



POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS FOR MODERNIZATION AND COMPUTERIZATION OF OWN PREVENTIVE FINANCIAL CONTROL IN THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEFENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

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The own preventive financial control is also carried out in entities of the Ministry of National Defence based on a customized normative framework, starting from the one established for all public institutions. This normative framework that applies in the army must be updated with the new normative acts adopted at national level (we have in mind OMPF no. 103/2019, Law no. 133/2021 and OMF no. 555/2021), which bring important elements of novelty, especially regarding the integrity of the person designated to exercise the activity of preventive financial control and the performance of the own preventive financial control in electronic form. The exercise of preventive financial control in electronic form was introduced this year by a separate normative act (OMF no. 555/2021), following the Coronavirus pandemic's outburst in 2020 (which is carrying on in 2021) and obliges public institutions to adopt specific methodological rules for application, in addition to the general framework configured by this regulation. In order to support these provisions, we have set out in this article certain solutions that can be considered by military entities in the process of setting up the own procedures for conducting preventive financial control in electronic format.

Keywords: control; own preventive financial control; preventive financial control in electronic form; guide for evaluating the internal control system in public entities; project; expert system; DMS (Document Management System).

Defining elements regarding the organization and exercise of the own preventive financial control in entities of the Ministry of National Defence and new updating requirements

The organization of the own preventive financial control in entities of the Ministry of National Defence is not only a very important and vital mission for the protection of material and financial resources allocated and used by these structures, but also a legal obligation, configured by specific regulations.

The normative acts, general and specific, that regulate this activity in the army units are OMPF no. 923/2014¹ for the approval of the General Methodological Norms regarding the exercise of preventive financial control and of the Specific Code of professional norms for the persons carrying out the own preventive financial control activity, OMPF no. 103/2019² on amending and supplementing the Order of the Minister of Public Finance no. 923/2014 and Order of the Minister of

National Defence (OMND) no. M.19/03.02.2018³ for the modification of the Order M.120/19.11.2014 for the approval of the specific methodological Norms regarding the organization and exercise of the own preventive financial control in the Ministry of National Defence.

Another normative act that was recently adopted and which also refers to preventive financial control is Law no. 133/2021⁴. The important modifications and completions regarding the own preventive financial control brought by this normative act refer to two aspects: the integrity of the person designated to exercise the activity of preventive financial control; exercising the own preventive financial control in electronic form.

In the same period, another recent regulation that fundamentally changes the philosophy of the own preventive financial control is the Order of the Minister of Finance (OMF) no. 555/2021⁵, regulation that is directly related to the issue of our article.

The provisions of this order refer to: a) the exercise of the own preventive financial control in electronic format; b) the possibility to apply the own preventive financial control visa on all copies of the operation; c) completing the Register regarding

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the operations presented at the preventive financial control visa in fully handwritten, fully electronic or combined form and archiving/keeping for a period of 10 years; d) establishing the electronic circuit for signing, endorsement, certification, approval and archiving, approved by an internal procedure, which allows audits/verifications/controls to be performed at any time and contains at least: the transmission methods, the actual circuit of documents, the exact specification of the electronic communication channel, etc.

Returning to the current normative act in the army (OMND no. M.19/03.02.2018) regarding the own preventive financial control, in it we find inserted the following fundamental aspects of this activity: 1) the specific framework of operations subject to the own preventive financial control in the Ministry of National Defence; 2) the operational procedure regarding the circulation schedule of the documents subject to the preventive financial control⁶; 3) the model of the document used for establishing the specialized compartments in which the operations subject to the own preventive financial control are initiated and carried out; 4) the model of the document used for establishing the persons with attributions and responsibilities in initiating and carrying out the operations subject to the own preventive financial control⁷; 5) the procedure for appointing the persons who exercise, by visa, the own preventive financial control at the level of tertiary, secondary and main authorizing officers; 6) the specific methodological norms for the establishment of the central database of the persons appointed to exercise the own preventive financial control in the Ministry of National Defence; 7) specific methodological norms for the suspension, change or dismissal of the persons who exercise, by visa, the own preventive financial control at the level of tertiary, secondary or main authorizing officers; 8) specific methodological norms for updating the central database of persons appointed to exercise the own preventive financial control in the Ministry of National Defence; 9) general methodological norms regarding the exercise of preventive financial control and the specific Code of professional norms for persons carrying out the own preventive financial control activity; 10) specific methodological norms for the "Record sheet of personal seals for own preventive financial control"; 11) specific methodological

