activities has a decisively negative impact on the implementation of the strategy.

In addition, the emergence of new threats (health crisis, fake news phenomenon, etc.) and even the accentuation of internal deficiencies (financial, material, and staffing with specialized personnel) must be noted, as well as some new advantages and opportunities (increase in the percentage of GDP allocated for defense, visibility, and quality of the army's presence in the virtual environment, decrease in the private sector's capacity to absorb labor, etc.).

At the same time, this analysis shows that the strategy for promoting the military profession must consider both the decline in the recruitment pool and the existing competition in the labor market. On the other hand, the promotion of the military profession benefits from the favorable image of the army and its triple offer: free education – guaranteed job upon graduation – career. Simultaneously, the support that the specialized structures of the army can provide in preparing military profession promotion campaigns, as well as the opportunities offered by the digital environment and new technologies in terms of marketing and communication, represent indisputable advantages for the implementation of any strategic option.

Conclusions

The Romanian Army needs enough young individuals who are strongly motivated for a military career, deeply attached to national values, and possess an aptitudinal and attitudinal profile corresponding to the performance standards required by established missions. The military profession is robust and offers a future full of opportunities to those

who choose it, and the military institution has the capacity to strengthen its position in the market of professional and educational offerings.

The primary objective of the strategy is *to attract, recruit, and retain as many young individuals with profiles suitable for the military field as possible*, ensuring, under any circumstances, the human resources necessary for the Romanian Army. This is achieved through the design and implementation of creative and persuasive military profession promotion campaigns that highlight the merits of the military profession.

This analysis cannot conclude without suggesting proposals for eliminating the dysfunctions still present in the management of military career promotion, such as:

- Ensuring a constant and sufficiently large flow of candidates compatible in terms of aptitude, attitude, and motivation with the requirements of the military institution and its promoted values, for all categories of military personnel and for all arms/services and military specialties.
- Gaining and maintaining the interest (loyalty) of young individuals who are not yet part of the immediately eligible potential candidate group for the military profession and the educational offerings of the Ministry of National Defense.
- Increasing the numerical and qualitative base of candidate selection for the training of military personnel in the medium and long term.
- Improving the accuracy, transparency, and timeliness of information targeting the potential candidates regarding the professional offerings of the army and ensuring message transmission in all recruitment environments, to all segments of the target group of potential candidates, as well as to the support group.
- Consolidating the position gained by the military profession in the labor market and improving the perception of young individuals regarding the educational and professional offerings of the army as attractive alternatives to civilian options.

These objectives will be detailed, nuanced, or revised in the context of each military profession promotion campaign, based on feedback from previous campaigns, human resource planning objectives, and established recruitment policies. To achieve these objectives, specific promotion activities will be organized and implemented at the national and/or local levels, depending on available financial, material, and human resources.

References

1. Alexandrescu, M., B., (2010). *Human Resources Marketing in the Romanian Army – Policies and Strategies*, Bucharest: Military Publishing House, 25.
2. Buhner, R. (1994). *Personal Management*, Landsberg, Verlag Moderne Industrie, p. 38.
3. Dragomir, C. (2019). *The Implications Of The Schools Of Management Thought In The Business Practice Of The Companies*, Review of General Management, 29(1), pp.26-35.
4. Drucker, P.F. (1969). Management's Social Role, în „The New World”, CIOS XV Session 1, Plenary A, Tokyo
5. Iorga, N. (1912). *The moral environment and military virtues*. In: “For the minds and hearts of our soldiers”, Infantry Magazine Publishing House
6. National Institute of Statistics, 2020. Projecting the population of Romania by development regions and counties, with a horizon in the year 2070. Available on: <https://insse.ro/cms/ro/content/proiectarea-popula%C8%9Biei-rom%C3%A2niei-pe-regiuni-de-dezvoltare-%C8%99i-jude%C8%9Be-la-orizontalul-anului-2070>. Accessed on 26.11.2023
7. Pânzaru, S. (2019). *Management general*, Ed. SITECH, Sibiu.
8. Pânzaru, S., (2006). *Managementul comportamentului organizațional în activitățile militare*, Editura Academiei Forțelor Aeriene “Henri Coandă”, Brașov.