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Relationship Between Organisational Culture and Leadership in Romanian County Councils

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ABSTRACT

Purpose*:* This study examines the relationship between leadership styles and organisational culture in Romanian county councils to identify the predominant leadership style and its alignment with cultural dimensions in the public sector.

Approach*:* Data were collected from 985 respondents in 29 of Romania's 41 county councils. Denison's model of organisational culture was applied, and three leadership styles were considered: transactional, transformational and servant leadership. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to construct a 'leadership style' variable, which was then correlated with Denison's four cultural dimensions: mission, consistency, involvement and adaptability.

Findings: The analysis indicates that transactional leadership predominates in the Romanian county councils studied. It is strongly associated with the consistency and mission dimensions of Denison's model, indicating an emphasis on stability, control and goal achievement.

Academic contribution to the field*:* The study contributes to the literature on the alignment between leadership and organisational culture by providing empirical evidence from the public sector, where this relationship has received less attention. It also demonstrates how Denison's model can be combined with leadership theories in public administration.

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Research limitations*:* The study is limited to Romanian county councils, and its findings may not be generalisable to other public administrations or private organisations. Future research could extend the sample and explore the effects of leadership–culture alignment over time.

Practical implications: The findings can inform leadership development and organisational change initiatives in public institutions, particularly by highlighting the role of transactional leadership in shaping cultural stability and a clear sense of mission.

Social implications*:* Understanding the relationship between leadership and organisational culture in the public sector can improve governance, accountability and citizens' trust by supporting more effective, resilient and performance-oriented public organisations.

Originality*:* This research is among the few empirical studies to examine leadership styles in Romanian public administration using Denison's cultural framework. Its originality lies in mapping the relationships between leadership and organisational culture in a transitional administrative context, offering both theoretical and practical value.

Keywords: servant leadership, transformational leadership, transactional leadership, Denison's model, organisational culture, public sector

Povezanost organizacijske kulture in vodenja v romunskih okrožnih svetih

POVZETEK

Namen: Raziskava preučuje povezanost slogov vodenja in organizacijske kulture v romunskih okrožnih svetih, da bi ugotovila prevladujoči slog vodenja in njegovo skladnost z razsežnostmi kulture v javnem sektorju.

Pristop: Podatki so bili zbrani pri 985 anketirancih v 29 od 41 romunskih okrožnih svetov. Uporabljen je bil Denisonov model organizacijske kulture, obravnavani pa so bili trije slogi vodenja: transakcijsko, transformacijsko in služeče vodenje. Z eksploratorno faktorsko analizo (EFA) je bila oblikovana spremenljivka »slog vodenja«, za katero so bile nato izračunane korelacije s štirimi Denisonovimi razsežnostmi kulture: poslanstvom, doslednostjo, vključenostjo in prilagodljivostjo.

Ugotovitve: Analiza kaže, da v preučenih romunskih okrožnih svetih prevladuje transakcijsko vodenje. To je močno povezano z razsežnostma doslednosti in poslanstva v Denisonovem modelu, kar kaže na poudarek na stabilnosti, nadzoru in doseganju ciljev.

Znanstveni prispevek: Raziskava dopolnjuje literaturo o skladnosti vodenja in organizacijske kulture z empiričnimi dokazi iz javnega sektorja, kjer je bila ta povezanost doslej deležna manj pozornosti. Kaže tudi, kako je mogoče Denisonov model povezati s teorijami vodenja v javni upravi.

Omejitve raziskave: Raziskava je omejena na romunske okrožne svete, njenih ugotovitev pa morda ni mogoče posplošiti na druge javne uprave ali zasebne organizacije. Prihodnje raziskave bi lahko razširile vzorec in preučile učinke skladnosti vodenja in organizacijske kulture skozi čas.

Praktični pomen: Ugotovitve lahko usmerjajo razvoj vodenja in pobude za organizacijske spremembe v javnih institucijah, zlasti s poudarjanjem vloge transakcijskega vodenja pri oblikovanju stabilne organizacijske kulture in jasne predstave o poslanstvu.

Družbeni pomen: Razumevanje povezanosti vodenja in organizacijske kulture v javnem sektorju lahko izboljša upravljanje, odgovornost in zaupanje državljanov s podporo učinkovitejšim in odpornejšim javnim organizacijam, usmerjenim v doseganje rezultatov.

Izvirnost: Raziskava je ena redkih empiričnih študij, ki sloge vodenja v romunski javni upravi preučujejo z Denisonovim okvirom organizacijske kulture. Njena izvirnost je v prikazu povezav med vodenjem in organizacijsko kulturo v upravnem okolju v tranziciji, s čimer prispeva k teoriji in praksi.

Ključne besede: služeče vodenje, transformacijsko vodenje, transakcijsko vodenje, Denisonov model, organizacijska kultura, javni sektor

JEL: D73, M14

1 Introduction

The importance of an open, innovative and adaptive organizational culture for increasing efficiency, performance and resilience all together in organizations has become common knowledge, alongside the importance of having a leadership style present, that can nurture and maintain this type of culture. But regardless of this, there are still insufficient studies done on Romanian public institutions, to help us have a better understanding of their core values and to employ adequate measures to adapt the organizational culture to current needs, changes and even pressures that can arise.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to determine the leadership style in Romanian County Councils, based on the perceived organizational culture, using Denison's model as a main tool. To achieve this, we focused our research on three objectives:

R.O.1: To assess the dominant organizational culture in Romanian county councils using Denison's model.

R.O.2: To examine the relationship between organizational culture dimensions and leadership styles.

R.O.3: To identify the leadership style most strongly aligned with the dominant cultural dimension.

We want to see first of all which dimensions are the most relevant for the 29 county councils involved in this study (out of the total of 41), and to determine if the leadership style (transactional, transformational and servant) associated with those dimensions are relevant and adequate for public institutions and their nature. The existing literature suggests that the predominant culture type significantly influences which leadership styles are supported and how effective they are in promoting desired outcomes like change, performance, efficiency, and resilience.

To achieve this goal, we extracted the variable "leadership style" using an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) extracted from the survey we used; after we

identified our factor, we normalized the data and created the said variable. To have a better image of the organizational culture perceived by the 985 respondents, we interpreted the data by looking at the four main dimensions and at the indicators that form them, as Denison's methodology dictates. Using correlation and regression, we were able to determine that the most predominant leadership style present in the surveyed institutions is the "transactional" one, due to the specificity of the public sector and due to its strong correlation with two pivotal dimensions from Denison's model, frequently present as well, in the public sector.

