

# The Digitalization of the Local Public Administration from Romania to Where?

Ana Dorina Pavel

*Secretary of Gruuiu Commune City Hall, Ilfov County, Romania*

**ABSTRACT:** The current context of the contemporary society, but also that of the information society, changed in relation to the political paradigm, the political balance of powers, more and more aspects of personal and professional life are subject to the effect of digitization, computerization and are realized, using electronic devices: laptop, tablet, smartphone. The term that defines the era of computerization is e-government, representing an essential step in the reform of public administration, its modernization process and considers the process of digitalization of the public sector (Apubb.ro n.d.) a staged one, which would mediate an essential stage in the interaction between public institutions, in this case mayors and citizens, with the help of applications created for this purpose through information technology.

**KEYWORDS:** digitization, public administration, central administration, local administration, e-government, e-government, implementation, portal for e-government services, consequences

Nowadays, one of the strategic resources in society's development is information supported by modern information technologies. *“The impact of the implementation of information technologies in various fields of human activity is so strong that there is talk of a new phase in the evolution of society - the information society. One of the largest industries in the world is the information technology industry and it is constantly growing. Due to the advantages that information technology offers for economic and social growth, all economically developed and developing countries have adopted computerization strategies both in general and in certain special areas (Ciochină 2012b, 55-57).*

In our country, regarding the services from the Public Administration, the Government Decision no. 1007/2001 for the approval of the Government's strategy regarding the computerization of the Public Administration, as well as many normative acts, referring here to Law no. 455/2001 regarding the electronic signature; Law no. 52/2003 regarding the decisional transparency in the Public Administration; Law no. 291/2002 for the approval of the Government Ordinance no. 24/2002 on the collection by electronic means of local taxes and fees; Law no. 161/2003 on some measures to ensure transparency in the exercise of public dignities of public positions and in the business environment, the prevention and sanctioning of corruption.

*“The concept of computerization of the Public Administration cannot be included in a single definition, according to the strategy that the Government proposes to the citizens.*

*It has four main components:*

*- One of these components is that the citizen can benefit from any public service to which he is entitled through a request addressed to any administrative office authorized to exercise the service in question without having relevance his domicile of territorial competence;*

*- If there is a change in the life of the citizen or of a third person (relevant in the case) for which he must notify or notify the administration, he must be able to do so only once, at the time of the event. This notification should automatically produce the corresponding effects. The administration should keep for each citizen a separate file that will allow the transmission of the change to all interested bodies and the corresponding services to be activated;*

*- Once the citizen requesting a service (other than personal identity documents) has been identified, he or she must not provide other personal information that is (or should be) in the database of any State Administration;*

*The citizen can request a service exclusively based on his own needs without being obliged to know what each body deals with, without knowing how the state is organized, but to benefit from a combination of services from a single public service provider . In these conditions and taking into account the previously mentioned visions, the Government must elaborate the strategy regarding the computerization of the Public Administration so that the public services can also function in the service of the citizen. We affirm these starting from the elements that are included in the Government’s strategy regarding the computerization of the Public Administration” (Ciochină 2012c, 123-127).*

The citizen, in other words, a natural person within the meaning of Romanian civil law “is a conventional name given to man as a legal entity. Every human being has the quality of a natural person and is subject to civil rights (Ciochină 2012a). The citizen, for whom the state, is obliged to carry out all the necessary steps in facilitating them to the state services as easily and quickly as possible. Or digitalization is a process that must be implemented with priority in the service of the citizen.

The latest DESI studies published by the European Union illustrate that Romania is among the last countries to use information technology in order to facilitate access to the payment of taxes and communication and between state institutions and citizens. We might ask ourselves whether the rule of law shows good faith. Good faith is provided in the country’s constitution and the inclusion of the principle of good faith in the general principles of civil law has created a system of increased protection of social relations in the private sphere. Through this principle, respect for justice, order, fundamental rights, reason and other social values results from its substance” (Ciochină 2013, 243-248), doesn’t the state have the same duty towards the citizens? Does the state not have to prove and respect the principle of good faith?

Although we have the best connectivity to internet services and very good professionals, the percentage in which digitization is implemented in Romania is below the European average, which means that there is no strategy at a practical level, but only one at a theoretical level, approved only in February 2020.

Connectivity, capital, the use of internet data, the incorporation of innovative techniques through digitalisation and digital services are the principles on which the EC operates.