norms regarding the register for the operations presented at the own preventive financial control visa; 12) methodological norms that are updated by the General Financial-Accounting Directorate, with the approval of the Ministry of Public Finance for exercising the own preventive financial control visa in electronic system; 13) the procedure for going through the checklist specific to the operations received at the visa; 14) how to resolve visa refusal situations; 15) evaluation of the activity of the persons exercising the own preventive financial control.

In order to evaluate the activity of the persons exercising the own preventive financial control at the level of the main authorizing officer, the General Financial-Accounting Directorate sends to the Ministry of Public Finance – Central Unit for Harmonization of Financial Management and Control Systems (CUHFMCS)⁸, in order to issue the agreement, the following documents: a) the proposal of the main authorizing officer regarding the evaluation of the designated person with the exercise the own preventive financial control for the respective year; b) copy of the report/evaluation sheet of the individual professional performances for each person for whom the agreement is requested, for the respective year, from which to result the specific objectives and performance indicators for the own preventive financial control activity; c) the number of verified operations and their value; d) extracts from the reports of the internal public audit and of the Court of Accounts, where applicable, regarding the own preventive financial control activity⁹.

The Court of Accounts of Romania has, in turn, a guide for evaluating the internal control system in public entities¹⁰, in which an important place is occupied by the own preventive financial control. In this sense, this supreme audit body, when evaluating the own preventive financial control, uses a checklist regarding the organization and functioning of the own preventive financial control (OPFC), which we present in Table no. 1.

Very important in this normative act is the reporting system regarding the own preventive financial control. All authorizing officers have the obligation to draw up quarterly reports on the own preventive financial control activity, which include the statistical situation of operations subject to preventive financial control and a summary of



Table no. 1
CHECKLIST ON THE ORGANIZATION AND OPERATION OF THE OPFC

No.	Questions	Yes	No	Observations
1	Has the management of the public entity issued the decision/order appointing the persons exercising the OPFC?			
2	The drafting of the order was carried out in accordance with annex no. 2 of OMPF no. 522/2003?			
3.	Has the appointment, change or dismissal of the persons in charge of the exercise of the OPFC been carried out with the consent of the hierarchically superior institution?			
4.	Has the evaluation of the activity of the person exercising the OPFC been carried out with the consent of the public entity that approved the appointment?			
5.	In the case of public entities provided in point 22 of OMPF no. 522/2003, have specific norms been elaborated by OPFC?			
6.	Were these rules targeted by the Ministry of Public Finance?			
7.	Have personal seals been made for persons authorized to exercise the OPFC?			
8.	Is there a Register on the operations provided for in the OPFC visa?			
9.	Are the draft operations submitted under the OPFC visa accompanied by appropriate supporting documents prepared by the specialized departments within the entity?			
10.	Are these documents certified in terms of reality, regularity and legality by the heads of the specialized departments within the entity?			
11.	Is there a document circuit chart?			
12.	Have all the projects of operations to which the OPFC visa was granted been highlighted in the "Register on the operations presented under the OPFC visa"?			
13.	They were drawn up and sent to the higher hierarchical body/M.P.F. the quarterly reports on the activity of OPFC, in accordance with points 12.4 and 12.5 of OMPF no. 522/2003?			
14.	Have checklists drawn up detailing the objectives of the audit for each operation within the specific framework of the entity?			

Source: *Guide for evaluating the internal control system in public entities*, Court of Accounts, Bucharest, 2011, p. 50.

the reasons on which the visa refusals were based, during the reported period, completed according to the model contained in a separate annex to the specific methodological norms.

