

A REMEMBRANCE OF THE PREVIOUS FINANCIAL DISASTERS FROM THE INDIVIDUAL TO THE TEAM WORK EXCELLENCE IN THE ROMANIAN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION ACTIVITIES

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ABSTRACT

Digital transformation has become an important approach as well as a working method in the Romanian public sector. I am going to explore the extent to which digital transformation may lead to government concepts operationalizing and the way the required decisions are made at the level of central and local public administration in Romania.

KEYWORDS: *citizens, collaborative aims, empower, programs, technology*

INTRODUCTION

When referring to digital transformation (DT), the key word is no doubt the term changes that should be radical and observed in organisational structures and behavioural repertoires. These changes should move away from the legacy of the siloed bureaucratic model called the Weberian model that influenced various administrative systems in different ways, giving rise to different national traditions (Bleiklie and Michelsen, 2013; Kuhlmann and Wollmann, 2014; Lampropoulou and Oikonomou, 2018; Codagnone et al., 2020).

It has been affirmed that ‘moving from e-Government to digital transformation is the application of new and emerging technologies (Codagnone et al., 2020). These technologies cannot be considered in isolation from other factors and especially from the hu-man resources’ availability of digital skills capabilities.

Digital transformation lessons can be seen in the attempt to improve policy making and governance, going beyond digitizing resources, formulating a new strategy. The main points lead to the following ideas:

- technologies should not be considered in isolation,
- the combination of technologies and other innovations offers the power to transform.

Measuring and evaluating the effects of digital transformation, within any initiative involving the use of public funds, is of great strategic importance for any public sector organisation. It is important for the sake of accountability, for the monitoring of progress and project management, as well as understanding what works and why, for the purposes of learning and fine-tuning interventions. A simple distinction may be made between measurement and evaluation. Measurement is about counting ‘what is’. Evaluation, while requiring the measurement of relevant variables, is something different and more difficult than measurement.

Among the outputs of DT in governance there are new services, new processes, new skills or new products. They cover four main areas:

- internal processes,
- governing,
- policy making,

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- services delivery.

Regarding the concept of excellence in quality management, excellence implies that an organization should be a model/ be the best, because:

- it is customer oriented,
- applies top managerial techniques,
- obtains good results within its activities.

More than the above-mentioned characteristics, excellence in public administration should imply:

- respecting norms and procedures,
- focusing on solving citizens' needs,
- averting political controversies and arbitrary decisions,
- improving efficiency and effectiveness,
- practicing leadership, constancy of purpose, continuous innovation and improvement,
- developing partnership and social responsibility.

1. ROMANIAN E-GOVERNANCE BETWEEN NATIONAL AND LOCAL DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION.

1.1 Is there a digitalization strategy?

Digitizing public institutions depends on a number of factors among which the management style is perhaps the most important one. On the other hand, for the digital administrative code to work in Romania, there are a number of requirements to be met: 'a stable environment (introducing, maintaining, and developing online services is a long-term process), financial resources, knowledgeable leadership (it is not essential for the managers to be IT specialists, but they must understand the basic costs and benefits of various alternatives), competent IT specialists, preferably from inside the institution (they will be tasked with implementing all the procedural changes, along with all the technological tools necessary for a digitalization strategy to work), good internal communication (an important majority of the employees understanding the strategy)' (Urs, 2018). Researchers of the administrative sector are aware of the problems facing the digitalization of Romania's public administration. That is why there is need for:

- the sharing and exchange of electronic information between public sector actors,
- initiatives developed to promote people's interaction with the Public Administration, as consumers and citizens,
- e-society referring to public participation and citizenship,
- electronic governance implying electronic democracy.
- (Viana, 2021)

There is a clear relationship between the degree of digitalization in public administration services and the perceived satisfaction among citizens at large. This truth has been affirmed by many Romanian and foreign specialists in public administration activities. The four aspects that are important imply: the municipality's strategy within e-governance, the ways and tools that provide information and enable transparency, how e-services are provided, how digital forms of citizens' participation are displayed and made known (Bernhard et al., 2018).

