ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE – A CHALLENGE FOR PUBLIC MANAGEMENT? ROMANIA VERSUS NORWAY

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Abstract
The development of public and private organizations is an irreversible process, but the pace at which it unfolds is different. While private organizations seek solutions to increase profit, public organizations, in the absence of a competitive environment, carry out their activity with less pressure on operating costs and with a slight passivity in the implementation of new reforms or technologies. Public managers are facing new technological challenges, with the development of artificial intelligence systems. The article aimed to conduct a comparative analysis regarding the implementation and intention to implement artificial intelligence tools in cities-municipalities in Romania versus those in Norway. The study of specialized literature highlighted the fact that in Norway there are extensive debates on the subject of the adoption of a legislative framework regarding the use of artificial intelligence in public institutions, while in Romania these are just beginning to take shape. The analysis carried out showed that in Norway, at the level of public organizations, from the perspective of the structural configuration, there are IT departments with a high number of employees. In Romanian municipalities, the number of workers with IT duties is under 10 civil servants, even if the number of employees in the institution exceeds in some situations over 800 or 1000. Of the nine municipalities in Romania analysed, in two of them, Cluj Napoca and Galați, virtual assistant solutions, called virtual civil servants chatbots, were implemented. In the context of the implementation of artificial intelligence, public management and all the functions it performs will need to be fundamentally rethought.
Keywords: Artificial intelligence, Public management, Municipalities, Romania, Norway.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.24818/beman/2025.S.I.5-16

1. INTRODUCTION

The accelerated development of technology that brings with it the implementation of artificial intelligence tools is viewed as an opportunity for managers in private organizations and with some scepticism by managers of public organizations that do not face the competition specific to the private environment.

Management personnel in public organizations are constrained in their decision-making by numerous factors, including: legislation, own or allocated budgets, the existing IT infrastructure in the institution, the level of knowledge held by subordinates, the non-repetitive activities they face, or the bureaucratic process aimed at assuming responsibility by obtaining multiple signatures on a single document.

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The article analyses municipalities in Romania and Norway from the perspective of the implementation or expectations of the implementation of artificial intelligence.

Romania and Norway are states with different forms of government. Romania is a semi-presidential republic, with executive power vested in the president and prime minister. Norway is a constitutional monarchy, with executive power vested in the Crown Council (prime minister and cabinet members).

Romania has an administrative system specific to Central/Eastern/South-Eastern European states, considered to be a legacy of socialist administration, with a centralized leadership style (Funck & Karlsson, 2020), while the Norwegian administrative system is a Nordic type, being characterized by a high degree of transparency. The leadership style of the public institutions is almost unitary, but decentralized, with a strong decision-making representation at the local level.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Artificial Intelligence is considered a key development sector, a strategic priority by the European Union (Peter et al., 2025). According to a study conducted by specialists from the European Parliament (2020), artificial intelligence (AI) represents "the ability of a machine to imitate human functions, such as reasoning, learning, planning and creativity".

Regarding AI, Boucher (2020, p. VI) believes that it is represented by: "systems that exhibit intelligent behaviour by analysing environment surrounding and taking measures – with a certain degree of autonomy – to achieve specific objectives". In the National Strategy in the field of artificial intelligence 2024 – 2027, the Romanian Authority for digitization specified the following idea: "Artificial intelligence (AI) refers to systems that exhibit intelligent behaviours by analysing their environment and take measures - with a certain degree of autonomy – to reach specific objectives". Both the author Boucher (2020) and the group of experts who developed the National Strategy in the field of artificial intelligence 2024 – 2027 for Romania have obviously similar definitions of the concept of artificial intelligence.

Mikalef, Fjortoft, and Torvatn (2019) believe that artificial intelligence (AI) can be defined as a set of technologies that simulate human cognitive processes, including reasoning, learning, and self-correction.

According to the description mentioned on the website https://www.europarl.europa.eu, artificial intelligence (AI) is identified in two distinct forms: software (virtual assistants, image analysis software, search engines, voice and facial recognition systems) and embedded AI: robots, autonomous cars, drones, etc.

The use of artificial intelligence is possible in various fields of activity such as: commerce - making personalized shopping recommendations for internet users, using virtual assistants for various activities,

software that performs translations, subtitles, software for saving energy or for managing traffic (traffic lights) in cities (European Parliament, 2020).