We must acknowledge how crucial is to have a clear, objective and real perspective of the organizational culture present, the leadership style and its influence on the development of the organization. Especially now, in turbulent times, we need to understand how these factors can support a strong culture that promotes unity, that empowers its members, or a weak one, where the sense of direction is lost and the organization is at risk of failing. Accordingly, we must acknowledge the impact that organizational culture has on leadership and vice-versa (Kelmendi et al., 2024, p. 215) and how to make this relation work in favor of all involved. If there isn't a clear correlation between the two, the members can lose direction, their sense of purpose and commitment to the mission of the organization. Thus, it is imperative to determine the style of leadership, especially in the public sector and to see to what extent it is aligned with the values, beliefs and behaviors that shape the organization.

2 Theoretical Framework

Organizational culture, defined as the shared values and beliefs (Schein, 2010) that establish norms for expected employee behaviors, is significantly shaped by leaders. "Reflecting shared environments and experiences, as well as knowledge transmitted across individuals and time, culture causes members to be relatively similar to each other, and different from non-members" (Caza et al., 2021), influencing also how they are seen from the external environment. In this regard, leaders are central to the formation and maintenance of it because these shared values are strongly connected to the fundamental assumptions that are exercises and validated within the group (Day et al., 2014, p. 103). As we know, the two concepts are interdependent, arguing even that the most crucial thing for a leader to do is to create, manage and maintain culture, for it shapes the future and direction of the organization (Dahlin and Schroeder, 2022; Hartnell and Walumbwa, 2011; Nguyen et al., 2023). The success or failure of an organization depends deeply of the strengths, depth and the behaviors that are ingrained in its members. Therefore, it is imperative to have an understanding on the type of leadership style and the culture it promotes, especially in the public sector, the core for any community.

This is crucial because leaders have the role to reduce uncertainty and set a clear direction through different strategies that are correlated with the external environment (Hartnell and Walumbwa, 2011, p. 228; Ehrhart et al., 2014, pp. 146–147) and have the purpose to strengthen the group and cre-

ate a sense of unity of direction. Depending on how leaders respond to crisis, react to critical situations, on how well they take the role of a designer and a teacher, the core values will remain strong and coordinate the group's activity within the organization. The unity of the group and the strength of the organizational culture are directly linked to the leader's ability to form and maintain such unity. This is why, most literature looks at the two concepts from an interdependence point of view.

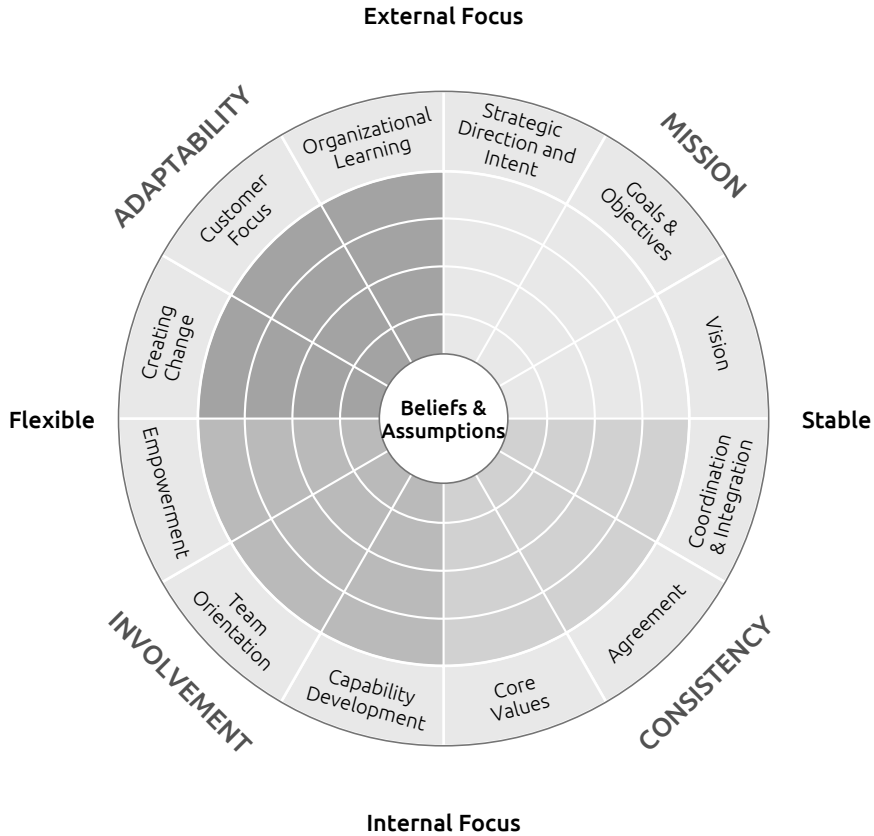
The relationship between leadership and organizational culture is inherently dialectical rather than unidirectional. While leadership often drives cultural formation, established organizational norms—particularly in mature, cohesive groups—frequently dictate the boundaries of "acceptable" leadership styles. This reciprocal influence is best understood through the lens of functional alignment with Denison's cultural dimensions. In environments characterized by routine and a need for structural stability, such as public institutions, a symbiotic link exists between transactional leadership and the dimensions of consistency and mission. Here, leadership is not merely a driver but a response to the organizational requirement for clear expectations and goal setting (Lavery, 2011; Odero, 2023). Conversely, where organizational survival depends on innovation, transformational leadership acts as the primary catalyst for adaptability and involvement. By prioritizing empowerment, this style fosters the psychological climate necessary for the "involvement" dimension to thrive, thereby institutionalizing change (Masood et al., 2006; Nguyen et al., 2023; Bagga et al., 2023; Koç, 2024). When a culture is predicated on high-trust and collaboration, it naturally selects for servant leadership. This style operates across the involvement, consistency, and adaptability axes by shifting the organizational focus toward follower growth and developmental needs (Wahyuni et al., 2022; Goestjahjanti et al., 2022; Dahlin and Schroeder, 2022; Alipio et al., 2023). Analyzing these correlations is critical for institutional resilience, particularly within the public sector's unique complexity. Identifying the "cultural fit" of a leadership style does more than describe a state of affairs; it provides a diagnostic tool for identifying organizational gaps and aligning leadership behavior with the community-centric needs of the organization.

