

## ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN PUBLIC SECTOR

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### **Abstract**

*Resulting from the changing world in which public organizations function, it has amplified prospects about their responsible conduct. Currently in public sector does not exist a coherent approach of activities and initiatives relating to social responsibility. In order to be effective, social responsibility programs and activities of a public institution need to be placed in the institution's strategic plan. In this respect we have proposed, based on exploratory research undertaken on literature a research methodology of empirical nature. This research model will be applied within County Gendarmerie Inspectorate Călărași. However this model is adapted to be applied in public institutions and in particular in those from the public order area.*

**Key words:** social responsibility, public sector, assessment methodology

**JEL classification:** M14

### **1. Introduction**

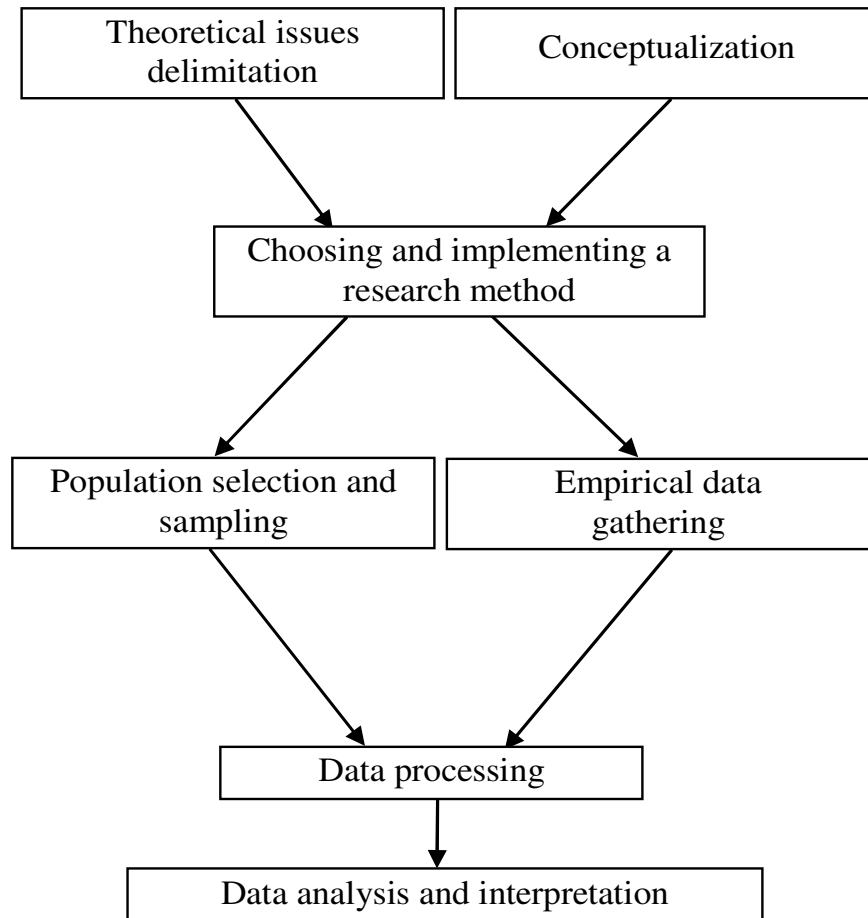
Although in the past, social responsibility was focused mainly on the business sector in the last decade, "the public sector has joined other stakeholders in taking a more active role in promoting social responsibility vector" [9], "in collaboration with nongovernmental organizations, recognizing that public policies are crucial to encourage responsible behavior of private sector" [7].

Given the new public management paradigm, "public organizations must operate in compliance with the principles of efficiency, effectiveness and social responsibility" [5]. The new public management paradigm began to be implemented in the public sector due to the perception that the public sector reforms "are inefficient compared with cyclic restructuring occurring within the private sector" [3].