Prokopowicz (2025, p.8) presented the use of AI in the field of education and scientific research: intelligent systems that are designed to simulate the role of a teacher, adapting the content and guidance to the current needs of the students. These intelligent systems can diagnose the user's knowledge level, can identify gaps in understanding and can offer personalized exercises and explanations. Educational chatbots based on natural language processing (NLP) algorithms, allow interaction in the form of a dialogue with the student, answering questions, explaining problems and having a conversation in real time. According to the website www.b-itserv.com, a chatbot is an automated program that interacts with visitors by text messages or vowels. This maybe be integrated on websites, Facebook Messenger, Instagram or WhatsApp and offers immediate answers, anytime, to the person who interrogate them.

Other areas in which AI is used, according to the website https://www.europarl.europa.eu, are: railway or navigation safety, cybersecurity, combating disinformation, healthcare, industrial production, food and agriculture, public administration and emergency services. It is stated that the financial activities in a public organization, being repetitive, are suitable for optimization through artificial intelligence.

So, humanity is in a new stage of its existence. Technological challenges are important and bring radical changes in both the private and public sectors.

To implement AI within public organizations, it is necessary to meet several conditions, including: updating the legislative framework, allocating a consistent budget for this activity, preparing an IT infrastructure and training specialized employees to provide support for other categories of employees in the institution in the implementation of these technologies.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research used the method of document analysis and comparison. The starting points were the territorial organization of the two states Romania and Norway, the strategies adopted by the Romanian and Norwegian Governments for the implementation of artificial intelligence in the public sector, as well as the existing legislation in the field of AI. Information posted on the websites of public organizations in Romania and Norway was analysed to complete the present research.

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4. STUDY RESULTS

4.1 Romania

In Romania, according to the website of the Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration, on January 1, 2024, there were 3,228 administrative-territorial units, structured as follows: 41 county councils, 6 sectors, 103 municipalities, 216 cities and 2,862 communes.

These administrative-territorial units provide public services for Romanian citizens, totalling a population of over 19 million people, on a country area of 238,398 km².

TABLE 1. SITUATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE-TERRITORIAL UNITS IN ROMANIA ACCORDING TO POPULATION SIZE

Groups in depending on the population as of 01.01.2024	No. of ATUs within group					
	Total ATU	Communes	Cities	Municipalities	Sectors	County Councils
1 (the much 1,500)	**438**	438				
2 (1,501-3,000)	**1,149**	1,142	7			
3 (3,001-5,000)	**836**	813	23			
4 (5,001-10,000)	**502**	413	89			
5 (10,001-20,000)	**147**	50	81	16		
6 (20,001-50,000)	**65**	5	16	44		
7 (50,001-100,000)	**20**	1		19		
8 (100,001-200,000)	**14**			14		
9 (200,001-400,000)	**31**			9	5	17
Over 400,000	**26**			1	1	24
Total	**3,228**	**2,862**	**216**	**103**	**6**	**41**

Source: https://www.mdlpa.ro/pages/politicifiscalesibugetarelocale

As can be seen from Table 1, in Romania there are municipalities with between 200,000 and 400,000 inhabitants, but also municipalities with a number between 10,000 and 20,000 inhabitants. There are also very large discrepancies at the level of communes, 438 communes have less than 1,500 inhabitants, and large communes have a number between 20,000 - 50,000 inhabitants or even over 50,000 inhabitants. Large communes have developed as a result of being located in the metropolitan area of the county seat municipalities or the capital.

In the analysis carried out, a number of 9 large municipalities in Romania were selected by the number of employees in the institution, as well as by the number of civil servants within the IT department.

In Romania, the Administrative Code approved by Government Emergency Ordinance no. 57 of 2019, (Annex 5 – List of public positions), provides for the job position a specific position with the title: expert in technology of information and telecommunications.

On the websites of the administrative-territorial units (ATU) – municipalities, the number of total positions (dignitaries, civil servants and contractual personnel) can be identified, as provided in the organizational charts and job descriptions. This information is summarized in Table 2, below.