2.1 Denison's Model on Organizational Culture

Denison's model is a world-known one to assess the organizational culture of an organization, based on the perception of employees, and offers an understanding regarding the focus (internal or external) and state (flexible or stable) in which the entity places itself. Using this model can offer us an understanding on how things work, and what can be improved, to increase motivation, performance, efficiency and the sustainability of the organization (Denison and Mishra, 1995). When employees are engaged in the organization's activities, when they are involved in the decision-making process, they develop "a sense of ownership, trust and loyalty" (Akpa et al., 2021, p. 367) to the organization, acting as an engine for performance and efficiency and Denison's model analyses these aspects accordingly.

Furthermore, it is imperative to understand how different values, behaviors and issues shape the efficiency and effectiveness of an organization (Denison, 1990) and how leaders tend to these needs and how they create tailor-made activities and goals to root even further the accepted values within the organization. This is why Denison's model offers us a broader view on key aspects of an organization, such as: mission, consistency, involvement and adaptability, providing us with a better understanding on how the group positions itself (with an internal or external focus) and if they relate more with a stable or flexible environment.

Figure 1. Denison's model.



Source: https://denisonconsulting.com

Looking at the figure above, we can see that the dimension "mission" has sub-indicators, such as goals and objectives, vision and strategic direction and intent – meaning that having a strong sense of mission offers purpose, direction and provides the reason for the organization's existence (Denison and Mishra, 1995, p. 16).

Both mission and "consistency" are correlated to stability, thus, a strong organizational culture should have an agreement on the core values, and the

leader should have the ability to coordinate the group, dimensions correlated with a transactional style.

The model also looks at the level of "involvement" of the team, analyzing the level of empowerment they feel, and to what extent they can develop their capabilities within the organization. This dimension has mainly an internal focus, making sure that there is a clear coordination of action and that ideas, decisions and actions are linked with the team and their abilities.

Lastly, and maybe one of the most important aspects is "adaptability", to be able to take risks as an organization and to have the capacity to learn from mistakes (Wahyuni et al., 2022, p. 14). Having an external focus and enhancing flexibility, this dimension is essential for building resilient organizations, but simultaneously, is difficult to implement it adequately in public institutions to do their legal and administrative restraints.

Henceforth, Denison's model has a holistic approach, looking both at the internal and external environment, giving us the chance to see if there is a tendency towards stability or flexibility and also making it easier to identify the leadership style present in the county councils in question of this research.

2.2 Transformational Leadership and Organizational Culture

Leadership is fundamentally a process of social influence designed to align organizational culture with strategic objectives. Within this framework, transformational leadership acts as a moral and motivational lever, appealing to "higher ideals and moral values such as liberty, justice, equality, peace, and humanitarian" rather than base emotions (Masood et al., 2006, p. 942). By serving as a role model, the leader mobilizes commitment and provides the structural resources necessary for members to achieve their potential while advancing the organizational mission (Smith et al., 2004). The efficacy of the transformational style lies in its ability to internalize organizational goals. By fostering an inclusive environment and inspiring proactive behavior, leaders secure a deep commitment to the vision, which simultaneously drives member growth, satisfaction, and motivation (Çelik, 2018; Min, 2024). This leadership approach ensures that the organizational culture serves as the primary "engine" of collective behavior (Hartnell and Walumbwa, 2011; Khan et al., 2021). Furthermore, Transformational leaders are particularly vital in volatile environments where they reinforce open, collaborative, and team-oriented cultures (Masood et al., 2006; Gul et al., 2024). By stimulating intellect and empowering followers to overcome challenges, they build the organizational resilience necessary for innovation (Ali et al., 2024). This style is most effective when members are highly involved and aligned with core values, allowing the organization to pivot effectively during periods of change (Bagga et al., 2023).

Therefore, in relation to Denison's model as others analyzed (Nguyen et al., 2023), transformational leaders are associated to: mission (because they can articulate clear visions and align people to achieve long-term strategic goals), involvement (because they empower, motivate and inspire people) and adapt-

ability (they represent a driver of change, fostering innovation and constantly challenging the status quo).

2.3 Transactional Leadership and Organizational Culture

While transformational leadership acts as a catalyst for change, transactional leadership functions primarily as a culture maintainer (Rashwan and Ghaly, 2022). Its efficacy is predicated on the reinforcement of existing norms, rules, and administrative structures to ensure operational continuity. In highly regulated environments, most notably the public sector—transactional leadership addresses the necessity of legal and administrative restraints (Gul et al., 2024). By utilizing contingent rewards within established procedures, this style aligns with organizations in stable environments where the strategic priority is risk mitigation, task completion, and adherence to predetermined agreements (Khan et al., 2021). Noteworthy, the influence of the transactional leader on organizational culture is extrinsic and conditional. Rather than reshaping values, this style leverages "conditional rewards and punishments" to align behavior with organizational goals (Gul et al., 2024; Nguyen et al., 2023; Martinez and Leija, 2023). However, the success of this approach is contingent upon two critical cultural variables: social norms (the existence of well-defined norms and perceived fairness) and knowledge ecology. Meaning that, while effective in bureaucratic structures valuing task execution, transactional leaders face limitations in cultures where "information hoarding" or independent behavior prevails, as the style often struggles to incentivize voluntary knowledge sharing (Agrawal and Dhamija, 2024).

Within the Denison framework, transactional leadership serves as the functional counterpart to the Consistency and Mission dimensions. By prioritizing task completion and rule adherence, it institutionalizes the stability necessary for bureaucratic efficiency, though it may lack the agility required for the "Adaptability" quadrant.

2.4 Servant Leadership and Organizational Culture

Unlike the abovementioned leadership styles, servant leadership adopts a follower-first orientation, prioritizing the collective's needs to drive mutual growth and organizational commitment (Smith et al., 2004; Stone et al., 2004). This style is characterized by an altruistic calling and a focus on ethics, empathy, and collaboration (Goestjahjanti et al., 2022; Wahyuni et al., 2022; Dahlin and Schroeder, 2022; Alipio et al., 2023; Martinez and Leija, 2023; Gul et al., 2024).