1.2 The supply of electronic administrative services for citizens in Romanian public administration

I am going to mention the services that are displayed and recognized at an international level for Romania:

1. appointments for travel documents can be made online. For IDs, it varies between cities,

2. including payments for the service. Downloadable forms for obtaining IDs and travel documents are available in most municipalities.
3. registering a new permanent address is a local service.
4. obtaining or changing a driving licence is a national service.
5. registering a car is a national service.
6. solving waste disposal is a local service.
7. paying local taxes and fees is a local service.
8. one can send a complaint through electronic means and receive an answer through email. Some cities also have a platform on which complaints are visible to other users and they must receive a public answer.
9. paying for local transport is a local service.
10. a number of cities use dedicated online platforms for participatory budgeting (Cluj-Napoca, Oradea, Turda, etc.). Some cities use either dedicated tools or social media to collect feedback or to ask for proposals as input for the decision-making process.
11. in the case of the application for childcare, there are differences in the service delivery according to different municipalities. Information describing the service and related requirements are available either on the education ministry website or on the local municipalities' websites. (Špaček et al., 2020)

2. IMPLEMENTING THE EUROPEAN LABEL FOR EXCELLENCE IN GOVERNANCE (ELOGE) PROGRAM TOGETHER WITH THE LOCAL PUBLIC AUTHORITIES.

The concept of excellence has been developed both from the EFQM Excellence Model, issued and owned by the European Foundation for Quality Management and the Common Assessment Framework for civil servants, launched at the European level in 2000. Implementing the European Label for Excellence in Governance (ELOGE) has started in 2022 at the level of both Romanian central and local administration authorities, by the analysis of the 12 principles of good governance established by the Council of Europe:

- participation, representation and fair conduct of elections,
- perceptiveness,
- efficiency and effectiveness,
- openness and transparency,
- state of law,
- ethical behaviour,
- abilities and jurisdiction,
- innovation and receptiveness,
- sustainable development and long-term,
- solid financial management,
- human rights, cultural diversity and social unity,
- accountability.

ELOGE is an award granted by the Council of Europe to local public administration authorities, shaped on 'an European and International Assessment Mechanism regarding the quality of local governance and it is a way to appreciate and recognize those local authorities whose activity is carried out according to international standards (Interim Report to the Council of Europe, 2023).

Within the program, 58 territorial administrative units from 22 counties of the country signed up (the list is available at <https://sgg.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Anexa-nr.-2-Lista-UAT-populatie-1.pdf>).

The stages the territorial administrative units have gone through, implied:

- enrol in the project,
- making a self-assessment of its activity,

- answering questionnaires regarding the 12 principles of excellent democratic governance,
- collect the data and write the appraisal reports,

It has been proposed to award the label of excellence in governance, session 2022-2023, to 14 communes, 6 towns, 6 municipalities, 4 counties.

The report has underlined the importance of the 'smart city' concept. The future of public administration is seen in this concept that becomes a principle, too. Local authorities should promote smart solutions to improve the citizens' quality of life at the local level. At the same time, the relationship between the public and private sectors should be enhanced.

3. SOME EXAMPLES OF HOW DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION HAS BROUGHT IMPROVEMENTS FOR THE LOCAL ADMINISTRATION ACTIVITIES

3.1. Information about the selected cases.

I have picked up some examples of local authorities – one of them proposed to be awarded the label of excellence in governance, session 2022-2023: the municipality of Buzău – together with the municipalities of Satu-Mare, Oradea and Timișoara.

The most widely online services on the webpages of the above-mentioned municipalities are:

- complaints and requests,
- public interest information,
- paying taxes online,
- requesting documents,
- checking the state of a request,
- marriage scheduling,
- mobile applications.

Digitising public administration may lead to benefits that will represent the outputs of both individual and team work: eliminate the need for citizens to visit several institutions for the same issue, highlight interoperability and steady communication among institutions, adhere to recognized standards.