TABLE 2. NUMBER OF IT POSITIONS – CIVIL SERVANTS, OCCUPIED OUT OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE-TERRITORIAL UNITS (ATU) – MUNICIPALITIES SELECTED FOR RESEARCH – CASE ROMANIA

Municipality	Total number of employees	Total positions IT civil servants	No. of civil servant IT positions filled	No. of inhabitants in the municipality
Arad	649	4	4	172,824
Braşov	336	11	10	284,596
Galati	605	11	4	298,861
Cluj-Napoca	1093	8	8	308,304
Craiova	655	5	5	302,601
IASI	804	10	7	316,343
Oradea	640	8	5	206,614
Suceava	790	11	11	106,138
Timisoara	494	8	7	306,435

Source: processing after https://worldpopulationreview.com/cities/romania/, analyzed ATU websites, www.anfp.gov.ro

The number of positions occupied by civil servants performing duties in the IT field was obtained by processing the data available on the portal www.anfp.gov.ro, open data section. It is to mention that some municipalities such as Galați or Craiova, although they have over 600 employees in the local organizational structure, employ 4, respectively 5 civil servants within the IT department.

From the analysis of the websites for these municipalities, a series of aspects regarding the implementation of artificial intelligence is highlighted.

The Municipality of Arad initiated a meeting with the Arad community in 2021 to carry out the activities of the Intelligent Program Cities Challenge (Arad City Hall, 2025). One of the measures established, according to data on its own website, was the start of the implementation of a conversational Artificial Intelligence tool to improve citizens' interaction with the local administration. The advantage of such a system is that it is available to citizens 24 hours a day, and is also accessible from a mobile phone. From the queries carried out, it emerged that the Arad City Hall website does not yet display the option for citizens to access this artificial intelligence system.

The municipality of Brașov is testing an intelligent traffic light system, which aims to prevent road accidents, changing the colour of the traffic light when detecting a car traveling at a higher speed than the legal limit (Brașov City Hall, 2025).

The Municipality of Galați has made a chatbot available to citizens - which plays the role of a virtual civil servant (Galați City Hall, 2025).

Citizens in Cluj-Napoca also interact with the city hall through the virtual clerk Antonia. Undeniably, there are limitations in the answers she provides, and the services will improve as she receives more requests from citizens. In 2022, the Local Council of the City Hall of Cluj-Napoca adopted the City Hall's Digital Development Strategy, which has as its main objective to increase the quality of life for the citizens and the prosperity of Cluj community (Cluj Napoca City Hall, 2025).

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Craiova Municipality has started in August 2025 a project that aims to increase the effectiveness of public transport in the city, through the expansion of the intelligent traffic management system with 12 intersections, according to the document available on the institution's website (Craiova City Hall, 2025).The same site states that the intelligent traffic management system in Craiova will allow monitoring in real - time the traffic flows and adjusting immediate traffic light to prevent traffic jams.

The city of Iasi is considered the first city that introduced in public transport an anti- collision management system for buses and trams through artificial intelligence (Iași City Hall, 2025). The information available on the municipality's website reveals that this system has the role of warning the drivers before collision in traffic and maintaining a high degree of protection for citizens who use public transport. This system involves considerable funding, including for the purchase of trams and buses.

Oradea has started to elaborate the Digital Strategy Oradea Smart City in order to integrate technology to better meet citizens' needs (Oradea City Hall, 2025). In the last years, Oradea faced problems related to the employment of civil servants with IT duties, due to unattractive remunerations for experienced specialists.

Suceava Municipality does not have an intelligent traffic light system implemented and no dynamic traffic management system. There is no virtual assistant on the city hall website that can offer counselling services to the citizens (Suceava City Hall, 2025).

The City Hall of Timișoara has launched a GIS platform. This is an application that offers instant access to urban planning information with the help of AI (Timișoara City Hall, 2025). According to the website of Timisoara City Hall, this interactive application integrates multiple data sets from the General Urban Plan (PUG), buildings and buildings tabulated, parking network Timpark, urban protection areas, monuments and the historical sites, administrative boundaries of Timișoara and Orthophotoplane.

The municipalities in Romania have made some progress in artificial intelligence implementation within public institutions, but the acceptance of these artificial intelligence systems is different and depends on the level of economic development of these cities, the European funding projects they access, the will of local councils and the involvement of officials in the institution.

In the opinion of the author Androniceanu (2024), chatbots make the work of civil servants more flexible. The same study states that according to the report "Digitalization in Europe - 2024 edition", only 8% of organizations in the EU have used artificial intelligence technologies, and Romania ranks last with a percentage of 1.5% of companies using artificial intelligence.