The implementation of servant leadership does not merely influence behavior; it precipitates the evolution of the organization into a "servant culture" (Alipio et al., 2023). This "spiritual generative culture" (Wahyuni et al., 2022) functions by a human-centric development, by prioritizing individuals as holistic beings, which enhances their capabilities and facilitates the pursuit of their full potential (Tsai, 2011; Zia-ur-Rehman et al., 2022), alongside empowerment and devotion, fostering high levels of job satisfaction and performance

through a commitment to the group's growth rather than top-down mandates (Harwiki, 2016). Henceforth, literature indicates that organizational culture acts as a mediating variable between servant leadership and outcomes such as innovation, performance, and resilience (Stone et al., 2004). By fostering a teamwork-oriented environment, this leadership style creates a responsive cultural infrastructure capable of thriving in learning-focused organizations. Therefore, by correlating this style of leadership with Denison's model, the most relevant dimensions are: "involvement" because servant leaders develop individuals, build trust, and promote shared decision-making, "consistency"—they often model and reinforce core values like trust and respect and "adaptability" due to the fact that they listen to the needs of others, thus promoting a responsive culture.

2.5 Implications for Romanian County Councils

Public sector organizations are sometimes characterized by cultures emphasizing hierarchy, rules, and stability, leaving little space for change, development and sometimes, even resilient capacity. In this sense, a bureaucratic culture might be less supportive of transformational leadership, which thrives in more adaptive, involving, and market-oriented cultures. However, transformational leadership is also posited to influence culture and drive change, suggesting it could be a style needed to shift a predominantly hierarchical culture towards one more open to change, innovation, or involvement.

On the other hand, transactional leadership might align more readily with a stable, rule-oriented and bureaucratic culture focused on its consistency and mission, as it relies on established procedures and rewards within the existing framework. This style could potentially maintain efficiency within existing structures but may not be conducive to significant change or fostering resilience in turbulent environments. Servant leadership, with its focus on people, empowerment, and a service-oriented culture, might contrast with a strong bureaucratic culture but could be a leadership style that fosters the desired traits of involvement.

Taking into account the fact that this research is focused on public institutions, we expect a tendency of an organizational culture that focuses on standardization of tasks, stability, reliability and permanency of conditions (Panagiotis, Alexandros and George, 2014), aspect that might have a great impact on the public servants' performance and overall work discipline (Paais and Pattiruhu, 2020; Haryadi et al., 2022).

We make this observation because the Romanian public administration in general has a bureaucratic tendency (in some cases highly bureaucratic), with tendencies of digitization and digitalization in bigger counties (such as Cluj, Timiș, Brașov, Maramureș, Bucharest, etc.). We also need to emphasize that the current administrative reform has a hybrid form, including elements from public management, open governance, neo-Weberian and also neo-Taylorism, henceforth, we also expect to see an interesting hybridization of the leader-

ship style present in the county councils used in this research, based on the answers provided by those included in this study.

3 Methodology

The purpose of this study is to determine the leadership style in Romanian County Councils, based on the perceived organizational culture, using Denison's model as a main tool. This model, as mentioned in the previous sections, examines both the internal and external environment, giving us an integrated and holistic perspective on "how things really work" and to determine what leadership style is present in the county councils.

In this analysis were involved 29 county councils (out of the total of 41 in Romania), gathering a total of 985 answers to our survey, providing the empirical basis for our analysis. The survey included 60 items, developed by Denison, being an already developed and tested instrument that used a Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (highly agree) to have the possibility to create new variables and to generate the statistical tests that we intended. Participation to this study was voluntary, ensuring the participants of data protection and they were informed that the data will be used solely for the purpose of the study. The survey was sent via e-mail, explaining the purpose of this research and with a link attached to a Google Form. In this sense, we acknowledge the limitation that we had no control, nor knowledge regarding who and in what conditions they filled out the survey.

As mentioned in the Introduction, this study has three main research objectives:

R.O.1: To assess the dominant organizational culture in Romanian county councils using Denison's model – this objective will be achieved by using the standard methodological approach developed by Denison and his team.

R.O.2: To examine the relationship between organizational culture dimensions and leadership styles – this objective will be reached by developing a new variable (the leadership one) using an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to extract the predominant factor and to create the new variable.

R.O.3: To identify the leadership style most strongly aligned with the dominant cultural dimension – to achieve this objective we conducted a regression where the leadership style was the dependent variable and the dimensions of organizational culture were the independent variables.

Table 1. Correlation between leadership styles and Denison's model.

Leadership style	Denison's dimensions
Transactional	– **Consistency** – Mission
Transformational	– Mission – **Adaptability** – Consistency
Servant	– **Involvement** – Consistency – Adaptability

Source: authors' interpretation

Furthermore, to ensure a clear identification for each leadership style, we will focus our research and data interpretation on the most characteristic dimension associated to each style, supported and confirmed by the literature, as follows: "consistency" being the most appropriate for the transactional style, "adaptability" for transformational and "involvement" for the servant leadership style.

By emphasizing the strongest descriptor, we can distinguish more precisely the predominant leadership style present in the County Councils analyzed and will minimize the possibility of overlapping and possible misinterpretation of the results, acknowledging at the same time that Denison's dimensions are relevant to multiple leadership styles.

Furthermore, we used an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) in SPSS to identify and later create the "leadership style" variable and normalized the data. The employment of EFA is appropriate in this context, given that leadership styles are latent constructs that cannot be directly observed and that Denison's cultural dimensions are known theoretically to overlap across leadership styles. Instead of imposing a predefined structure, EFA enables the underlying factor structure to emerge from the data. This process enhances construct validity and reduces potential researcher bias. Moreover, the implementation of EFA serves to fortify the methodological underpinnings of data reduction and variable creation. The application of factor analysis (EFA) to reduce the number of correlated indicators to a smaller number of significant factors enhances parsimony while preserving explanatory power. This process ensures that the newly created leadership style variable reflects the common variation among relevant dimensions, rather than isolated or redundant measures. Consequently, this increases the reliability and interpretability of subsequent correlation and regression analyses.

The analysis enabled the reduction of data through the grouping of correlated dimensions into a single latent factor representing leadership style, thereby ensuring that the constructed variable reflected the common variance among the relevant indicators. After the extraction of factors, the data

underwent a process of normalization to ensure comparability of measurements. The resulting leadership style variable was subsequently employed in correlation and regression analyses to assess the strength of the association between Denison's dimensions and the empirically derived leadership construct, allowing the identification of the predominant leadership style within the analyzed county councils.

4 Results

As previously mentioned, from the total of 29 County Councils that agreed to be included in this research, we managed to gather 985 responses, out of which 88.2% were in executive positions and 11.8% were in management positions. These percentages are relevant due to the nature of this study (determining the leadership style), thus, having a broader perspective regarding both culture and leadership from people in executive positions is more than relevant. Another important aspect regarding their knowledge on the shared values and beliefs of the institutions is their seniority. 20% of the respondents have been public servants in the County Councils for 11-20 years, 19.6% were between six and ten years and 39% were for one to five years. In terms of age, most of the respondents are between 36-45 years old (35.8%) and 46-55 years old (28.1%), hence the seniority.