Public institutions and authorities are interested in implementing social responsibility as a responsible behaviour of private actors can facilitate the fulfilment of public policy objectives [10]. In addition, policies of social responsibility can be a successful substitute for legal regulations if does not exist the political will to adopt them. A decline in the level of state regulation could facilitate the emergence of new forms of voluntary responsible behavior [8]. Social responsibility begins to be "not just a feature of corporations, but increasingly more a characteristic of the new social governance" [11]. Given that social responsibility involves managing relationships with stakeholders, organizations and public authorities play an important role in these relationships, being stakeholders for private companies that operate in their areas of competence [13].

Albareda et al. [1] concludes that "for institutions and public authorities implementing social responsibility in public policy entails the need to manage a complex set of relationships that are established between the three sectors: private, public and non-governmental". Thus it is needed to analyzing the diverse perceptions and expectations of all stakeholders.

In this regard we consider it necessary to establish a research methodology issues that will lay the basis for a methodical and designed approach to social responsibility of public organisations. We consider that any research cannot start without defined stages of research. This provides the prerequisites for replication of the research, development and improvement of the proposed research methodology so as to be able to achieve not only a cross-cutting research, but also a longitudinal one. For research of social responsibility in public institutions, we proposed a flowchart of the research design inspired by Babbie [2]. The flowchart of the research design process is illustrated in Figure 1. The following sections of this paper we describe the stages of this methodology, we will detail the tools used and specify the anticipated outcomes from the implementation of research methodology.



**Figure 1. Research process**

Source: Adaptation from Babbie, 2010, p. 134

## 2. Theoretical issues delimitation and conceptualization

Beginning from the core theoretical issues linked to the dimensions of social responsibility can be demarcated the essential aspects regarding development of the research methodology. Following the changes on economic and social context, in which public institutions operate, have increased expectations for their responsible behaviour.

Constant expectations appear in the area of human resources and overall impact of the institution's activity on society and the environment. Social responsibility is becoming increasingly important as a strategic organizational approach, and not just a peripheral activity linked exclusively to the organization's reputation and image [4].

The need to develop such a methodology research in social responsibility area is justified by the idea to ensure a greater authenticity in relation to various categories of stakeholders [12]. To identify the status of public institution in an implementation of an effective strategy in social responsibility area are required identification of employees perceptions, the key stakeholders involved in the social responsibility programs and actions. In this regard, we intend to achieve and interpret during the research employee perceptions on the following areas of organizational culture and social responsibility:

- identifying employee perception on labor issues within the organization: labor characteristics, satisfaction at work, cooperation within the organization, information circuits within the institution, features which an employee must meet to be recognized / encouraged by organization heads, qualities that define the employee-type, positive aspects on the institution;

- identifying employees perceptions on various aspects of human resources management and labor relations: perception of fairness employment, sanction or dismissal procedures, the perception on the frequency of discrimination and harassment cases, the perception on ensuring equal opportunities for women, minorities and people with

disabilities, perception on equity of wages, perception on electronic surveillance at the work (including through video and online activity monitoring), attitude towards suggestions and proposals resulting from the consultation process with employees;

- identifying employee perception on environmental policies of the enterprise: the perception on energy conservation measures, the perception on measures to reduce and recycling, the perception on pollution prevention measures (eg, air and water emissions, waste discharges, noise), perception on natural environment protection measures, the perception on environmental responsibility programs;

- identifying employee perceptions about social responsibility programs and activities: opportunities offered to members of the local community, open dialogue with the local community on controversial or sensitive issues, donations to schools, hospitals, homes for the elderly or children, cultural or sporting sponsorships, volunteering, partnerships for safe conduct of cultural and artistic manifestations, public information campaigns on how to prevent and combat antisocial acts.

In addition to all of these objectives on employee perceptions about the cultural aspects of social responsibility, it can be identified and other objectives of research involving analysis of the following hypotheses:

- public institution pay high importance to ensuring socially responsible behavior towards its employees;
- there are discrepancies between the way in which employees occupying a position of management and those who occupy executive positions in the institution perceive certain aspects of social responsibility;
- it manifest certain differences in perception of some aspects of social responsibility to employees from different categories of employment or with different ages.