The General Financial-Accounting Directorate of the Ministry of National Defence prepares reports for its own activity and centralizes the reports received from the secondary and tertiary authorizing officers from direct financing.

The reports are sent to the Ministry of Public Finance – Central Unit for Harmonization of Financial Management and Control Systems (CUHFMCS) within the deadlines set by it for the quarterly and annual financial statements provided by law.

From the comparative analysis between OMND no. M 19/03.02.2018 and the latest normative acts adopted at higher levels of this order in the field of own preventive financial control (we consider OMPF no. 103/2019, Law no. 133/2021 and OMF

no. 555/2021) it results that the regulation specific for the army listed above is not updated and does not include the changes brought by the three normative acts, which must be resolved in the next period, as soon as possible.

From the whole current issue of the own preventive financial control in the army, in the second part of this article we focused only on the indication of possible solutions for the implementation in the army entities of a preventive financial control system in electronic system, according to requirements of OMF no. 555/2021.

Possible solutions for carrying out the own preventive financial control in electronic system in the Ministry of National Defence in the context of the new regulations adopted as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic

From the above presented issues on the organization of the own preventive financial control



in the Ministry of National Defence and from the strategy of developing public internal financial control configured by recent regulations in force, we detached, as a possible action to be configured in the future to achieve an integrated computer system for the exercise of internal/managerial control and own preventive financial control in electronic system, a system that can be found in the internal procedures that must be established by the army entities.

We will present some essential aspects that computer scientists who would be involved in the development of such an integrated computer system should take into account when designing such a system. We will refer to the proposals that an IT professional should consider when designing an integrated IT system, only for the own preventive financial control.

The expert system that should be introduced for the management of the necessary documents in the process of the own preventive financial control is a traditional one, being able to be based on the internal norms of the military institution, which establishes precise rules for any situation.

In order to achieve such a new integrated computer system, a project competition must be organized and the technical documentation, specifications and the selection competition itself must be carried out.

The proposed IT system must be developed in a modular design, allowing the gradual integration of all IT systems to be developed along the way, using a single database, and component modules will be created at the level of essential activities in the units of the Ministry of Defence involved in preventive financial control activity.

Management information systems are being used more and more widely in Romanian companies. The need to introduce such a system in the units of the Ministry of Defence where preventive financial control is performed, is motivated by the fact that the information must be correct and provided on time, both to management and operational levels, in order to increase the efficiency of the internal financial control activity. In the contemporary world, characterized by dynamism, this is only possible using computational technology.

After finalizing the solution contest, you can actually move on to the design stage. The project will seek to raise the capacity of the Ministry of

Defence on two levels: 1) implementation of an innovative solution, with a friendly interface that provides applications for the daily activities of all units involved in the preventive financial control; 2) adequate training of users.

The project could be composed of two parts: telecommunications infrastructure (workstations, servers, fixed and virtual local and territorial network, intranet, internet) and applications: the document management system.

The basic element of the intended document management system is the paper document, which does not allow close monitoring, nor does it allow users to access these documents *online*.

This application should be designed to replace paper by introducing a new basic e-Document. The system can work with different types of documents from different sources and in different formats. DMS (Document Management System) allows the structures of the Ministry of Defence involved in organizing and conducting preventive financial control to define an optimal internal work cycle and to monitor each document on its path to a specific work cycle.

The electronic archive will allow each user to access via the Internet or Intranet all the documents to which he has access.

DMS (Document Management System) can be an application with a web interface built on the IBM Lotus Notes/Domino platform or other types of platforms suitable for such an application. Using an internal email server, the application can coordinate any activity specific to the Ministry of Defence by managing all documents. The system must also include an electronic archiving module that stores and coordinates issues related to the form and structure of decision documents.

Users will have access via the Internet or intranet to the documents stored in this electronic archive, according to the level of security approved and the right to access certain documents.

The experience gained in other applications implemented in the Ministry of Defence must be used, such as the one used for international missions, in which the army of our country has taken and will take part in the future¹¹.

