

Philosophical counseling: a new profession in Romania

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Abstract: The first step towards recognizing a new specialization, philosophical counseling, was made in Romania by setting up the professional association of philosophical counselors, being the effect of the appearance on the Romanian labor market of the first specialists in the first series of master's degree graduates. philosophical counseling program. Prior to this recognition, they could pursue other occupations, based on their initial training, reflected in their bachelor's degrees. The develop the new profession of philosophical counselor was more than necessary, being intended for specialists trained in Romanian university. The highlighted solution supports the training of practitioners and specialists in the philosophical counseling master's or postgraduate programs wich will be developed in Romania. The new specialization, given by califiquation for philosophical counselor, has a real chances to be a new profession who can take a place in the Romanian society.

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The philosophical counselor is a new specialist who develops a dialogue with the counselee, analyzing and solving interpersonal and intercultural problems in order to transfer skills and abilities developed through the process of philosophical counseling, and who will be able to clarify life situations, problems or dilemmas faced by the person, defining with him his own vision of the world and life, with the help of concepts and tools of thought specific to philosophical practice.

The implementation of philosophical counseling can take place in specialized counseling offices for individuals, or by organizing events for groups of people, in which the specialist becomes a facilitator of dialogue and the application of specific procedures to the philosophy applied to groups, such as Socratic dialogue or philosophical debates held during events such as "philosophical cafe" (Hațegan, 2018).

The companies or organizations may benefit from philosophical consulting or counseling services through services provided by a specialist in organizational philosophical consulting, which is addressed to the manager or management team, or even other groups of staff within the company, to benefit from applications specific, adapted to their activity, or to solve their own situations regarding the activity carried out in the company. The specialist in philosophical counseling can intervene within a company, supporting the advised organization to comply with the moral norms of contemporary society, as well as consulting the management team in the form of organizationally applied ethics, such as: assistance in carrying out the mission statement of the company, the development and implementation of a code of ethics and deontology specific to the field of activity, support for conducting the company's ethical audit and decision-making regarding other people or the development and evolution of the entire organization (Hațegan, 2019a).

Philosophical counseling has some specific characteristics, such as:

The purpose of counseling is to examine the person's life and clarify his or her view of the world;

It manifests itself through counseling practices based on tools of philosophy, which are successfully transferred to the counseling process;

The beneficiary of the counseling procedure are individual clients, groups or organizations / institutions / communities;

The main way of working is based on individual or group dialogue;

It can be regulated in the form of a specialized public service;

Demonstrates professionalism, in the sense that a code of ethics / ethics of specialization is applied;

Practitioners are specialists trained in the field of philosophical counseling, they follow a continuous professional training;

The counselor has a certain freedom of conscience and action in choosing his method and techniques of work, a freedom that derives from the vision of the world of the specialist but also of the counselee;

The dialogue and listening to the person can generate compassionate relationships, manifested in the form of an intellectual friendship between the practitioner and the counselee;

The activation of the resources of the persons is done by stimulating his / her positive actions;

The occupation requires an office location arranged for the counseling process;

The service offered is onerous, in the form of a tariff practiced by the specialist and paid by the client.

The activity of philosophical counseling fits well in the category of liberal professions, by the fact that it can have a flexible program, oriented to the needs of the person or of the organization or the advised group.

This form of philosophy practice has been implemented in countries in Europe and around the world, through specialized practitioners, who come from graduates with a degree in philosophy or other related specializations, and who are to be recognized as specialists in the community. They new practitioners are organized in the professional associations, whose main objective is to regulate a new field, seen as an occupation distinct from that of philosopher. Thus, national professional associations have emerged in various countries around the world that promote and monitor the work of practitioners in philosophical counseling, who have developed their own codes of ethics, specific to the field of activity, which the practitioners can subscribe, and they must have a special training, approved by the organization. Currently, specialists and practitioners in philosophy and philosophical counseling are also members of international professional associations, such us: IGPP Internationale Gesellschaft für Philosophische Praxis - Germany; American Philosophical Practice Association or National Philosophical Counseling Association from USA.