Romania, a member state of the European Union, must harmonize its legislation with that of the European Union in the field of artificial intelligence. The EU Regulation on AI is considered by the European Parliament to represent the first law on artificial intelligence in the world. In this regard, The National Strategy on Artificial Intelligence 2024 – 2027 was adopted in Romania as part of the Romanian Strategy

on the adoption of digital technologies in the economy and society, while respecting human rights and promoting excellence and trust in AI. A draft Law on the responsible use of artificial intelligence is currently being worked on in the Romanian Parliament.

In 2024, Law no. 201 was adopted to supplement the National Archives Law no. 16/1996, as well as to amend and supplement Law no. 135/2007 on the archiving of documents in electronic form, which provides in art. 27^1 a series of obligations for creators and holders of electronic documents, including: preserving the integrity, authenticity and possibility of use of electronic documents, both during current use and in the archive repository. However, the archiving of documents in public institutions in Romania is predominantly physical, with documents bound in files, as required by Romanian legislation.

Similar to these changes regarding archival activity, it is necessary to develop a legislative framework that regulates in which areas of activity in the public sector artificial intelligence can be used and how to use it, so as not to generate risks with consequences that are difficult to anticipate or evaluate. An important aspect signalled is that the digital skills of employees in public institutions must also be taken into account. The average age of civil servants in Romania, according to the latest report from 2024 generated by the National Agency of Civil Servants, is 49 years old, the included population being considered as aging for the civil service corps and also a vulnerable point in the process of administrative reforms.

In Romania, due to the different level of implementation of administrative processes, we encounter municipalities that are run on the model of classical, bureaucratic administration, but also municipalities in which public management has been implemented, with performance indicators and quantifiable results. In both cases, however, the transition to the "digitalized era" requires the reform of the entire public sector. The lack of IT specialists who can provide technical support and perform periodic audits of AI systems may represent vulnerable elements in this endeavour.

4.2 Norway

Mikalef, Fjortoft, and Torvatn (2019) stated that in Norway, in 2019, there were 422 municipalities, and their size varies from a few hundreds of inhabitants up to over 650,000 inhabitants in the capital Oslo. Regarding surface, there is same distinction: the smallest municipality has an area of 6 kmt², and the largest is 9700 km². The same author emphasizes that Norwegian government has carried out a municipal reform, which reorganized 119 municipalities turning them into 47. This reform meant a reduction from 422 to 356 municipalities starting from January 2020. At present, Norway has 357 municipalities, following the separation of Haram municipality from the larger Ålesund municipality since 01.01.2024 (Bolstad, 2025).

Norway is not a member state of the European Union, but it has the highest degree of digitalization of public services, as well as the oldest and most complex databases established and interconnected for

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public organizations. The public sector in Norway is organized at the central and local levels, as represented in Figure 1.

