PLAGIARISM IN PH.D. THESES. A CASE STUDY OF MILITARY UNIVERSITIES IN ROMANIA

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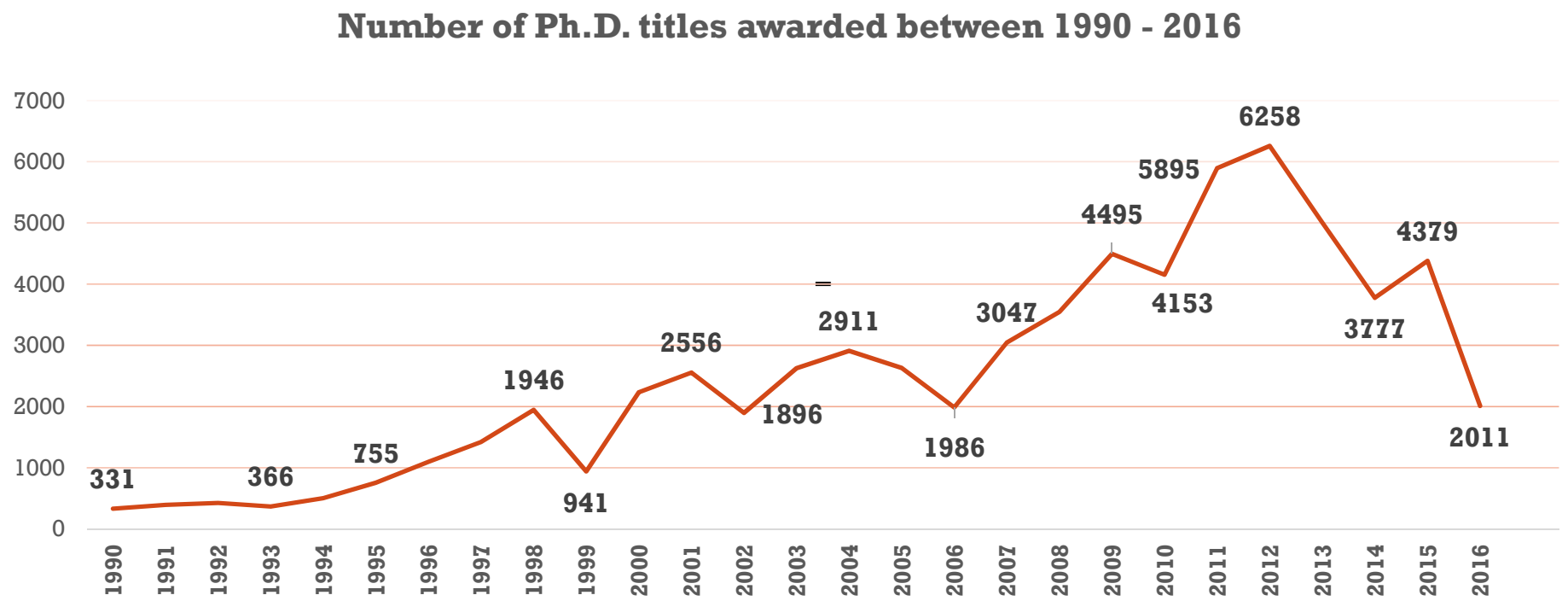
OUTLINE OF PRESENTATION

- Plagiarism in the Ph.D. theses in military universities.
- The Romanian military universities set up doctoral domains unique in the world: Public Order and National Security and Intelligence and National Security.
- The Ph.D. titles in Military Science became very attractive for politicians, civil servants, prosecutors, judges, police officers, servicemen.
- 14,63% (12 from 82) of the Ph.D. theses from the National Intelligence Academy within the Romanian Intelligent Service are plagiarized.
- The plagiarism in the military universities is a large scale phenomenon rather than a hazard discovery.

DOCTORAL STUDIES IN ROMANIA



EXPLANATIONS

- Between 1900 and 1989 have been awarded 1.500 Ph.D. titles.
- Between 1990 and 2016 have been awarded 67.583 Ph.D. titles.
- Explanations of the interest:

  - - the limitations imposed by the communist system disappeared;
  - - private universities have been set up;
  - - many universities set up new doctoral schools;
  - - 15% salary increase for an employee from the public system since 1999;
  - - other material advantages (EU grants, general, lawyer without an exam);
  - - advancement in administrative career or public legitimacy.