These assumptions can be made as simple sentences, they will be confirmed or denied after obtaining results. Through analyzing these hypotheses it aims: getting an overview about responsible behaviour, identifying possible sources of tension and errors resulting from the existence of discrepancies between perceptions of different categories of employees in order to monitor and mitigate them, identifying weaknesses in internal communication related to social responsibility to pay an increased attention to their fastest possible remedy.

### **3. Choosing and implementing research method**

Given the quantity nature of research, the research method chosen is represented by a survey conducted through a questionnaire. Also we chosen a structured questionnaire with closed questions that allow timely and accurate quantification and interpretation of the responses collected.

Once selected method of research, in the stage of operationalization of research issue we proceeded to questionnaire items determination. To determine questionnaire items were identified primarily themes and variables that must compose the questionnaire. After establishing themes and variables we proceeded to development items of the questionnaire. We have formulated 28 questions with closed character, some questions regarding multiple aspects.

### **4. Population selection and sampling**

Population selected to test research methodology is represented by the Gendarmerie Inspectorate of Calarasi County employees. The reason that we selected this organization to carry out applied research is that it is a public institution from the public order area already involved in a variety of programs and social responsibility actions developed within the local community.

To determine the research sample we will establish as sampling frame database comprising employees County Gendarmerie Inspectorate Calarasi. By 2015, County Gendarmerie Inspectorate Calarasi has 360 employees with employment contracts of indefinite duration. As sampling method we will use sampling stages. In determining sample we will consider both the limits of organizational conditions and ensuring the best possible representativeness of the information obtained. The sample size used will be 200 questionnaires providing a research confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 4,62%.

### **5. Research results**

The application technique of survey implies interviews at work of employees. The research area is mainly Calarasi County and data collection period will be between 1 and 20 November 2015. At this stage of the research it will be done coding of the responses to the questionnaires and translation them into electronic format. Data processing will be done using SPSS 17 software program (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

Using SPSS we will define the variables corresponding to analyzed aspects and build the framework to enable systematization of the answers given by the interviewed. In the questionnaire we chose closed questions, but for some of the questionnaire respondents were the possibility to detail the answers provided by additional issuing a request such

as "You can show examples to support this view". Although the number of questions is limited to 28, the content and volume of information collected will be raised.

After we perform statistical processing of data we will proceed to the analysis and interpretation of results. For this, we use data univariate analysis, bivariate analysis and multivariate data analysis. In univariate analysis stage data will provide an interpretation of the answers given for each question, achieving an absolute and relative frequency being carried out a presentation and a graphical representation of them.

Bivariate and multivariate data analysis will aim to highlight the most significant comparative analysis between perceptions of different categories of employees, being particularly useful in interpreting the research hypotheses.

Following the univariate and multivariate analyzes we propose an index for measuring the degree of social responsibility (IMDSR) which are as basis for calculating the main items of the questionnaire. For construction of index for measuring the degree of social responsibility will use those survey items that can be quantified. From this point of view, the items were classified into three categories:

- items outside index,
- items with two possible answers (responses were given the values 0 and 10),
- items with five possible answers (responses were noted with following values 0; 2,5; 5; 7,5 și 10).

Of the 28 items, eight have provided the possibility of a non-answered (do not know / no answer / not applicable).

Based on the maximum values attributed to the responses we illustrated index for measuring the degree of social responsibility in figure 2.