An additional reason for the design and introduction of such an application is the problems caused by the outburst of CORONAVIRUS pandemic in 2020 (still going on in 2021), which



has generated spatial distance between colleagues and the widespread use of work from home or in the online environment, in order to avoid as much as possible, the direct contact in the work activities in public institutions and the private environment. This new situation determined the Romanian legislator to adopt OMF no. 555/2021.

It is known that, so far, the activity of preventive financial control (own and delegated) involves the movement of documents on them of those applying for PFC visas to persons authorized to grant such visas, circumstances that determine direct contact between the two parties in such activities.

To ensure the use of this application at optimal parameters, general presentations, practical and specialized trainings, round tables for questions and comments, online support for operational and updating issues will be organized.

The implementation plan must go through six stages:

1) *Realization of the activity plan*, stage in which: the system requirements and its architectural structure are established; the technical and functional specifications for the Document Management Application for preventive financial control are created; the foundations of the training plan are laid according to the requirements of those involved; the testing methodology is established and the module for extracting information from the old document storage system is provided;

2) *Customization of applications and completion of network infrastructure*, stage in which: applications are customized according to standards and legislative requirements in the field of preventive financial control and particular requirements of structure and operation of the Ministry of National Defence; the local and virtual network is completed by installing workstations, servers and internet and intranet connection; the actual testing is performed according to the standards in the field of preventive financial control;

3) *Implementation, training and testing*, stage in which: for DMS the pilot implementation is carried out in the departments and structures from the upper echelons and from the units where the preventive financial control is requested; support and assistance in use is provided; the results of the use are tested according to the specifications prepared for the acquisition of the company that designs and implements such an application;

4) *Completion of the implementation, integration of the system and training*, stage in which: the extension of the DMS in all the structures of the Ministry of Defence involved in the organization and development of the preventive financial control is carried out; integrates through interoperability all applications provided to all structures involved; the final training is performed for all users;

5) *Monitoring the system and the guarantee offered by the supplier company*, stage in which the system is supervised during the warranty period offered by the software company.

6) *Types of documents involved in the application for preventive financial control* would be the following: A) Accounting and budgetary documents; B) Public procurement documents; C) Expenditure ordering documents; D) Documents for the concession, rental, transmission, sale and exchange of goods from the patrimony of military units; E) Documents of other operations subject to the own preventive financial control; F) Legal documents; G) Functions held by persons, who are involved in applying for and granting the preventive financial control visa; H) The specialized departments in which the operations subject to the own preventive financial control are initiated and carried out; I) Functions held by persons, who are involved in solving the cases of refusal to grant the preventive financial control visa.

A) Accounting and budgetary documents, constantly updated, according to OMF no. 555/2021 and the specific Methodological Norms from the Order of the Minister of National Defence no. M19/03.02.2018 – documents mentioned in operations and checklists (such as: budgets, requests for opening budget appropriations, budgetary provisions, documents for changing the quarterly allocation of budget appropriations, documents for making credit transfers, budgetary provisions on withdrawal of budget appropriations, formats of accounting documents – invoices, receipts, collection/payment provisions, payment orders, payroll statements, etc., management accounting documents: consumption voucher, shipping notice, receipt and finding of differences; etc.; summary accounting documents: accounting registers – journal register; inventory register; general ledger; monthly balance sheets; balance sheet; cash register; bank journals, etc.);



B) Public procurement documents, permanently updated, according to OMF no. 555/2021 and the specific Methodological Norms from the Order of the Minister of National Defence no. M.19/03.02.2018 – documents mentioned in operations and checklists (such as: public procurement contracts; annual public procurement strategy; annual public procurement programs; public procurement program at project level – in case of projects financed from grants and/or research and development projects, complete award documentation, as published in the SEAP, clarifications to the award documentation, winning bids and clarifications related to the bids, if applicable, Contract/Decision/Financing Order; financing application, financing contract, partnership agreement, etc.);