PLAGIARISM OVERVIEW

- Before 2012 the question of academic plagiarism was almost nonexistent.
- The former PM of Romania, Victor Ponta, was exposed by *Nature Magazine*.
  - **Tipping point – 2015**
- The interim PM, Gabriel Oprea, was exposed as plagiarist.
- He was Ph.D. supervisor and almost all his doctoral students plagiarized.
- Nine cases of plagiarism in Ph.D. theses were exposed by media in six months.
- Public opinion started to understand the abstract matter of plagiarism.
- Favorite areas for plagiarism: law, economics, theology, medicine, military studies.

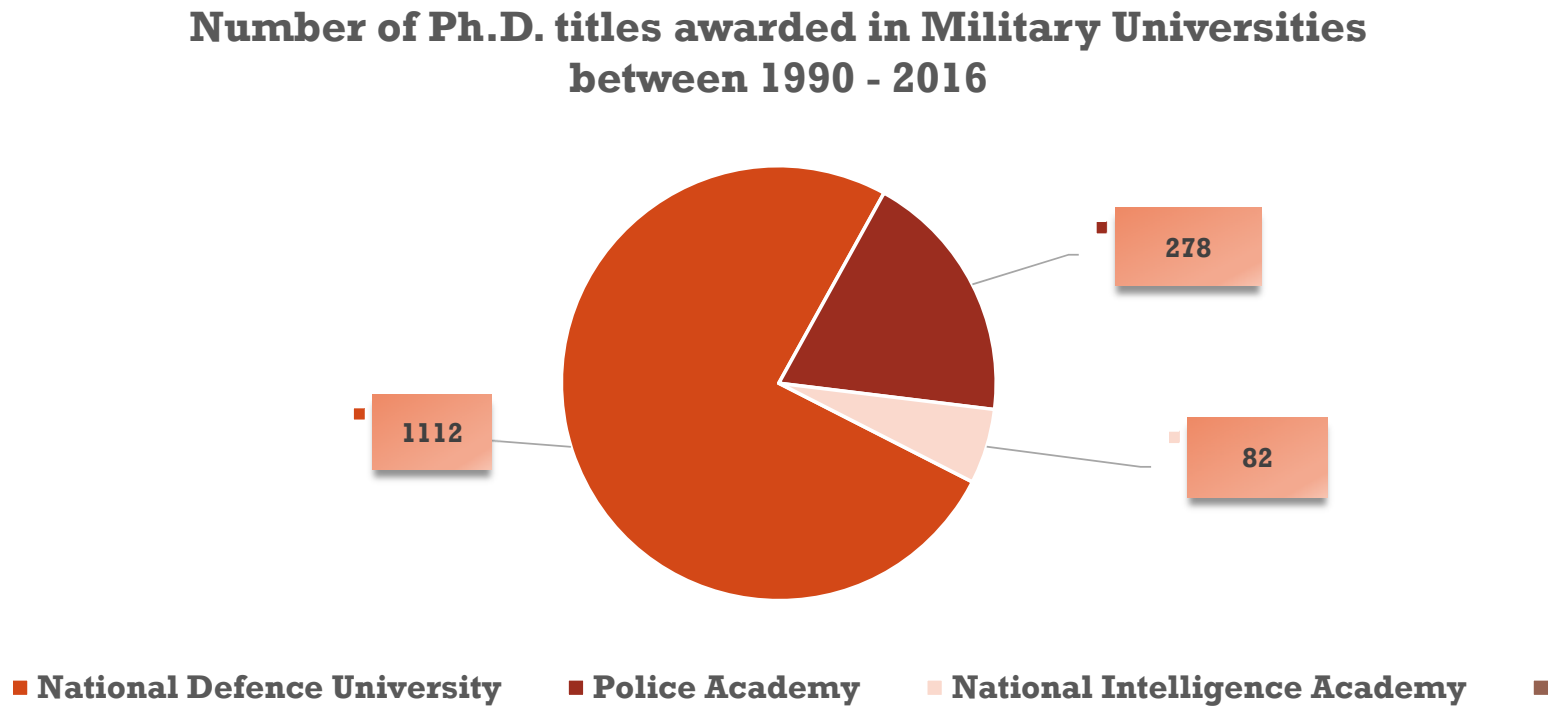
THE MILITARY UNIVERSITIES

- **The National Defense Academy "Carol I", subordinated to the Minister of Defense**
- Was established in 1889.
- The first doctoral program started in 1968. Between 1968–1989 were granted 54 Ph.D. titles.

- **The Police Academy, subordinated to the Minister of Interior**
- Was established in 1949 as a communist Militia Officers School.
- First doctoral program - in 1990, the second one in 2002 Public Order and National Security.

- **The National Intelligence Academy, subordinated to the Romanian Intelligence Service**
- Was established in 1992.
- The first doctoral program started in 2007.