Table 2. Work satisfaction.

How satisfied are you with your job?	
To a very high extent	28%
To a high extent	47.1%
Somewhat	19.6%
To a low extent	4.7%
To a very low extent	0.5%

Source: authors' calculations

The first aspect that was of interest for us was related to overall work satisfaction, so we can have a starting point (being also aware of the social bias that might arise from this question). As we can see in the table above, over 50% of the respondents are "satisfied" and "very satisfied" with their job and overall activity, giving us already a perspective regarding their association with the core values of the organization and their sense of unity.

Table 3. KMO and Bartlett's Test of reliability.

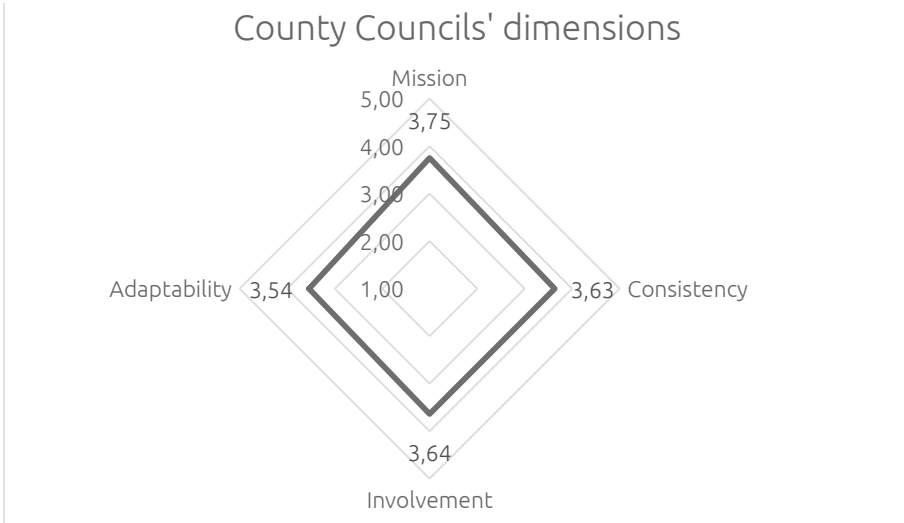
KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.885
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	5548.632
	df	10
	Sig.	.000

Source: authors' calculations

After having a first impression of the overall perspective regarding their activity, we did a reliability test using KMO and Bartlett's Test due to the dimension of the sample and as we can see in the table above, we received a very good score of 0.885, meaning that our dataset and the responses we gathered are valid. These results were also confirmed by the Cronbach's Alpha test of reliability, which gave us a score of .925.

R.O.1: To assess the dominant organizational culture in Romanian county councils using Denison's model:

Figure 2. Main results: Denison's dimensions.



Source: authors' calculation

Moving on to our main results, we can already see a trend and a direction of the leadership style and, of the most relevant and coherent aspects from the County Councils included in the analysis. Looking both at the figure above and table below, we can observe that the most relevant and present traits are regarding "mission", with a score of 3.75/5 and "involvement", with a score of 3.64/5.

Table 4. Statistics for each dimension.

Statistics					
		Involvement	Consistency	Adaptability	Mission
N	Valid	983	983	983	983
	Missing	2	2	2	2
Mean		**3.6618**	**3.6455**	**3.5433**	**3.7690**
Range		3.80	3.60	3.60	3.93
Minimum		1.20	1.40	1.40	1.07
Maximum		5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00

Source: authors' calculation

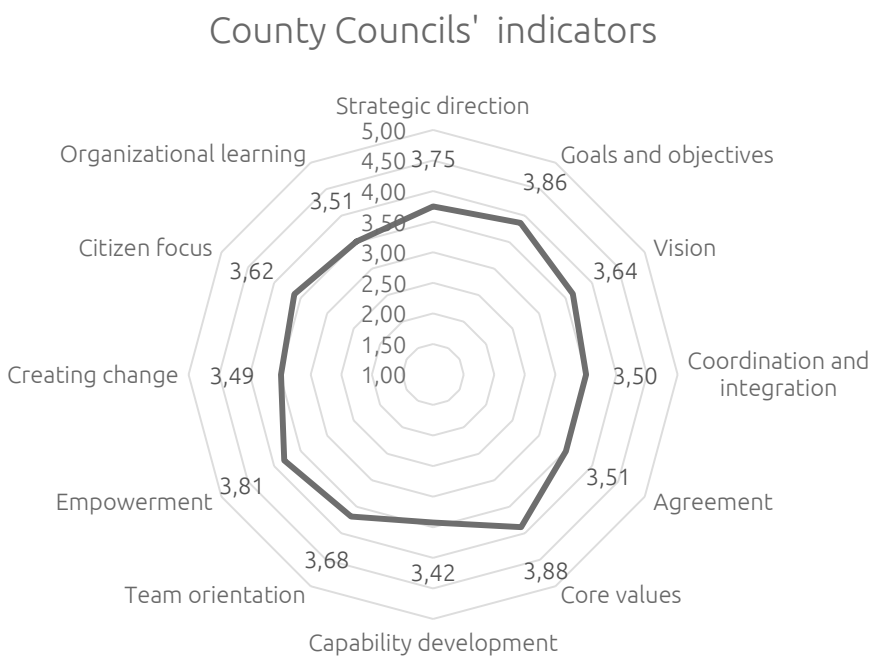
Another immediate observation that we can make is related to the closeness of the values, with almost insignificant differences. Taking into account the nature of work of County Councils and the fact that we are looking at the public sector, we are not necessarily surprised that the "adaptability" dimension received the lowest score (3.54), but we are surprised that it's above average, making it an advantage in terms of introducing change and continuously learning.

We can already see a tendency towards a transactional leadership style with a hint of servant leadership style, but we need to look deeper into the data and into the analysis to be certain and to draw the correct conclusions presented by the data.

We also wanted to see the scores for each indicator of each dimension to see which are the most present and relevant aspects for the respondents and to have a better idea of the aspects that could be improved, to enrich the sense of unity and to support the right direction for the institutions. Looking at the figure above, we can see that the most relevant or present elements are the core values (3.88) correlated with the "consistency" dimension, goals and objectives have also a quite high score of 3.86 (from the "mission" dimension) and empowerment has also a high score of 3.81 (included in the "involvement" dimension).