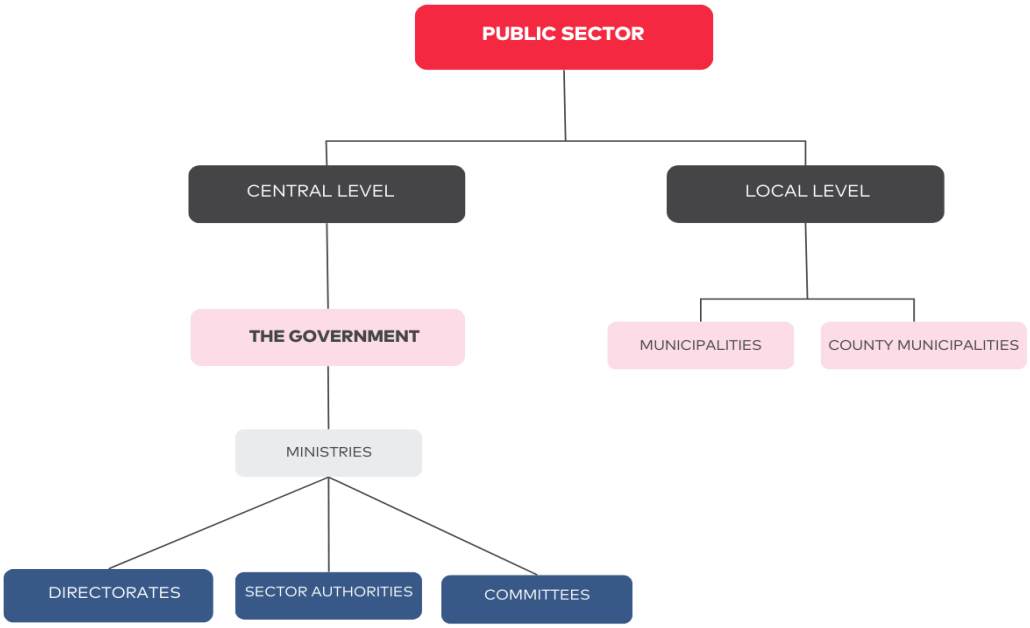

FIGURE 1. ORGANIZATION OF THE NORWEGIAN PUBLIC SECTOR
Source: https://pub.norden.org/temanord2024-503/norway.html

In 2020, Norway developed the AI Strategy, which reinforces the idea of the potential for improving public services through digitalization. The digitalization and implementation of artificial intelligence technologies in Norway, according to Esayas and Hauglid (2024), is carried out taking into account the following principles:

- Privacy and data protection (there is a high level of awareness of risks related to privacy and data protection).
- Human oversight (people should be involved in all stages of a decision-making process).
- Robustness and technical safety (cybersecurity, safe use of AI).
- Transparency (an open decision-making process).
- Non-discrimination, equality and digital inclusion (it was recognised that artificial intelligence could discriminate against vulnerable groups).
- Accountability (requirement that allows for external evaluation).
- Environmental and social well-being.

There is a fear regarding the adoption of AI legislation, in the sense of fragmentation according to the sector of activity: health, finance, social assistance, education, migrant management, etc.

There is extensive debate in Norway about adopting a law on the use of artificial intelligence, and for this reason, the Norwegians have classified AI systems into four risk levels:

1. Unacceptable risks (leading to prohibited practices).
2. High risks (which trigger a set of strict obligations, including carrying out a conformity assessment).
3. Limited risks (with associated transparency obligations).
4. Minimal risks (where stakeholders are encouraged to comply with codes of conduct).

In 2023, the Norwegian government allocated approximately 94 million euros to strengthen research in artificial intelligence and digital technology for the next 5 years (Esayas & Hauglid, 2024).

This article has already mentioned the study conducted by Mikalef, Fjortoft, and Torvatn (2019) on the intention of some Norwegian municipalities to implement artificial intelligence systems. A top of these areas according to the intention of use that was identified in this study is presented in Table 6.

The responses collected by the three researchers were provided by IT managers or managers in Norwegian municipalities. The authors limited the population to 83 IT managers in Norwegian municipalities to whom they sent the questionnaire, but the number of respondents was 46. Contact details were identified on the websites of the Norwegian municipalities.

The study conducted in 2019 highlighted the following aspects, summarized in Tables 3, 4 and 5.

TABLE 3. SUMMARY OF RESPONSES ON THE USE OF AI IN NORWEGIAN MUNICIPALITIES

What is the timeframe for using AI in your organization?	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
We are not using artificial intelligence yet.	31	67.4%
Less than 1 year	5	10.9%
1-2 years	9	19.6%
2-3 years	1	2.2%

Source: Post processing from Mikalef et al., 2019.

31 of the respondents, representing 67.4% of the responses, stated that artificial intelligence was not used in the municipality where they worked in 2019.

TABLE 4. NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES IN NORWEGIAN MUNICIPALITIES INVOLVED IN THE STUDY

How many employees does the municipality have?	No. of municipalities	Percent
Less than 100 employees	3	6.5%
100-500	11	23.9%
500-1,000	14	30.4%
1,000 – 2,500	8	17.4%
2,500 – 5,000	4	8.7%
More than 5000	6	13%

Source: Post processing from Mikalef et al., 2019.

Table 4 highlights the fact that in Norway, although a state with only 5.4 million inhabitants, a large number of people work in municipalities. 30% of the respondents to the questionnaires were representatives of municipalities with over 500 employees, 17.4% of respondents worked in municipalities with over 1,000 employees, 8.7% of the survey participants worked in institutions with over 2,500 employees. 6 municipalities participating in the questionnaire have more than 5,000 employees.