**The research problem** starts from this point of the DESI (2018) report published by the European Commission, in which Romania ranks last. Digitization illustrates a new stage of globalization, where both states and individuals, but especially states, think of important strategies. This research was conducted on several levels, once the author wanted to see how digitization is reflected in official documents of the European Union. Then the author did a research on the analysis of the opportunity to digitize public services for citizens provided by the local administration in Ilfov County.

It can be shown from research and studies that each state that achieves an increase in the level of digitization compared to other states, improves its financial potential. In addition to economic growth, significant growth can be achieved in the collection of taxes and duties. That is why, whether it is about the economic importance or the alignment of our country with the other Member States, we realize that a high degree of digitization only makes a profit.

*Electronic governance* (Vasilache 2008, 44) means a very important stage of reconfiguration within local public institutions, having as main objective the advantage of the interaction between public institutions and citizens, respectively the business environment, potential investors, often forgotten by local authorities, who are not aware of the special importance that the business environment has on the development of the area, through applications based on information technology.

An effervescent promoter and supporter of digitalisation is the European Digital Agenda (EDA), which seeks to stimulate the European budget by ensuring both lasting economic and social benefits, thanks to a digital single market (ANCOM 2020).

The European Commission's strong emphasis on implementing digitalisation intensifies the need to develop every public administration, understanding that e-Government is urgently needed to reduce and simplify bureaucratic procedures, reduce public spending, improve access to information, to reduce and at the same time fight corruption.

Therefore, through the research we conducted, we identified ways to improve by digitizing the quality of services offered locally in Ilfov County. By identifying and analyzing them, I want to formulate conclusions, to find the causes of the delayed implementation of this process in the local public administration, to improve the current situation, through the recommendations resulting from the research.

Currently, in some local administrative units (Periș, Dascălu and Ciolpani) the services offered are digitized, and in the other local administrative units in Ilfov County none of the services offered are digitized, either for receipts, public relations or for making payments. .

The implementation of digitized services greatly reduces the working time both between compartments, without repeating the same procedure at the level of each compartment, and through well-defined relationships between ATUs and citizens (SmartcityBlog 2017)

Starting from the current state of knowledge on digitization in local public administration aims to see what is the current state in the culture of digitization in administrative-territorial units and what is the state of scientific research in the field, we reach the analysis of the opportunity to digitize public services for citizens offered by the local administration from Ilfov county, presents the purpose and objectives of the research aimed at stating the purpose of the current paper and the objectives of this research.

The hypotheses and variables consider the development of working hypotheses and variables for piloting digitization methods to streamline the relationship between compartments, but also in the relationship with the public.

Research methodology - includes the following parts: target group , research design, sampling, research methods and tools used, data collection and systematization. The target group will be represented by the staff of the town halls, which will implement certain digitization methods for the efficiency of public services and it will be ascertained whether it is an optimal choice or not.

Determining the size of the research sample was represented by the choice of a number of ATUs involved in this research on the digitization of public services, in this case 11 ATUs.

Methods and techniques of the research used is the part in which the effective methods were chosen by which they were observed, analyzed from a qualitative and quantitative point of view, how the digitization works at the level of the sampled units and chosen for piloting. At this stage, citizen satisfaction questionnaires were conducted, as well as questionnaires for ATU staff to find out if digitization really facilitates work at the level of departments and helps to avoid repetition of activities within the departments.

The issue of digitization of services provided by public institutions has long been discussed and addressed in recent years, along with the huge progress made by the development of the Internet. Internet access has become easy, so any activity of the taxpayer is intended to be “a click away” (Todoruț and Tselentis 2018).

Creating complete databases of each citizen, with access from various inputs, could greatly improve and streamline the work of some institutions. For example, the data of a citizen can be accessed, at the mayor's office, by the agricultural directorate, which obtains from there all the information about the properties and assets owned by the citizen, and then the same database is accessed by the service Taxes, taxes where it can be clearly seen what the person's situation is. Under the signature of confidentiality and according to law no. 363 /

28.12.2018, personal data can be collected and processed only for well-defined purposes, so it would not endanger personal data.

At the same time, digitization can eliminate much of the bureaucracy. Just as some institutions in Bucharest have started to collaborate in support of the citizen, the same could be done at the level of smaller town halls, even in rural areas. We cannot rely indefinitely on the idea that the elderly do not have access to the internet and will never be able to solve their problems online, but we should think that their grandchildren and children live in the age of speed and have up- already graduated knowledge, so he certainly manages to help his older relatives.