These international organizations are concerned for promotion and ongoing training of specialists who have become practitioners in philosophical counseling, and international conferences are regularly organized by the aforementioned associations. Once every two years a major international event takes place, organized under the auspices of ICPP which offers participants a real exchange of information and practices, professional rules as well as news in the applied field of philosophical counseling. The next event of this type (their history is presented at icpp.site) will take place in 2023 in Timisoara, with the support of the Romanian professional organization APCFE, which will be attended by practitioners from Romania, along with guests and specialists around the world (icpp2023.ro).

I agree with the need to regulate philosophical counseling on the Romanian labor market, as an occupation that differs from the occupation of philosopher, being intended for new specialists who can apply to train and specialize in the new field. A first step for the training of these specialists took place with the establishment of a master's program, organized at the University of Timisoara since 2015, which delivered on the labor market several series of graduates, as certified specialists in the qualification of philosophical advisor. The master's program for the specialization of philosophical advisor is a good start in the process of supporting the recognition of a new occupation, with good prospects for implementation in the labor market, and is intended for both graduates of undergraduate studies in philosophy philosopher, as well as other undergraduate specializations with complementary field, who can become applicants of the specialization program in philosophical counseling. The specialized master's program in the new field is organized and promoted by the local University in the form of studies lasting 2 years, currently being underway two series of studies.

A short analysis was carried for the training program initiated in Timișoara, which showed indicators that reflect a constant interest in this program, with an increase in the number of students, from fields other than philosophy, sorting by their bachelor degree. The analysis was based on the information provided by the students and the preliminary interview given by them at enrollment, which shows that some of the students had previous activities in the area related to counseling, carried out on the basis of previous training or a license obtained in other fields assimilated

to counseling. This aspect being reflected by a report of $\frac{1}{4}$ out of the total number of enrolled persons, and they intend to practice the philosophical counseling, following the specialization acquired within the university training program in which they participate. The data of the analysis show that only a percentage of 22% of the people who enroll in the specialization program in philosophical counseling come from the field of study of philosophy, highlighted by the bachelor's degree presented at their enrollment in the master's program, and the rest of the participants having license obtained in other fields.

The emergence and development of a specialization program in philosophical counseling, followed by the recognition of this qualification, generated numerous comments from those involved in teaching philosophy, who had no worries about the options of graduates, who obtain a bachelor's degree, and these graduates in philosophy he faces difficulties in professing, both as a philosopher or as a professor of philosophy, due to the non-existence of such offers in the Romanian labor market. The criteria for access to the university environment require the fulfillment of additional conditions for participation in the competition, the graduate is required to work yhe scientific publications, his participation in scientific communication sessions and specialized events, and his involvement in research projects, which are usually developed by specialized institutions, and the individual application being an exception hardly accepted by the financing entity. This created an exclusive caste attitude in the field of philosophy, the options of a graduate of philosophy are very limited, and the occupation of philosopher is limited to academia or research. Philosophical practice is not encouraged at all among students who study philosophy, and who are often forced to retrain after completing their university studies or to use their diploma only as a requirement to show their studies, without having real opportunities to work in the field in which they studied.

Can be observed that in other countries of the world there are no regulations specific to philosophical counseling, which has led to the inclusion of the occupation in other activities, in various forms, graduates of the specialization program in the philosophical practice being at the limit of exercising specific activities of philosophical practice for people. The practitioners often have to present their skills acquired using other forms of counseling, in which they also use tools specific to philosophical

practices acquired in a training program in philosophical counseling. These specialists practiced in the form of occupations or related activities, due to the fact that the specialization in which they obtained a university degree was not a regulated occupation, philosophical counseling specialists not being assimilated to the occupation of philosopher, which require the studies in Philosophy, and most of them come from other fields, and they had the opportunity to specialize through an authorized master's program, named Philosophical Counseling and Consultancy.

With the appearance of the association of professionals in the field of philosophical counseling in Romania, the promotion of the new specialization was initiated, with the aim of attracting these specialists within the professional organization rules, accepted by all members of the organization. The association is concerned for creating the professional reputation of the philosophical advisor and pays attention to the observance of the rules of ethics by all its members.