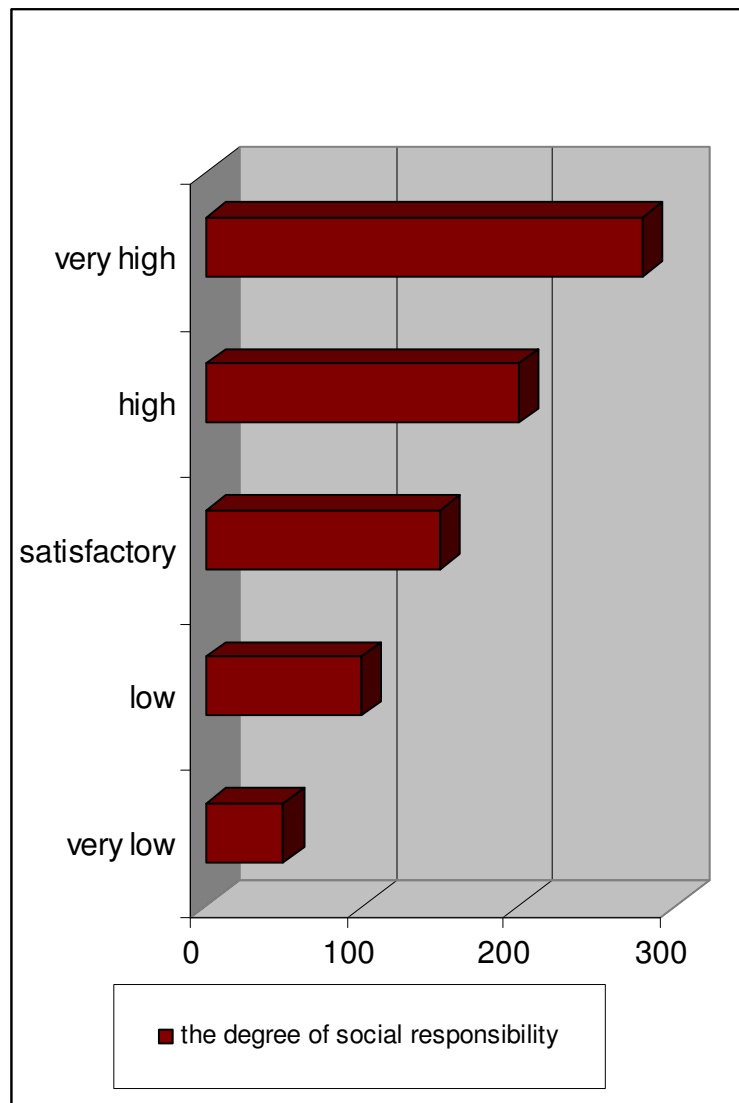
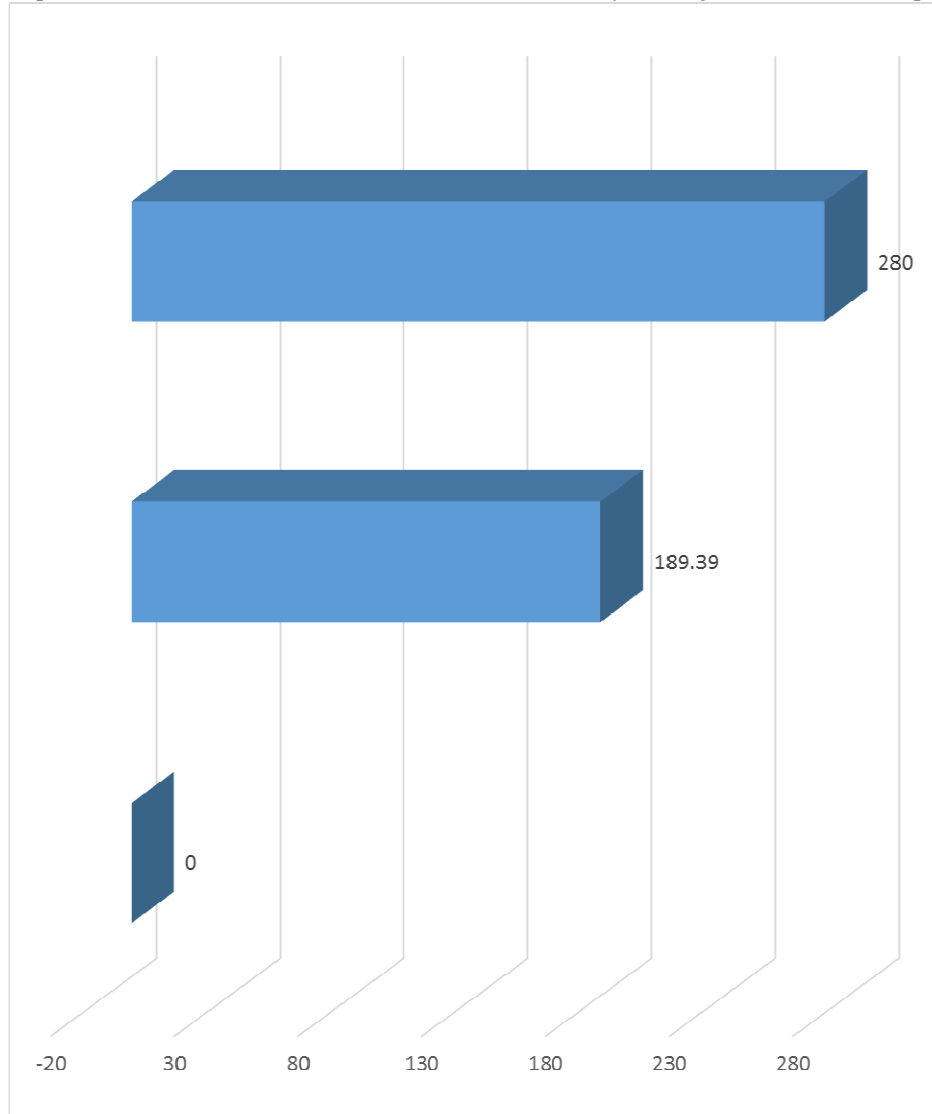