Buzău town hall website displays the following sections and services:

- taxes and contributions,
- electronic service portal
- press release by the Mayor
- population records
- info
- transparency
- claims
- announcements
- official Monitor
- contact
- search

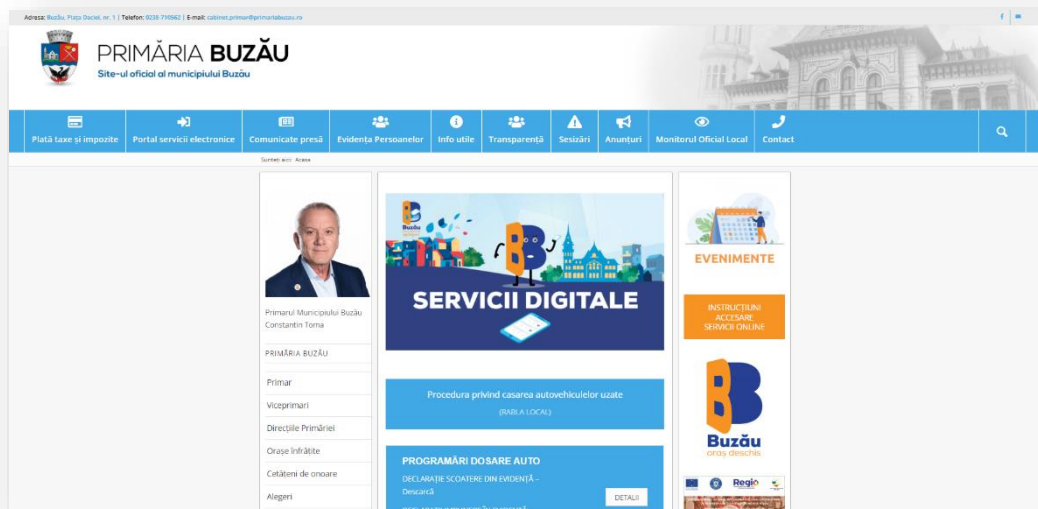


Figure 1. Buzau Town Hall website

Source: <https://primariabuzau.ro/>

Satu-Mare town hall website displays the following sections and services:

- about the institution
- townhall projects
- services to citizens
- public information
- news
- official local Monitor
- contact
- search
- social media – Facebook, Instagram, YouTube

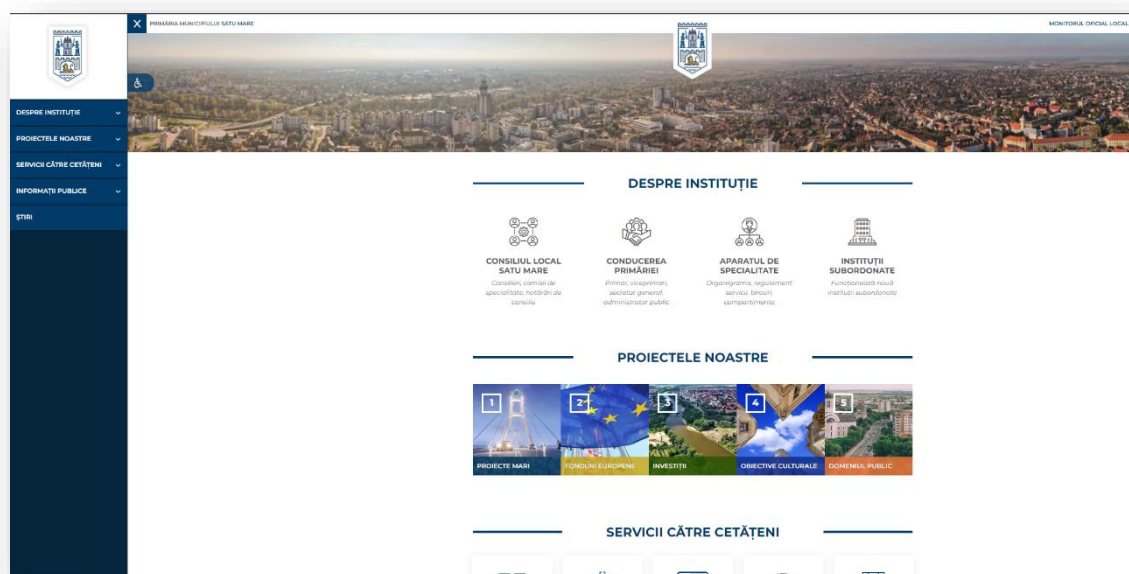


Figure 2. Satu-Mare Town Hall website

Source: <https://www.primariasm.ro/>

Oradea town hall website displays the following sections and services: news,

- transparency,
- program with the public,
- taxes and contributions,
- ghișeul online
- services and online applications
- Official Monitor
- image gallery
- Oradea Town Hall
- Local council
- public information