THE MILITARY UNIVERSITIES



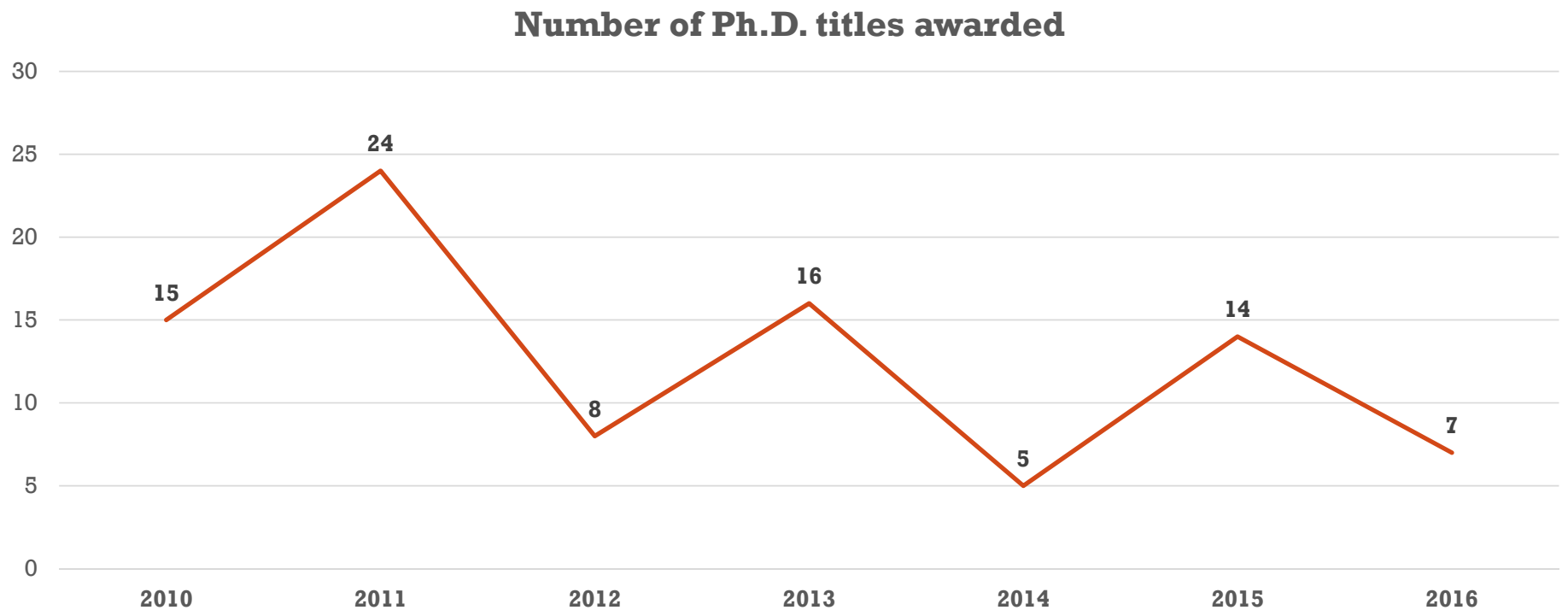
PLAGIARISM CASES

- The military universities set up doctoral domains unique in the world: Public Order and National Security (2002) and Intelligence and National Security (2007).
- The common factor: Gabriel Oprea, former Vice PM and interim PM.
- Oprea (Ph.D. in law) – became professor at National Defense Academy, became the first Ph.D. supervisor in Public Order and National Security at Police Academy and set up the Doctoral School of National Intelligence Academy.
- Oprea supervised 22 Ph.D. theses, 9 in Public Order and National Security at Police Academy and 13 in Intelligence and National Security at the National Intelligence Academy.
- Oprea plagiarized his Ph.D. thesis.
- 9 Ph.D. theses (at least) supervised by him were also plagiarized.

PLAGIARISM CASES

- Gabriel Oprea was interim PM.
- The Ph.D. students supervised by him were:
- - the Deputy General Attorney;
- - the Deputy Chief of Romanian Police;
- - a former Ministry of Defense;
- - the Mayor of Second District of Bucharest;
- - his niece;
- - his personal secretary.

NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ACADEMY (SRI)

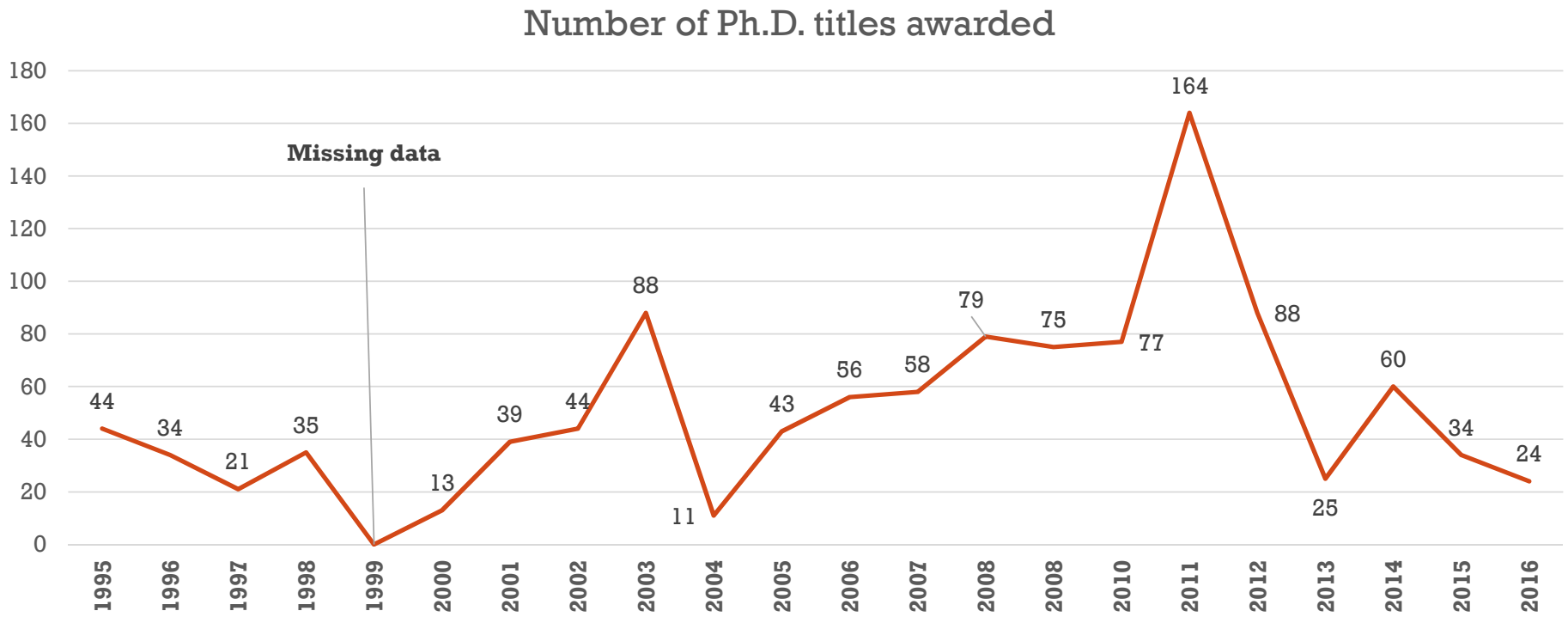


BOGDAN LICU CASE

- **Deputy General Attorney**

- Become Ph.D. at National Intelligence Academy of the Romanian Intelligence Service under Oprea's supervision.
- More than half of his thesis was plagiarized.
- Content copied without source indication and quotation marks.
- The paper don't has a research part.
- Copy-paste plagiarism type.
- All plagiarism sources were available online.
- Sources of plagiarism: books, university courses, scientific articles, news articles.

NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY

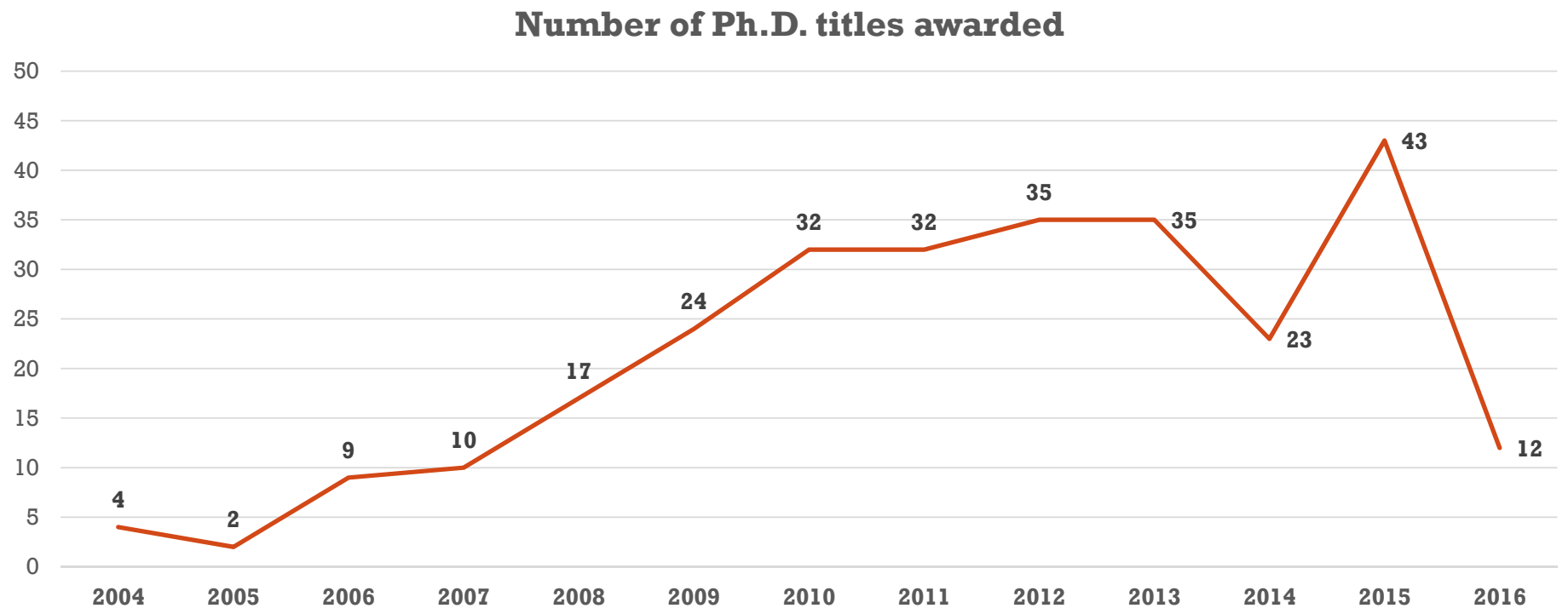


PETRE TOBA CASE

- **Minister of Interior**

- Become Ph.D. at National Defense University.
- More than half of his thesis was plagiarized.
- Content copied without source indication and quotation marks.
- The paper don't has a research part.
- Copy-paste plagiarism type.
- Sources of plagiarism: **two Ph.D. theses**, books, university courses, scientific articles, news articles.
- All plagiarism sources were available online.

POLICE ACADEMY (MI)



ROBERT NEGOITA CASE

- **Mayor of 3rd District in Bucharest**

- Become Ph.D. at Police Academy of the Ministry of Interior.
- The entire thesis was plagiarized.
- Content copied without source indication and quotation marks.
- The paper don't has a research part.
- Copy-paste plagiarism type.
- All plagiarism sources were available online.
- Sources of plagiarism: books, university courses, scientific articles, news articles.

COMMON ISSUES

- The military universities accepted people with poor academic background, but with high public positions.
- Diploma hunters (scientific legitimization). The military universities accepted as doctoral students politicians, civil servants, prosecutors or judges.
- Doctorates were made when these people occupied public positions.
- The public sustaining were grandiose ceremonies.
- Military universities are prone to plagiarism because are hermetic.
  - **Explanations**
- **Doctoral supervisors** – many former leading officers became Ph.D. supervisors.
- **Arranged committee** - dozens of identical committees, exclusively from the three universities.

CAUSES OF THE PHENOMENON

- **Material benefits and career advancement**
- 15% salary increase for public system. In the Minister of Defense – 911 employees received 1,2 million euros in the last two years.
- Can become general in the Ministers of Defense or Interior without an exam.
- **Poor academic standards**
- Nonexistent anti-plagiarism policies.
- Ethical committees to save appearances.
- **Educational control policies**
- Political subordination of education.
- Lack of independent control bodies.

RESPONSES

- **The Society's Responses**

- The subject entered on public agenda by the notoriety of the characters.
- The subject of plagiarism has become of interest to society.
- Debates, conferences, new investigations of journalists.

- **Political Class Responses**

- Attempts to change legislation - the possibility of giving up the Ph.D. title.
- The control commissions have been changed.
- The public access to doctoral theses has been limited or forbidden.
- The political control of the universities through public funding.

CONCLUSIONS

- The closed system of military universities allowed the development of a parallel doctoral system with the civilian one.
- We are in a state of awareness. Unconsolidated democracy, lack of control levers.
- Military universities are protected by the force institutions to whom they are subordinate. Lack of transparency, hermetic environment.
- Political protection. Those who are able to do something (Ministry of Education, supervising committees, universities) do nothing.
- A co-interested relationship between public officials and politicians with Ph.D. and academics. The biased attitude of the academic environment.
- **Romania needs a Mechanism for Cooperation and Verification (CVM) for Ph.D. as a safeguard measure from the European Commission, because the Romanian Ph.D. Diplomas are recognized and have effects at European level.**

THANK YOU!