Digitization can also improve communication between departments of the same institution, thinking only of the saved time that employees lost walking around colleagues, asking them about the files and situation of a taxpayer, then searching, unpacking documents, terms of postponement of the settlement, the return of the taxpayer to the mayor's office at a certain number of days to proceed to the settlement of the next stage and so on. Things were dragging on a lot, or digitization right here, in the most concrete way, comes in support of the citizen.

Often, the resumption of part of the documentation can lead to the creation of a set of photocopies addressed to each department, because employees have no way of knowing what documents their colleagues have in relation to one person or another, or the digital version. where all the documents of a taxpayer can be scanned, it would be very easy to access and confront online what the citizen presents at each counter at which he makes a request. This would save paper, toner and working time, so it would be twice as good for both the citizen and the employee.

Submitting various requests online to public institutions would significantly reduce the queues at the counters, especially if pre-arranged deadlines are also offered, so citizens would come to pick up their requested documents on a fixed date, within a well-established time frame, which would greatly help the good institution-citizen collaboration and the efficiency of the whole process. It can be understood that electronic archives occupy a virtual space that does not confuse man in carrying out his routine activity, while helping to have a beneficial effect on human health in the long run.

*The computerization of the Public Administration is necessary in order to increase the operational efficiency within the local and central administration. Having as beneficiary the citizens and the economic agents, the computerization of the services obliges to their integration in order to be able to ensure to the end users the access to information, in an electronically centralized form. At the same time as the priority of information and telecommunications systems, the Government's strategy requires the improvement of the legal framework that can make such actions possible, and especially the creation of additional organizational structures appropriate for both strategy development and project implementation (Ciochină 2014, 133-136).*

## References

- ANCOM. 2020. (National Authority for Management and Regulation in Communications). National Strategy for the Digital Agenda for Romania – 2020. [https://www.ancom.ro/uploads/links\\_files/Strategia\\_nationala\\_privind\\_Agenda\\_Digitala\\_pentru\\_Romania\\_2020.pdf](https://www.ancom.ro/uploads/links_files/Strategia_nationala_privind_Agenda_Digitala_pentru_Romania_2020.pdf).
- Apubb.ro. *Public Administration and Management. Public administration reform. Study on e-Governance at the level of the European Union.* <https://www.apubb.ro/cep/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Reforma-in-administratia-publica.-Studiu-privind-e-Guvernarea-la-nivelul-Uniunii-Europene.pdf>,% 20accesta% 20la% 20data% 20de% 2010% 20noiembrie% 202019, accessed on December 10, 2019.
- Ciochină, Daniela. 2012a. Civil Law. The General Part. People, University Course, Individual Study Manual. Bucharest: Prouniversitaria Publishing House.
- Ciochină, Daniela. 2012b. Informatisation of public services - strategic resource in the development of society. *Perspectives of Business Law in the Third Millennium* 1(1): 55-57, online.

- Ciochină, Daniela. 2012c. "Principles of computerization of public administration services." *Journal of Public Law* 3:123-127. Bucharest: Universul Juridic Publishing House.
- Ciochină, Daniela. 2013. "The principle of good faith. The dimension of legality in the rule of law." *European Culture of Human Rights - Law and respect for the law in the rule of law*. Bucharest: ProUniversitaria Publishing House.
- Ciochină, Daniela. 2014. "Informatization of Public Administration Services for the Citizen." *The Perpetual Mission of Public Administration to be in the Service of Society*. Chişinău: Editura Tipografia Elan Poligraf SRL.
- DESI (Digital Economy and Society Index). 2018. [https://ec.europa.eu/information\\_society/newsroom/image/document/2018-20/ro-desi\\_2018-country-profile\\_eng\\_199394CB-B93B-4B85-C789C5D6A54B83FC\\_52230.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/information_society/newsroom/image/document/2018-20/ro-desi_2018-country-profile_eng_199394CB-B93B-4B85-C789C5D6A54B83FC_52230.pdf).
- Smartcityblog. 2017. Case Study Bod Town Hall. Digitization of Public Administration. <https://smartcityblog.ro/studiu-de-caz-primaria-comunei-bod-digitalizzazione-amministratiei-publice/>, accessed on December 10, 2019.
- Todoruț, A.V. and Tselentis, V. 2018. *Digital technologies and modernization of public administration*, <https://www.srac.ro/calitatea/arhiva/2018/2018-04-Rezumat.pdf>, accessed on November 10, 2019.
- Vasilache, D. 2008. *Electronic Governance - An Introduction*. Cluj-Napoca: House of Scientific Book Publ.