C) Expenditure ordering documents, permanently updated, according to OMF no. 555/2021 and the specific Methodological Norms from the Order of the Minister of National Defence no. M19/03.02.2018 – documents mentioned in operations and checklists (such as: payment orders regarding public procurement, concession of works or services; contract/subsequent public procurement contract, or order, concession contract for works or services; the document establishing the guarantee of good execution, the document constituting the reception commission, the documents regarding the reception, etc.; payment order for advances granted within the contract for public procurement/concession of works or services, etc.);

D) Documents regarding the concession, rental, transmission, sale and exchange of goods from the patrimony of the military units, permanently updated, according to OMF no. 555/2021 and the specific Methodological Norms from the Order of the Minister of National Defence no. M19/03.02.2018 – documents mentioned in operations and checklists (such as: concession contract for public property – the military unit is the grantor, with the supporting documents; contract for renting public property – the military unit is the holder of the right ownership/administration, with the related supporting documents; works or services concession contract – the military unit is the grantor, with the related supporting documents; etc.);

E) Documents of other operations subject to the own preventive financial control, permanently updated, according to OMF no. 555/2021 and the

specific Methodological Norms from the Order of the Minister of National Defence no. M.19/03.02.2018 – documents mentioned in operations and checklists (such as: contracting strategy for public procurement, with related supporting documents; contracting strategy for the concession of works or services, with related supporting documents; model framework agreement public procurement included in the award documentation, with the related supporting documents, etc.);

F) Legal documents according to OMF no. 555/2021 and the specific Methodological Norms from the Order of the Minister of National Defence no. M19/03.02.2018 – those from the List of normative acts included in the second column of the Specific Framework of operations subject to own preventive financial control, which must be permanently updated;

G) Functions held by persons, who are involved in applying for and granting the preventive financial control visa: The main, secondary and tertiary authorizing officers of the Ministry of National Defence; The heads of the specialized departments from all the units and echelons in which the operations subject to the own preventive financial control are initiated and carried out, as well as the subordinated personnel, with attributions in the administration of material goods or other values; Head of the General Financial-Accounting Directorate of the Ministry of National Defence; The heads of the financial-accounting departments from the categories of forces, central structures, large units and units; Persons designated to exercise preventive financial control (who meet the express requirements of the Specific Code of Professional Norms for persons carrying out their own preventive financial control activity); Administrators and chief accountants of economic operators under the coordination of the Ministry of National Defence; The heads of the legal/similar departments, for the operations that are approved, according to the law, by the legal, financial departments before being subjected to the own preventive control.

We configured in Figure 1 the mechanism for granting the preventive financial control visa in entities of the Ministry of National Defence in electronic system.

H) The specialized departments in which the operations subject to the own preventive financial

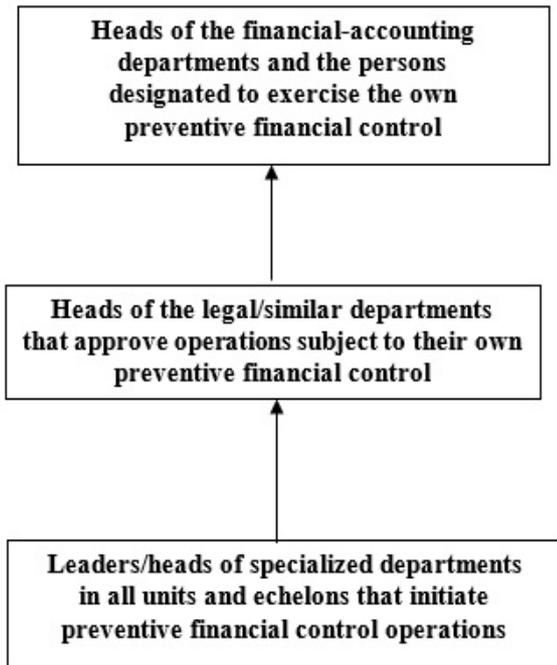


Figure 1 The mechanism for granting the preventive financial control visa

Source: Own realization according to the specific *Methodological Norms of the Order of the Minister of National Defence no. M 19/03.02.2018 and OMF no. 555/2021.*

control are initiated and carried out: a) the microstructures of the military unit – compartments, offices, sections, services or other structures

with attributions in initiating and carrying out operations subject to the own preventive financial control; b) the microstructures from the military units financially insured by the military unit at the level of which the own preventive financial control is organized; c) the microstructures from the military units with attributions in initiating and carrying out some operations which, according to the law, are approved by the hierarchically superior credit officers and are subject to the own preventive financial control.