Figure 3. Oradea Town Hall website
Source: <https://www.oradea.ro/>

Timisoara Town Hall

- Administration
- Patrimony
- Urbanism
- Mobility
- Environment
- Culture
- Transparency
- Community
- Announcements
- Institutional integrity
- Contact

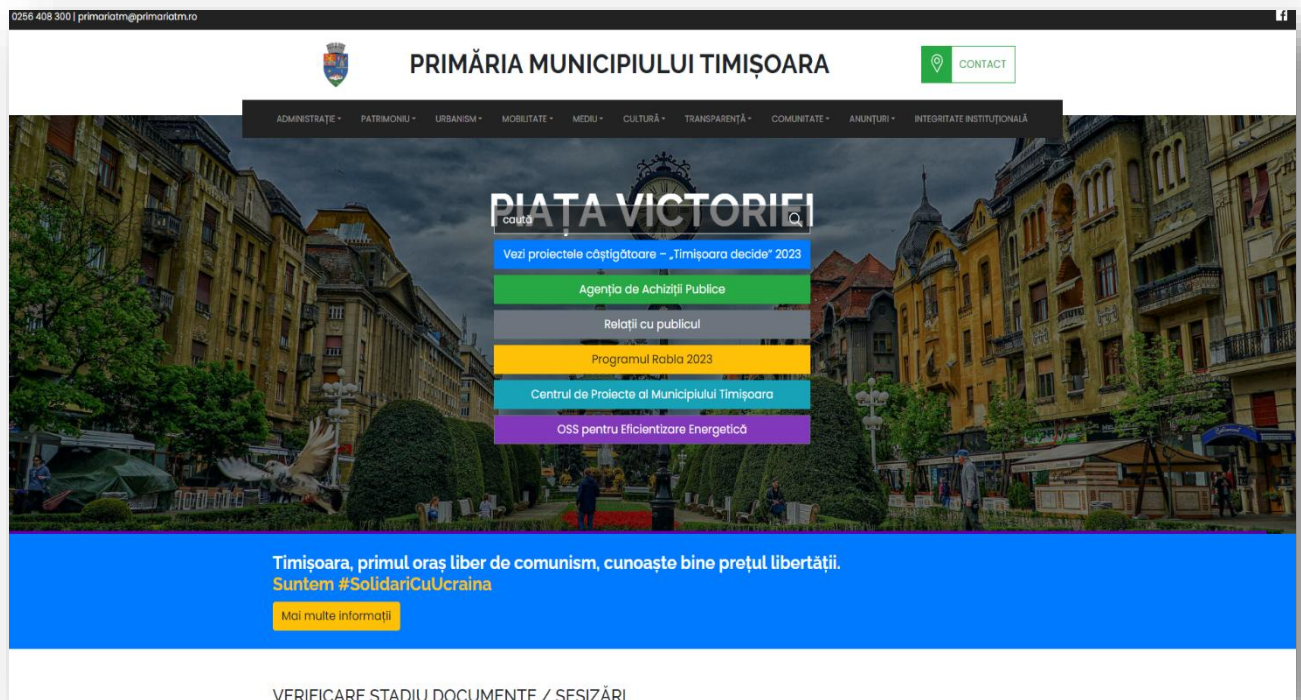
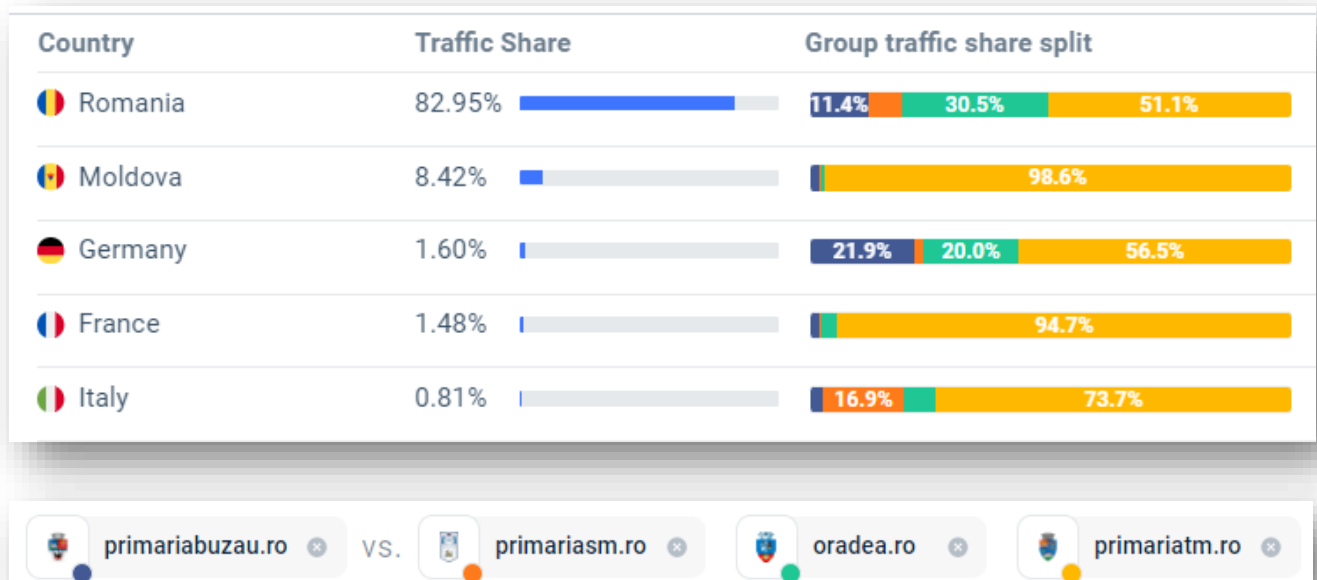