In order to develop this field, it is considered to attract other specialists, who may come from graduates with a degree in philosophy or other fields related to philosophical practice, who may have the opportunity to specialize in philosophical counseling. They can use an alternative path training and professional training in the new specialization, taking into account the fact that the requirement of the master's program involves the allocation of time for training lasting 2 university years, that can be discouraging for the applicant, to following a long program. I also support the option of vocational training by following an alternative route to obtain a certificate of qualification in the profession, through postgraduate programs of continuous training, such as short-term vocational training. These are for preparing for new profession, the philosophical counselor, which will use the professional certifications for a new occupation. These postgraduate programs can also be developed in more restricted areas of activity, such as: personal counseling, group facilitation or philosophical consultancy for organizations.

In order to highlight the potential of the new occupation on the labor market, we consider how it has developed in other countries of the world, following those who have initiated training and specialization procedures in the new occupation, carried out in various forms and national regulations.

This trend of recognizing the new specialization has led to the emergence of national professional associations, which include members recognized in the community as good practitioners and philosophical advisers, who are subject to specific professional and ethical rules new professions, respecting the national rules of practice of new practices, aiming at the inclusion in the professional ethics of each national professional body. In order to show the advantages of professionalizing philosophical practices by promoting the specialization of philosophical counselor, I consider the following arguments: the public interest shown by people who can turn to a philosophical counseling service is growing in various countries of the world; access to initial training and specialization in the profession, recognizing the interest in continuing professional training of practitioners; professional independence and membership of a professional association for representation in relation to others; introducing the concept of professional liability of members through the control exercised by the professional organizations to which they adhere; attracting professional responsibility through the ethical norms and rules of practice imposed but also by ensuring professional secrecy, elements that generate security and confidence in the profession. The payment of the service by fee ensures a balance on the interest of the persons involved in counseling, both the practitioner and the beneficiary of his service, being a service that can be classified in the form of a liberal profession, different from that of the philosopher practitioner, which requires a bachelor degree in philosophy (Hategan, 2021).

In Romania, a first step towards recognizing the new specialization was initiated by the establishment of the Professional Association of Philosophical and Ethical Counselors (consiliereafilosofica.ro) an initiative started as a result of the existence on the labor market of specialists from the first series of graduates of the specialization program philosophical consultancy, which were initially required to practice in other occupations, using qualifications acquired based on initial training or studies followed. I consider it opportune and necessary to recognize the occupation of philosophical counselor, being intended for specialists from state university education, and the specialization obtained through the qualification act is that of philosophical counselor, as a result of graduating a university program of training and specialization in the new profession, recognized now in Romania.

About dynamics of the new occupation on the labor market

To identify the interest in the proposed occupation, a sociological study was conducted in 2021 on a sample of research considered representative at the national level, through an company specialized in market research, which conducted a sociological survey using an online questionnaire applied throughout territory, being collected data from a significant number of counties (35) which ensures a major representation with a probability threshold estimated at 95%. The study also taking into account the identification of problems and concerns generated by the pandemic. The final labor market research report was made after processing the collected data and clearly highlights a major interest shown in Romanian society on the usefulness and need to implement the occupation of philosophical counselor, an interest expressed in a large percentage of respondents, 85% , the majority trend being confirmed by the definitions given to the investigated occupation, which were expressed online by 59% of participants. I present some of the expressions invoked by the participants in connection with the new type of investigated specialist, these being: “spiritual coach”, “help for conscience”, “facilitator in establishing and ordering reasoning”, “doctor for souls”, “on the road to knowing reality”, “mediator through dialogue”, “guide to wisdom”, “therapist for healthy people”, “life counselor”, “mediator between you and you”, “counselor on existential issues”, “trainer of capacity for reflection”, “guide in finding balance at the existential level”, “existential therapist”, “practicing philosopher”(Alpha Research, 2021).

The definitions expressed in the social study show a good perception in the Romanian society of the role of the proposed specialist, the philosophical counselor, who can take a distinct place in the counseling field, being a service that can offer specialized applications to any person, perceived as a derivation of philosophical practices that can be applied by the new specialists trained in philosophical counseling. It is an occupation that does not show major changes in the structure of skills in a short time, but given the digitization and orientation towards a friendly environment, changes may occur from another approach, but the basic structure and core competencies do not it will change often and in a short time, and the human relationship remaining an important factor for the development of

society. Based on these steps, the professional organization has promoted to the authorities, the all arguments for recognizing the new occupation, and recently the request was approved and published in the nomenclature indicating the Classification of Occupations in Romania, being assigned for the philosophical counselor, using the code 263311, like a part of the group of specific activities for philosophers.