All these aspects show us that from the perspective of the respondents, there is a clear understanding of the mission, their direction and their role within their organizations. Also, they have a strong connection to the core values of the institutions, and they associate those values with their own. Lastly, we can also draw the conclusion that they feel empowered and have autonomy in their work, meaning that they feel responsible for the task they complete and they appreciate the fact that there is little to no micromanagement or inability to think or act on their own. This aspect is crucial for healthy and strong organizational cultures, especially in the public sector.

Figure 3. Results for each indicator.



Source: authors' calculation

Another conclusion that we can draw from the three main relevant aspects that received the highest score is related to the focus of the respondents in terms of internal or external environment. Being employed in the public sector, it was expected that the general focus is internal, looking at the way the institutions work and how they can deliver output, being also focused on stability and predictability, but simultaneously, giving them the opportunity to be flexible when needed. Henceforth, in terms of the institution and its goals and objectives they look for stability and focus their attention on maintaining it, but they give the employees the opportunity to be autonomous and flexible in solving their tasks, depending on the nature and context of said task.

On the other hand, if we look at the lowest scores, in contrast to the aforementioned, we can see that capability development (in the "involvement" dimension) received the lowest score of 3.42, meaning that there isn't enough attention paid to the ability development of employees through courses, new technology or new procedures to do things, even though they are empowered. This means that more resources should be allocated toward these types of activities, especially because creating change is another aspect that received a low score of 3.49. Especially in the public sector it is crucial to adapt, change and learn how to improve service delivery and how to listen better and act upon the needs of the citizens. Hence, these aspects should be taken into consideration with most urgency and to identify feasible solutions that

can be integrated in a way that doesn't affect the main goals and objectives of the County Councils.

R.O.2: To examine the relationship between organizational culture dimensions and leadership styles

As mentioned in the Methodology section, we continued our analysis by creating a new variable using an EFA analysis. This step was taken to empirically capture the latent construct of leadership style based on the observed dimensions of organizational culture derived from Denison's model. Following the extraction of the factors, the factor scores were calculated and normalized to ensure the comparability of the observations and to satisfy the assumptions necessary for subsequent parametric analyses. The resulting leadership style variable was then employed in correlation and regression analyses to examine its relationship with Denison's cultural dimensions and to identify the leadership style most strongly associated with the organizational culture profile of Romanian county councils.

Now that we looked at the main results and after having a better understanding about the elements that are present and lacking from the institutions analyzed, we can look at the correlation between each dimension and the new dimension created ("leadership style"). Looking at the table above, we can see that the strongest correlations are between "leadership style" and the dimensions "consistency" (0.814) and "mission" (0.909), being a strong indicator of the fact that the leadership style present and perceived by the respondents has predominantly transactional traits. To confirm it, we performed a linear regression with the leadership style being the dependent variable and the four dimensions being the independent variables (Table 6 through Table 8).

R.O.3: To identify the leadership style most strongly aligned with the dominant cultural dimension

Table 5. Correlation between the main variables.

Correlations						
		Involvement	Consistency	Adaptability	Mission	Leadership style
Involvement	Pearson Correlation	1	.842**	.773**	.797**	**.775****
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	983	983	982	982	983
Consistency	Pearson Correlation	.842**	1	.806**	.831**	**.814****
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	983	983	982	982	983
Adaptability	Pearson Correlation	.773**	.806**	1	.822**	**.781****
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	982	982	983	983	983
Mission	Pearson Correlation	.797**	.831**	.822**	1	**.909****
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	982	982	983	983	983
Leadership style	Pearson Correlation	.775**	.814**	.781**	.909**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	983	983	983	983	985

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: authors' calculation

Table 6. Summary of the regression.

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.917[a]	**.840**	.840	.0822847	.840	1284.810	4	977	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Mission, Involvement, Adaptability, Consistency

Source: authors' calculation

Table 7. ANOVA table.

ANOVA[a]						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	34.732	4	8.683	1284.810	**.000[b]**
	Residual	6.603	977	.007		
	Total	41.335	981			
a. Dependent Variable: Leadership style						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Mission, Involvement, Adaptability, Consistency						

Source: authors' calculation

Table 8. Values for each variable.

Coefficients[a]						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.255	.015		-17.066	.000
	Involvement	.015	.007	.057	2.261	.024
	Consistency	.041	.008	**.142**	5.027	**.000**
	Adaptability	.010	.008	.031	1.269	.205
	Mission	.189	.007	**.721**	27.142	**.000**
a. Dependent Variable: Leadership style						

Source: authors' calculation

Looking at tables 6 to 8 above, we can positively say that the predominant leadership style in the County Councils analyzed is the transactional one. Looking at the R^2 (Table 6) we can see that our dependent variable is explained by the four dimensions by 84%, meaning that our variable has different elements from all four dimensions, but the most predominant ones are "consistency", with a $\beta = 0.142$ (low, but positive) and "mission", with a very high and positive score of 0.721, making this correlation statistically valid.

While all four dimensions contribute to explaining leadership style, the standardized beta coefficients reveal a clear hierarchy in terms of their relative importance. The mission dimension exerts a remarkably robust and favorable influence ($\beta = 0.721$), signifying that the clarity of purpose, strategic direction, and alignment with organizational objectives are the most salient factors influencing leadership practices in county councils. In contrast, the consistency dimension exhibited a positive yet comparatively weaker influence ($\beta = 0.142$), suggesting that shared values, coordination, and internal integration play a supportive role, albeit still statistically relevant—in defining leadership style.

When interpreted in percentage terms, the mission dimension accounts for approximately 72% of the explanatory weight of leadership style, while consistency contributes approximately 14.2%. This distribution underscores the fact that leadership in county councils is primarily oriented towards ensuring alignment with the institutional mission and the fulfillment of statutory objectives. This leadership style is indicative of transactional leadership, where leaders prioritize the achievement of objectives, performance expectations, and adherence to formal mandates.

Concurrently, the positive contribution of consistency underscores the significance of stability, predictability, and adherence to norms within the public sector. Given the nature of county councils as administrative bodies operating within strict legislative frameworks, maintaining consistency in decision-making processes and reinforcing fundamental organizational values are essential. These elements form the basis of the assumptions underlying organizational culture and reinforce transactional leadership behaviors, ensuring continuity, accountability, and institutional legitimacy.