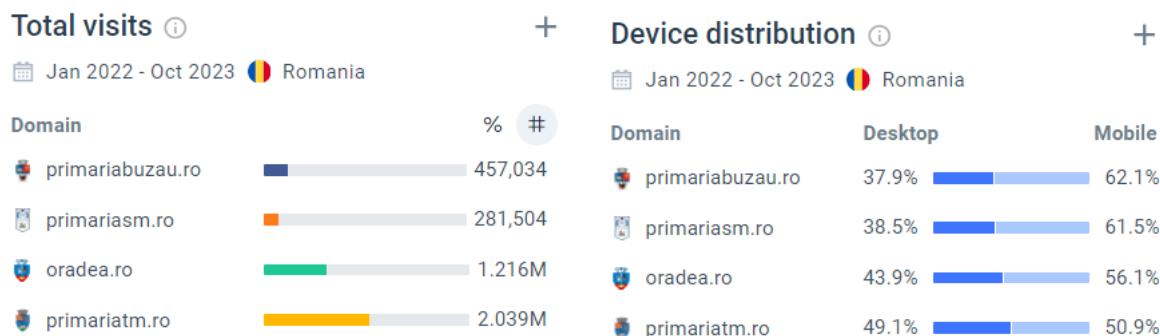
Figure 4. Oradea Town Hall website
Source: <https://www.primariatm.ro/>

3.2. Multilanguage option vs geography traffic share



Source: <https://pro.similarweb.com>, reference period Jan 2023 – Oct 2023

3.3. Digital accessibility



Source: <https://pro.similarweb.com>, reference period Jan 2023 – Oct 2023

Digital transformation should help us understand:

- what role trust in the public sector plays in the adoption of such services,
- what conditions citizens are willing to adopt in the new digital public services,
- the difference citizens make between privacy and the benefits that stem from the use of new digital public services in various domains,
- how digital accessibility bridges physical distance.

CONCLUSIONS

Promoting digital technologies and tools can help:

- ‘determine how individuals, public and private institutions and social context are going to interact with digitalization,
- determine the readiness of the institutions to work in the digital environment, to assess the legal framework on which these institutions apply digital solutions, and to identify factors leading to misuse of digital tools (Aurelija, 2020)
- ‘change governance paradigms, which reshape citizen-administration relationships,
- introduce efficiencies into processes, often by replacing or augmenting human activity (Codagnone, et al., 2020)
- network and interact with different digital platform operators.

Desiring an in-depth assessment of the digital transformation’s effects at the Romanian public administration level, it is necessary to implement and practice administrative process innovation which requires human resources training and a good digital equipment provision and maintenance.

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