I) Functions held by persons, who are involved in solving the cases of refusal to grant the preventive financial control visa: the persons designated to grant the preventive financial control visa who refused to grant the visa; the authorizing officer where the case of refusal to grant the preventive financial control visa appeared; the internal public audit department in charge of which the military unit where the visa refusal case appeared; the delegated controller of the Ministry of Public Finance who is responsible for the Ministry of National Defence; the Court of Accounts of Romania.

We configured below, in Figure 2 the way of solving the visa refusal according to OMF no. 555/2021 and Order of the Minister of National Defence no. M19/03.02.2018.

Of course, these are part of the opinions

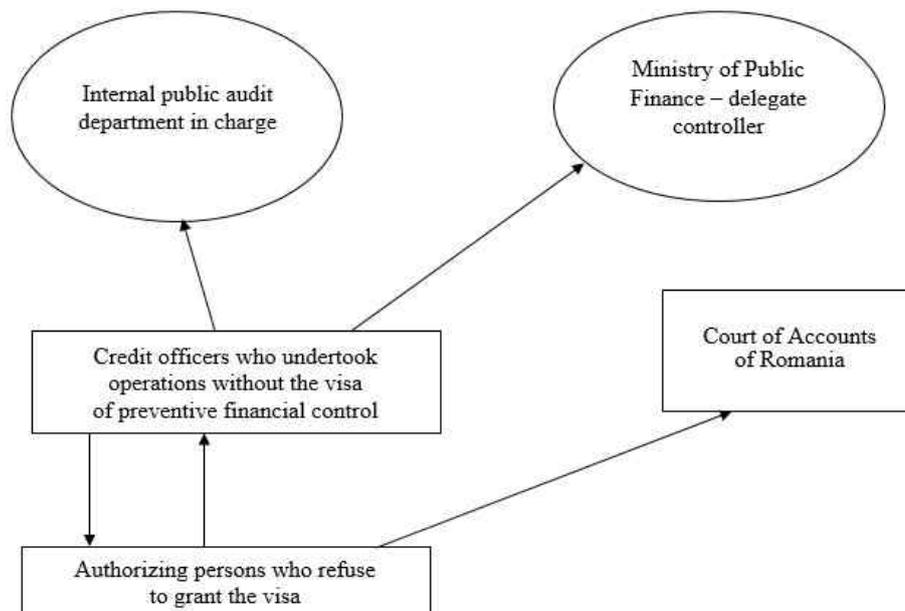


Figure 2 Resolving the visa refusal

Source: Own realization according to the specific *Methodological Norms of the Order of the Minister of National Defence no. M 19/03.02.2018 and OMF no. 555/2021.*

expressed by us, from the position of professionals in the financial-accounting field, who will have to perform preventive financial control in electronic system, without claiming that we have exhausted the whole issue and the many particular situations that may appear in the practice of exercising this activity of great responsibility in units of the Ministry of National Defence in the new system imposed by the CORONAVIRUS pandemic through OMF no. 555/2021.

Conclusions

The own preventive financial control is also carried out in entities of the Ministry of National Defence based on a customized normative framework, starting from the one established for all public institutions and includes a set of methods for its implementation.

This set of methods brings together in a logical, coherent manner from the specific framework of the operations subject to the own preventive financial control, continuing with the circulation schedule of the documents verified in this control, the specialized organizational departments/entities in which the operations subject to this control are initiated and carried out and ending with the persons with attributions and responsibilities in carrying out and certifying the operations subject to their own preventive financial control.