Finally, we were interested to see the results by county and to identify which dimensions are the most present for each institution included in the research. At first glance, we can see that "mission" is the most dominant dimension for all County Councils, underlying the sense of unity and confirming once again the impact and importance of the core values and of the common understanding of goals, objectives and direction. This is crucial especially in the public sector, due to its high impact it can have in terms of community development, integration and sustainability.

Table 9. Results for each dimension by county[1]

County	Mission	Consistency	Involvement	Adaptability
Arad	3.53	3.51	**3.54**	3.46
Argeș	**4.14**	3.96	3.98	3.88
Bacău	**4.29**	4.12	4.25	4.03
Bihor	**3.47**	3.45	3.33	3.31
Bistrița-Năsăud	**3.54**	3.27	3.31	3.29
Botoșani	3.87	**3.92**	3.75	3.68
Brașov	**3.48**	3.40	3.28	3.35
Caraș-Severin	3.30	3.28	**3.32**	3.25
Călărași	3.56	**3.60**	**3.60**	3.46
Cluj	3.14	3.16	**3.20**	3.09
Dâmbovița	**3.96**	3.82	3.94	3.56
Dolj	**4.05**	3.83	3.80	3.59
Giurgiu	4.53	4.49	**4.52**	4.18
Gorj	**3.79**	3.54	3.54	3.41
Harghita	**3.45**	3.40	3.25	3.39
Hunedoara	**3.52**	3.44	3.40	3.32
Ialomița	3.19	2.95	3.12	**3.28**
Mureș	3.29	**3.44**	3.24	3.20
Neamț	**3.81**	3.64	3.54	3.48
Olt	**4.19**	4.03	4.18	3.85
Satu Mare	**3.59**	3.42	3.49	3.38
Sălaj	**3.51**	3.39	3.38	3.41
Sibiu	3.34	3.24	**3.42**	3.29
Suceava	**4.46**	4.10	4.27	4.02
Teleorman	**3.70**	3.63	3.53	3.50
Timiș	**3.66**	3.49	3.46	3.45
Tulcea	**3.89**	3.74	3.74	3.68
Vaslui	**3.86**	3.80	3.80	3.77
Vâlcea	**4.65**	4.24	4.33	4.11

Source: authors' calculation

1 The results for each indicator by county can be seen in Annex 1.

Another interesting aspect that we can observe in the table above is the fact that counties from the North-East region of Romania (the poorest region) such as Botoșani, Suceava, Vaslui or Vâlcea have a better perspective regarding their organizational culture, at all levels, compared to counties from more developed regions, such as North-West (Cluj, Bistrița-Năsăud, Bihor or Sălaj). This might be argued by their level of responsibility and the network they've created over the years: the more developed, the more synergies of collaboration you create, the bigger is the pressure to maintain and develop it in a resilient and sustainable way. Henceforth, more developed counties feel the pressure differently compared to less developed ones, where there are not a lot of investors, partnerships or opportunities.

To sum up this section, we conclude that the leadership style present in the Romanian County Councils is a transactional one, focusing on clear expectations, structured tasks and with a performance-based rewards system, especially due to the nature of their work and the sector in which they activate. In this regard, usually the focus is on short-term periods, trying to maintain the status quo and the order, routine and predictability of the organization. This is why it correlates with the "mission" and "consistency" dimensions from Denison's model, because it seeks stability and has an internal focus.

5 Conclusions

In this study we wanted to determine the leadership style present in Romanian county councils based on the organizational culture present, using Denison's model. We concluded that the transactional leadership style is the most predominant, due to the dimensions that were dominant in the surveyed institutions. This style and the two dominant dimensions (mission and consistency) are typical for the public sector, as the literature suggested in the sections.

The findings substantiate the assertion that leadership approaches in public administration are considerably influenced by the prevailing institutional context. Romanian counties function within a robust regulatory environment, characterized by legal constraints, accountability requirements, and hierarchical structures. In a variety of settings, leadership practices that emphasize predictability, coordination, and control are not only prevalent but are often indispensable for ensuring organizational effectiveness. The mission statement's emphasis on clarity suggests a pronounced focus on public service mandates and statutory responsibilities. Conversely, the employment of consistent language underscores the significance of shared values, standard procedures, and internal integration.

Looking at the general analysis, we suggest that improvements should be made in terms of capability development and resilience and adaptation-building. Even though employees feel empowered, it is not sufficient for the long-term strategic direction of the institutions, especially if we look at the nature of their work. Henceforth, courses, workshops and digitalization of processes are some recommendations to try a more flexible approach, within the limits of the legislative constraints.

In conclusion, leadership is fundamentally and intrinsically linked to organizational culture and should understand its crucial role in shaping, maintaining or changing the shared values and beliefs. The findings further substantiate Tsai's (2011) proposition that leadership and organizational culture are mutually reinforcing. Leadership exerts a profound influence on the shaping of organizational cultural values through strategic decision-making, effective communication, and the consistent application of daily practices. Concurrently, organizational culture serves as a restrictive constraint on leadership behavior, delineating the norms and expectations that are deemed acceptable. Within the context of Romanian county councils, the predominance of mission and consistency appear to reflect and reinforce transactional leadership practices, thereby supporting a culture of stability and predictability.

Henceforth, it is vital to acknowledge the pivotal role that leaders play in the creation, shaping and maintenance of the values, beliefs and norms that collectively constitute organizational culture. This influence manifests through various mechanisms, including strategic decisions, vision communication, day-to-day interactions, and resource allocation. The impact of leadership on followers varies according to the hierarchical level of the leader. Organizational culture, in turn, acts as a significant mediator between leadership and organizational performance, explaining how leadership styles translate into tangible results. However, culture is not merely an outcome; it also exerts influence over and imposes constraints on leaders, thereby shaping the context in which leadership is perceived and enacted.

6 Discussions

Leadership style acts like the engine, and Denison’s culture model is the dashboard showing how well that engine drives performance. The most effective organizations choose or develop leadership approaches that intentionally support the cultural traits that matter most for their goals.

Despite the substantial theoretical work that recognizes this dynamic interplay, empirical research, particularly exploring recursive relationships, the influence of specific dimensions of leadership, and the complexities between levels and subcultures, is still emerging. Further research is required to explore the subtleties of this symbiotic relationship to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of how effective leadership fosters positive organizational cultures and enhances performance in changing environments.