Figure 2. The index for measuring the degree of social responsibility (IMDSR)

The minimum is 0 points (corresponding to a totally irresponsible behaviour of the organization), while the maximum is 280 (corresponding to a responsible behaviour of the organization).

## 6. Data analysis and interpretation

From the summation of responses from people searched for Calarasi Gendarmerie was recorded an average score of 189,39 points, which shows that the institution is characterized by a strong culture of social responsibility.



**Figure 3. Calarasi Gendarmerie position on the index measuring the degree of social responsibility (IMDSR)**

However culture of social responsibility can be improved by intensifying social responsibility, involvement of all employees in the various actions undertaken at the institutional level.

To simplify the calculation of the individual scores and their research on the identification variables we proceeded to placing scores into 5 ranges that have been scored 1 to 5:

- for the score ranging from 0 to 60 we gave 1 point;
- for the score ranging from 61 to 120 we gave 2 points;
- for the score ranging from 121 to 180 we gave 3 points;
- for the score ranging from 181 to 230 we gave 4 points;
- for the score ranging from 231 to 280 we gave 5 points.

In Figure 4 it can see a balanced distribution of scores obtained, extremes recording 10.5% (those who are

placed in the range 61-120) and 19% (those who are placed in the range 231-280). Approximately 60% of employees recorded a score of over 181 points.