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TABLE 5. NUMBER OF IT EMPLOYEES IN NORWEGIAN MUNICIPALITIES WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE STUDY

How many people work in the IT department?	No. of municipalities	Percent
1-9	30	65.2%
10-49	12	26.1%
50-249	4	8.7%
More than 250	0	0%

Source: Post processing from Mikalef et al., 2019.

The study highlighted that these municipalities have large IT departments, with up to 249 specialists. This explains the large volume of databases that Norway has and the high degree of digitalization that these Norwegian public services have. The digitalization of public services is a stage prior to the implementation of AI systems. The Norwegian researchers' article on the intention to implement AI systems used a Likert scale, with responses from 1 to 7, where 1 is the "weakest interest" and 7 the "highest interest" in developing the activity.

TABLE 6. ASPECTS PURSUED IN NORWEGIAN MUNICIPALITIES' INTENTION TO IMPLEMENT ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

No.	Types of processes/activities	Minimum interest	Score obtained	Maximum interest
1.	Intelligent interaction with citizens (chatbots)	1	5.23	7
2.	Automatic requests (e.g. school change requests)	1	4.54	7
3.	Health and well-being (better patient monitoring)	1	4.06	7
4.	Internal data automation	1	3.44	7
5.	Performing financial management and detecting fraud	1	3.35	7
6.	Translation during meetings (speech-speech, speech-text)	1	3.27	7
7.	Personalizing information to employees	1	3.2	7
8.	Decision-making assistance	1	3.19	7
9.	Performance monitoring and internal control	1	3.11	7
10.	Cybersecurity	1	3.03	7
11.	Human resources management	1	3.03	7
12.	Reduced document flow due to automation	1	2.92	7
13.	Autonomous vehicles	1	2.52	7
14.	Active identification of infrastructure problems	1	2.28	7
15.	Intelligent management support channel	1	2.26	7

Source: Post processing from Mikalef et al., 2019.

Table 6 reveals that the artificial intelligence tool that was intended to be implemented in Norwegian municipalities was that of chatbots (virtual assistants) that interact with citizens.

In Norway, municipalities have a large number of IT specialists, so they achieve very good scores in digitalization rankings every year. Artificial intelligence is considered by public management as an opportunity to streamline Norwegian public services, an aspect that is not yet possible for administrative-territorial units in Romania.

Norwegian experts are extensively debating on adopting a legislative framework to support the implementation of artificial intelligence. They have identified new risks related to its use and are developing projects to mitigate their effects. The Norwegian state is concerned about the use responsible of AI and it is making intensive efforts to achieve this goal. By 2025, seven out of ten Norwegian public sector entities

will use artificial intelligence, according to the statement of Øyvind Husby, CEO of TEK- Norway. However, this country is very concerned about the responsible use of AI.

5. CONCLUSIONS

A need for increased in-depth study of this field of research, relatively new for Romania, was highlighted in this study. We believe that the implementation of artificial intelligence in Romanian municipalities will be achieved in an uneven manner, with significant time lags. Large municipalities, which have significant financial resources and IT specialists, will implement these technologies in a shorter time horizon, but at the level of small municipalities this approach will be a long-term one. Over time, major changes are needed at the legislative level, as well as the launch of pilot projects to identify activities and processes that are difficult to manage.

Public management in Romania is not quite ready for the implementation of artificial intelligence. The speed of information creation and the speed of transmission are not controllable at this time. The management of public institutions in Romania must consider, for the introduction of artificial intelligence in the work with citizens, but also for the internal work of the organization, at least the following aspects:

1. Integrative legislative framework for artificial intelligence.
2. Technical infrastructure within the institution, but also of external users;
3. Training human resources in the IT field, but also content creators who can be from all specialties of activities specific to the public domain.
4. Risk delimitation.
5. Establishing ethical boundaries.
6. Adapting the act of justice to the new context.

There are also opposing views among some entities concerned with the emergence and implementation of AI and digitalization. In 2022, a legal think tank in Denmark published a report stating, according to Motzfeld and Lindberg (2024), that there are significant challenges regarding the legal security of citizens, and that at the same time a quarter of the Danish population had difficulty navigating digital government websites. The same website states that the painter Per Arnoldi created the symbol of the i(T)valid citizen “the vulnerable digital citizen”.

In the context of the implementation of artificial intelligence, public management and all the functions it performs will need to be fundamentally rethought.

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