Following an analysis of the content of the normative act in force for the army entities (OMND no. M 19/03.02.2018) and the last ones in force for all public institutions in our country (OMPF no. 103/2019, Law no. 133/2021 and OMF No. 555/2021), we concluded that the one specific to the army to be updated quickly with the novelty elements included in these normative acts adopted in 2019 and 2021, especially regarding the issuance of the own financial control visa in electronic system.

The Coronavirus pandemic has determined the Romanian legislator (Ministry of Public Finance) to adopt a special regulation for granting the preventive financial control visa in electronic system, and we suggested some ideas for a such a system, which can be taken over in their own procedures to be adopted by public institutions, according to this new regulation adopted by the Minister of Public Finance.

NOTES:

1 *** *Official Gazette of Romania*, Part I, no. 28/15.01.2016.

2 *** *Official Gazette of Romania*, Part I, no. 87/04.02.2019.

3 *** *Official Gazette of Romania*, Part I, no. 214 bis/09.03.2018.

4 It refers to the amendment and completion of Government Ordinance no. 119/1999 on internal/managerial control and preventive financial control, published in the *Official Gazette of Romania*, Part I, no. 501/13.05.2021.

5 It refers to the amendment and completion of Annex no. 1 the O.M.P.F. no. 923/2014 for the approval of the General Methodological Norms regarding the exercise of preventive financial control and of the Specific Code of professional norms for the persons carrying out the own preventive financial control activity, published in the *Official Gazette of Romania*, Part I, no. 515 of 18.05.2021.

6 *Methodological Norms of the Order of the Minister of National Defence no. M 19/03.02.2018*, Subchapter 5.2. – "Document circulation schedule", Chapter B – "Organization of the own preventive financial control".

7 *Methodological Norms of the Order of the Minister of National Defence no. M 19/03.02.2018*, Subchapter 5.4. – "Persons with attributions and responsibilities in initiating and carrying out operations subject to the own preventive financial control", Chapter B – "Organization of the own preventive financial control".

8 This structure operates at the level of the directorate-general under the secretary general of the ministry.

9 *Methodological Norms of the Order of the Minister of National Defence no. M 19/03.02.2018*, Chapter D – "Evaluation of the activity of the person exercising own preventive financial control".

10 www.curteadeconturi.ro, accessed on 25.06.2021.

11 Col.Assoc.Prof.Ec.Eng Popa N. Vasile N., PhD, „Realizarea unui sistem informatic integrat pentru gestionarea documentelor unităților ministerului apărării implicate în misiuni internaționale”, Scientific Communication Session, "Carol I" National Defence University, *Managementul integrat al resurselor de apărare. Necesitate, actualitate, perspective*, Braşov, 14 december 2007.

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activity, Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, no. 515, of 18.05.2021.

*** OMPF no. 103/2019 on amending and supplementing the Order of the Minister of Public Finance no. 923/2014 for the approval of the General Methodological Norms regarding the exercise of preventive financial control and of the Specific Code of professional norms for the persons carrying out their own preventive financial control activity, Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, no. 87/04.02.2019.

*** Order of the Minister of National Defence no. M 19/03.02.2018 for the modification of the Order M 120/19.11.2014 for the approval of the specific methodological Norms regarding the organization and exercise of its own preventive financial control in the Ministry of National Defence, Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, no. 214 bis/09.03.2018.

*** OMPF no. 923/2014 for the approval of the General Methodological Norms regarding the exercise of preventive financial control and of the Specific Code of professional norms for the persons carrying out their own preventive financial control activity, Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, no. 28/15.01.2016.

*** Ghid de evaluare a sistemului de control intern în entitățile publice, Romanian Court of Accounts, Bucharest, 2011, www.curteadeconturi.ro

Col.Assoc.Prof.Ec.Eng.Popa N. Vasile N., PhD, „Realizarea unui sistem informatic integrat pentru gestionarea documentelor unităților Ministerului Apărării implicate în misiuni internaționale”, Session of scientific communications *Managementul integrat al resurselor de apărare. Necesitate, actualitate, perspective*, "Carol I" National Defence University, Braşov, 14 december 2007.