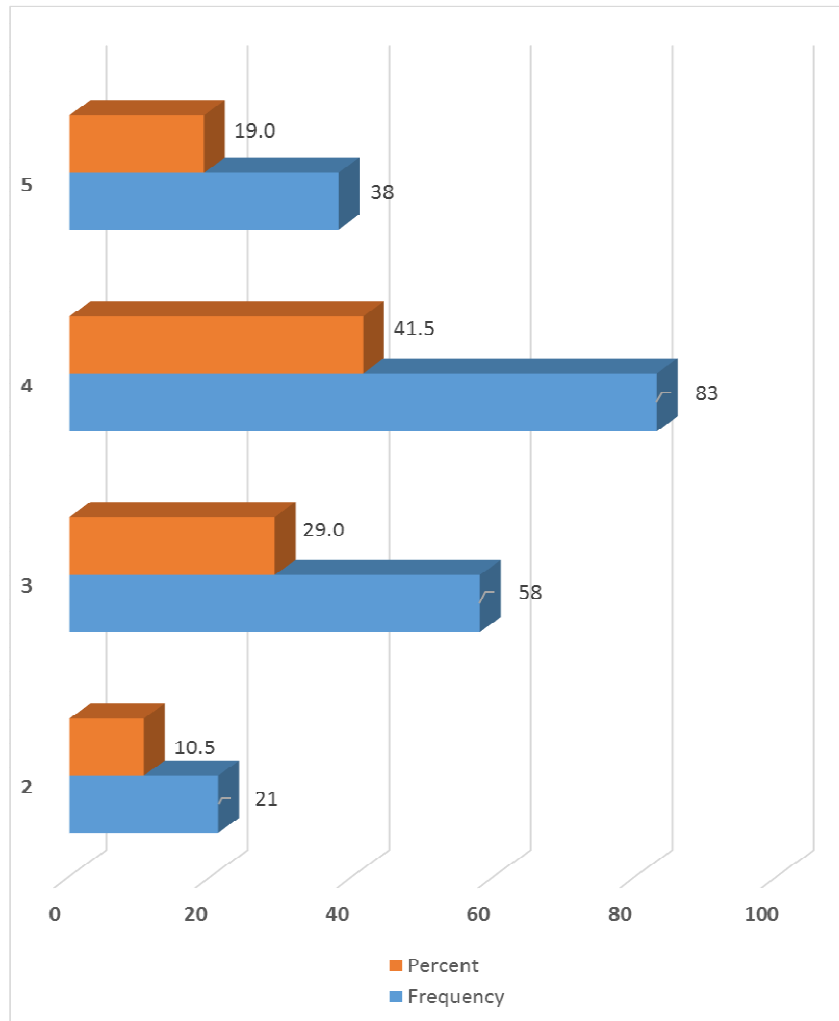


Figure 4. The proportion of individual scores

Table 1 shows the distribution of individual scores by gender, busy position, seniority and level of education.

Table 1. Individual scores by the identification variables

Sex	2	3	4	5	Total	Position	2	3	4	5	Total
Male	21	56	83	35	195	Manager	0	5	4	3	12
Female	0	2	0	3	5	Executive	21	53	79	35	188
Total	21	58	83	38	200	Total	21	58	83	38	200
Education	2	3	4	5	Total	Seniority	2	3	4	5	Total
professional	12	29	30	6	77	1-5 years	3	0	12	0	15
High school	3	6	3	9	21	5-10 years	9	22	26	15	72
Post high school	3	14	38	17	72	up to 10 years	3	29	30	8	70
University	3	9	9	6	27	up to 20 years	6	7	15	15	43
Master or doctoral degree	0	0	3	0	3	Total	21	58	83	38	200

Sex	2	3	4	5	Total	Position	2	3	4	5	Total
Male	21	56	83	35	195	Manager	0	5	4	3	12
Female	0	2	0	3	5	Executive	21	53	79	35	188
Total	21	58	83	38	200	Total	21	58	83	38	200
Total	21	58	83	38	200						

From Table 1 we can see that the 21 employees who registered a score between 61 and 120 points (corresponding to a weak culture of social responsibility) are exclusively male, were educated quite low, have a seniority 5 years usually and perform executive functions. This is a warning that the institution must take into account in the improvement of social responsibility programs.

If we analyze the correlation among total individual score obtained of each employee and values recorded e for each analyzed variable it can be seen differences between components of social responsibility (Table 2).