Moreover, the analysis underscores domains in which prevailing leadership practices may prove inadequate in addressing long-term organizational challenges. Although employees report a certain level of empowerment, the relatively weaker emphasis on adaptability and capacity building suggests limited organizational readiness for change, innovation, and resilience. This imbalance has the potential to impede the capacity of boards to respond effectively to evolving social demands, technological advances, and mounting expectations for public sector performance.

From a pragmatic standpoint, the findings indicate that, while transactional leadership remains functional and contextually suitable, it could be augmented by components associated with transformational or servant leadership. Initiatives such as specific training programs, leadership development workshops, and the digitization of administrative processes can help promote adaptability and learning without undermining the stability required in the public sector. Such hybrid approaches have the potential to facilitate a gradual cultural shift toward greater flexibility while remaining within the confines of existing legislative and institutional frameworks.

The study lends support to the prevailing perspective that leadership and organizational culture are reciprocally reinforcing. The role of leadership in shaping organizational culture is multifaceted. It is achieved through strategic direction, daily interactions, and resource allocation. Concurrently, organizational culture exerts a dual influence on leadership behavior, constraining and guiding it in its execution. It is imperative for public sector leaders seeking to balance continuity with change and stability with innovation to comprehend this dynamic relationship.

7 Limitations and Future Research

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. Firstly, the analysis is based on cross-sectional data, which limits the ability to draw causal conclusions about the direction of the relationship between leadership style and organizational culture. Longitudinal studies would be more appropriate for capturing how leadership practices and cultural dimensions evolve over time and influence each other.

Secondly, the study is dependent on self-reported survey data, which is subject to potential biases, including the desire to be socially accepted and perception errors. Employee assessments of organizational culture may not fully reflect actual leadership behaviors or informal practices within councils.

Thirdly, the utilization of the Denison model, despite its solid foundation and extensive validation, might not encompass all the culturally or contextually unique facets of leadership within the Romanian public administration context. It is possible that other frameworks or qualitative approaches could provide additional insights into the informal dynamics of leadership, the political influences that shape these dynamics, or the contextual nuances that are specific to local government institutions.

Ultimately, the emphasis on Romanian county councils restricts the generalizability of the findings to other public sector contexts or national levels. It is posited that disparities in administrative traditions, governance systems, and cultural norms may result in divergent configurations of leadership and culture in other regions. Future research could expand the sample to include other levels of administration or conduct cross-country comparative analyses.

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Annex 1. All results obtained at the county level for each indicator of each dimension.

County	Mission			Consistency			Involvement			Adaptability		
	Strategic direction	Goals and objectives	Vision	Coordination and integration	Agreement	Core values	Capability development	Team orientation	Empowerment	Creating change	Citizen focus	Organizational learning
Arad	3.48	3.75	3.35	3.32	3.49	3.73	3.32	3.54	3.76	3.61	3.44	3.32
Argeș	4.09	4.31	4.02	3.85	3.85	4.19	3.76	4.02	4.15	3.86	3.88	3.90
Bacău	4.20	4.45	4.23	4.07	3.94	4.35	4.00	4.23	4.52	4.14	4.05	3.90
Bihor	3.58	3.49	3.34	3.27	3.38	3.70	3.34	3.23	3.42	3.20	3.42	3.32
Bistrița-Năsăud	3.53	3.67	3.43	3.09	3.14	3.58	3.14	3.35	3.44	3.02	3.46	3.39
Botoșani	3.84	4.00	3.77	3.71	3.87	4.20	3.40	3.84	4.01	3.51	3.84	3.71
Brașov	3.46	3.71	3.26	3.18	3.25	3.76	2.95	3.32	3.56	3.27	3.32	3.45
Caraș-Severin	3.18	3.43	3.28	3.15	3.10	3.59	2.81	3.35	3.80	3.48	3.12	3.13
Călărași	3.42	3.73	3.51	3.46	3.47	3.86	3.32	3.61	3.86	3.62	3.41	3.36
Cluj	3.32	3.15	2.96	2.92	3.15	3.41	3.13	3.06	3.40	3.06	3.14	3.07
Dâmbovița	3.78	4.20	3.89	3.67	3.74	4.06	3.66	4.09	4.06	3.65	3.56	3.47
Dolj	4.07	4.21	3.88	3.60	3.84	4.04	3.69	3.83	3.88	3.46	3.68	3.63
Giurgiu	4.33	4.66	4.59	4.60	4.41	4.47	4.51	4.52	4.54	4.21	4.06	4.28
Gorj	3.83	3.78	3.75	3.50	3.27	3.86	3.35	3.59	3.68	3.40	3.41	3.42
Harghita	3.51	3.46	3.37	3.34	3.14	3.71	2.94	3.37	3.43	2.94	3.91	3.31
Hunedoara	3.40	3.71	3.46	3.19	3.36	3.77	3.21	3.43	3.56	3.32	3.39	3.25
Ialomița	3.42	3.14	3.00	2.90	3.02	2.94	2.76	3.18	3.42	3.30	3.34	3.20
Mureș	3.40	3.43	3.03	3.33	3.27	3.73	3.03	3.37	3.33	2.93	3.53	3.13
Neamț	3.88	3.90	3.66	3.41	3.54	3.98	3.17	3.63	3.82	3.44	3.63	3.38
Olt	4.13	4.33	4.12	3.91	3.91	4.28	3.98	4.23	4.32	3.83	3.91	3.80
Satu Mare	3.73	3.65	3.39	3.25	3.34	3.66	3.35	3.64	3.49	3.30	3.34	3.52
Sălaj	3.56	3.55	3.43	3.28	3.36	3.54	3.20	3.38	3.55	3.38	3.51	3.34
Sibiu	3.37	3.45	3.20	3.19	3.09	3.46	3.23	3.41	3.62	3.24	3.39	3.25
Suceava	4.37	4.53	4.47	4.08	3.72	4.50	4.09	4.29	4.44	4.00	4.15	3.90
Teleorman	3.69	3.85	3.56	3.46	3.52	3.92	3.33	3.56	3.71	3.45	3.59	3.45
Timiș	3.67	3.66	3.66	3.30	3.41	3.76	3.43	3.48	3.48	3.32	3.60	3.43
Tulcea	3.84	4.00	3.84	3.60	3.65	3.96	3.49	3.79	3.94	3.72	3.77	3.54
Vaslui	3.83	3.99	3.77	3.74	3.51	4.16	3.63	3.78	4.00	3.53	4.03	3.74
Vâlcea	4.80	4.84	4.32	4.20	4.04	4.48	3.96	4.64	4.40	3.96	4.20	4.16