A recent study conducted in Romania (Herțeliu, 2022) refers to the dropout rate in Romanian higher education, the authors using data from the Unique Enrollment Register of Romanian Universities, and which places the field of philosophy in the first place, with a percentage of 64, 1% of students have enrolled in this field and have dropped out of undergraduate studies in the first five years. The conclusion of the study also indirectly shows the lack of perspective faced by students in the field of philosophy, along with other causes that contribute to this "shameful" result of dropping out of the Romanian university environment. The approach to professionalization becomes a necessary and opportune step, which brings a serious motivation to those who are interested in studying and applying philosophy, in the format of the new occupation outlined in Romania, which will implicitly reduce the dropout rate mentioned.

Conclusions

Finally, I review the steps taken in the recognition and regulation of a profession, as defined in previous studies (Hațegan, 2018, 2019b, 2021), by starting in Romania a master training program, which must be completed by other postgraduate training programs, that can be successfully developed by Romanian universities. Another stage already completed is the establishment of a strong professional association, concerned with the promotion and recognition of a new profession, but also with its regulation in the next stage, represented by the establishment of a national institution to oversee the newly established profession, by organizing training continuous professionalism, the implementation of a unitary training standard, and the implementation of a code of ethics, opposable to all practitioners in counseling and philosophical practice. These actions is presented in the form of a diagram, which indicates the steps taken and how they were followed in Romania.

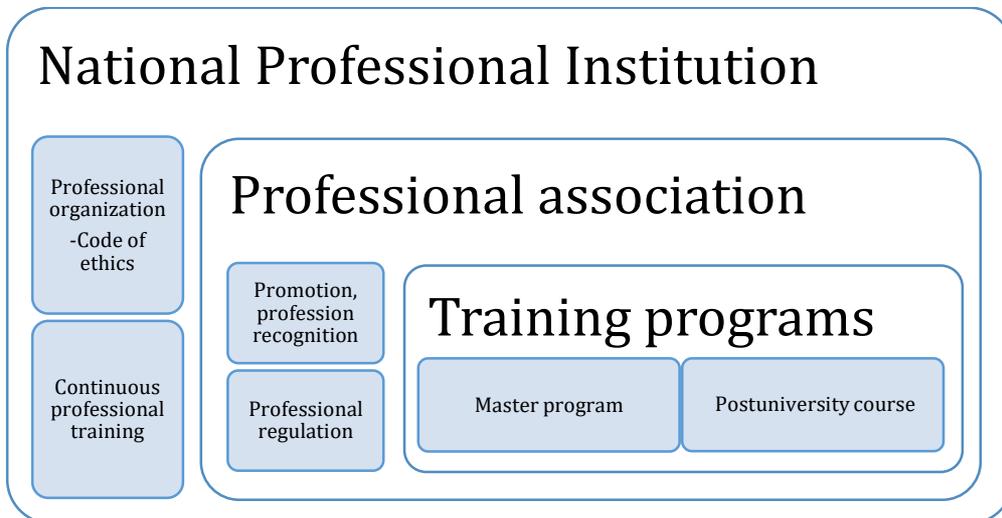


Fig. no.1 The steps for a new profession (author version)

The philosophical counselor is a new occupation that will prove its necessity permanently, for a very long time, as its origins come from the antiquity of mankind, along with the philosophical practices that have been passed down to the present day. In this context, Seneca's encouragement to Lucilius, from letter 48 (Seneca, 2013, 178) becomes more current, in the sense of seeking "the good advice" of philosophy, and also, to stay away from "the subtleties of philosophers" to find a "clear and simple language" (p.180).

From the dynamics of contemporary society there is a real orientation towards various forms of consulting and counseling, and the occupation of philosophical counselor supports this target, manifested in the form of a service provided by a specialist. The practitioner applies specific procedures to practice and philosophical counseling for persons, groups of people or organizations, and use the specific tools from philosophy, while distinguishing itself from any other occupation currently recognized, such as that of philosopher or philosophical researcher.

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