**Table 5. Correlations among total individual scores expressed in points and values recorded for the variables analyzed**

The name of the variable	Pearson coefficient	The name of the variable	Pearson coefficient
Perception of energy conservation measures	0.441**	Satisfaction at work	0.346**
Perception of the measures to reduce and recycle waste	0.702**	The degree of cooperation within the organization between managers	0.301**
Perception on the pollution prevention measures (for example, emissions to air and water, spills, noise)	0.596**	The degree of cooperation within the organization between executives and managers	0.332**
Perception of the measures of protection of the natural environment	0.604**	The degree of cooperation within the organization between executives	0.176*
The perception over the programmes relating to environmental responsibility	0.598**	The degree of cooperation within the organization between departments	0.299**
The perception of the public procurement system	0.653**	Attitude towards fairness of employment, promotion procedures, penalties or dismissal	0.324**
Timely and indiscriminate payment of invoices from suppliers.	0.559**	Attitude towards wage equity	0.366**
Opportunities offered for local community members	0.604**	Attitude towards professional development opportunities	0.283**
Public institution's dialogue with the local community on controversial or sensitive topics	0.440**	Attitude towards personal development opportunities	0.320**
The degree of knowledge concerning donations to schools, hospitals, old people's homes or children's homes	0.639**	The attitude towards the frequency of cases of discrimination	0.050
The degree of knowledge concerning sponsorships for cultural and sporting events	0.512**	The attitude towards the frequency of cases of harassment	0.520**
The degree of knowledge concerning voluntary actions	0.600**	Attitude towards ensuring equal opportunities for women, minorities and persons with disabilities	0.480**
Awareness of the partnerships made in order to carry out safe artistic or cultural events	0.638**	The attitude towards the suggestions and proposals resulting from the consultation process with employees	0.114
The degree of knowledge concerning public information campaigns on how to prevent and tackle antisocial acts	0.599**		

Pearson coefficient recorded higher values correlations between total individual scores and variables that define environmentally responsible policy and community involvement. Lower values are recorded in the variables that define organizational culture and human resources policy. It is recommendable that Gendarmerie Calarasi pay a greater attention to elements that characterize organizational culture and improve human resources policies.

Institutions that later will be investigated based on tool created in this paper can be placed on the scale of index for measuring the degree of social responsibility. Depending on the value of this IMDSR we will consider recommendations to improve the strategic approach to social responsibility programs and actions. The IMDSR is an instrument that we suggest to theoreticians and practitioners of social responsibility, to allow comparability among public institutions social responsibility and to deliver an instrument for developing and fulfilling the strategies in the area of responsibility social.

The results to be found by applying investigation procedure might prove to be very useful for leaders of public organisations and its stakeholders. Consequently, based on these results we will issue a series of conclusions and recommendations. This methodology is designed as a feedback tool for action and programs undertaken so far and as a basis for implementing the strategic dimension of social responsibility in the organizational culture of the institution.

## 7. Conclusions

To achieve their mission, organisations from the public order area must to catalyze or be co-participant in a number of social responsibility initiatives in the future. Through these initiatives institutions from the public order area are more concerned about community issues involving citizens reverse in actions they carry out. In this way, final scope, serving the interests and needs of citizens, is satisfied with good results. The values that should underpin both the core activity of the institutions from the public order area and the social responsibility programs and actions should be: professionalism, responsibility, integrity, dedication, excellence.

To achieve the goals set we have built a social responsibility research methodology. Based on the conclusions resulting from observations and exploratory research undertaken can be identified objectives of research involving analysis of research hypotheses formulated. The minimum is 0 points (corresponding to a nonexistent culture of social responsibility), while the maximum is 280 (corresponding to a culture of social responsibility that takes into account all stakeholder interests). From the summation of responses from people searched for Calarasi Gendarmerie was result a mean score demonstrates that the institution is characterized by a strong culture of social responsibility. Subsequently the tool that I called index for measuring the degree of social responsibility can be used in any public institution to help improve activity in this area.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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