

THE INNOVATION CAPACITY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN ROMANIA UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF GLOBAL CHALLENGES AND THE UN AGENDA

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Abstract

The paper explores the role of the United Nations General Assembly in promoting human rights, democracy, and global governance, with a particular focus on the adoption of the Pact for the Future at the 2024 session. This document establishes key priorities, including peace, sustainable development, the utilization of technology for global progress, and the safeguarding of future generations. Romania aligns with the UN's objectives through the implementation of national strategies, such as those concerning artificial intelligence and digitalization, thereby demonstrating its commitment to multilateralism, the 2030 Agenda, and the advancement of innovation. The discourse of global leaders, notably the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, underscores the critical importance of collective action in addressing contemporary crises and reforming international mechanisms.

Keywords: *Innovation capacity, public administration, Global challenges, UN Agenda, Pact for the Future, Human rights, Democracy*

JEL Classification: *[H83; O38]*

1. Introduction

In recent decades, the landscape of public administration has significantly transformed under the pressure of global challenges such as rapid technological advancements, globalization, environmental issues, and shifts in international governance. As these phenomena reshape the expectations placed upon public institutions, innovation has emerged as a key factor in ensuring that public administrations can effectively address current and future societal needs. Romania, like many other nations, is navigating this dynamic context, seeking pathways to modernize and bolster the innovative capabilities of its public sector. The integration of advanced technologies, including artificial intelligence and digital tools, alongside policy frameworks supporting smart specialization, represent critical areas through which Romania aims to enhance the efficiency, responsiveness, and adaptability of its public institutions. (Ministry of Research, Innovation, and Digitalization, 2024)

The country's engagement with global initiatives and international standards especially those advocated by the United Nations, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the recently introduced Pact for the Future serves as a

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strategic foundation for these national efforts. These international frameworks provide guiding principles and objectives that Romania strives to reflect within its domestic policies and practices. Furthermore, Romania's adherence to democratic principles, respect for human rights, and commitment to multilateral cooperation are integral components of its strategic orientation, influencing how innovation is conceptualized and implemented within its public administration. (Michel, 2024)

This introductory section provides the contextual groundwork for understanding Romania's current position and strategic responses within the broader global discourse on public sector innovation. By identifying both opportunities for advancement and structural challenges that may impede progress, this paper subsequently aims to offer a nuanced perspective on the complex interplay between national initiatives and international influences, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of effective governance in an increasingly interconnected world. (European Union, 2024)

2. Historical Context

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) is the principal deliberative body of the United Nations, responsible for discussing issues of global concern and making recommendations. It was established simultaneously with the UN in 1945, and its first session took place in London in January 1946, with the participation of 51 member states. (Sütfeld and Pascu, 2006)

147 days after the end of the Second World War, the United Nations, then consisting of only 51 countries striving to build a better and more peaceful world, convened for the first time in a General Assembly held in London. (United Nations, 1947)

"I hereby declare open the first session of the General Assembly," announced Henrik Spaak, the Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs and President of the council at that time.

This inaugural meeting was on the verge of failure due to behind-the-scenes tensions at the Westminster session. Before Henrik Spaak's official election as President, Moscow's ambassador, Andrei Gromyko, proposed Norway's Foreign Minister, Trygve Lie, as a competing candidate. Although he lost with 23 votes in favour and 28 against, only three weeks later, Trygve Lie was elected Secretary-General of the United Nations. In London, the major directions for the future international community were thus set. At the same time, the Security Council met, designating the non-permanent members, and the UN headquarters was subsequently established in New York. (Urquhart, 1972)

The first resolution of the United Nations, adopted on January 24, 1946, called for the elimination of atomic weapons – a noble aspiration, similar to many of the resolutions that followed.

Relations between Moscow and Washington deteriorated rapidly, and the sessions in New York often became scenes of propaganda during the Cold War. A

memorable episode is Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev's "shoe incident," when he, barefoot, struck the podium with his shoe, in the United States – a country that the Kremlin perceived as an adversary.

During the Cold War, in 1973, the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic became members of the UN, with membership numbers 133 and 134.

"The accession of the German Democratic Republic to the United Nations is a historic and encouraging event for our people," said Otto Winzer, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of East Germany. He celebrated the moment alongside the former Chancellor of the Federal Republic, Willy Brandt, who emphasized: "The human capacity for rational thinking made the creation of the United Nations possible, and the inclination toward the irrational makes them necessary."

Although UN resolutions are not legally binding on member states, the organization has remained a space for moral guidance, negotiations, and the power of words. General Assembly sessions were frequently the stage for memorable appearances, such as that of Yasser Arafat, who entered the session with a gun at his waist.

At the 60th session of the General Assembly, Secretary-General Kofi Annan stated that the UN was at a crossroads. "We have reached a decisive moment, comparable to the meeting of 1945," Annan said.

Annan called for profound reform of the organization, including an expansion of the Security Council. (Annan, 2005) Debates on this issue continued for years without reaching a consensus.

The global financial crisis of 2008 added a new dimension to the challenges facing the UN. Despite the difficulties, the UN continued to play an important role in promoting development and human rights. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015 marked an important step toward a more just and sustainable future.

3. Romania's Permanent Mission to the United Nations

Romania's profound attachment to the United Nations and its contribution to strengthening multilateralism within the organization reflect a central direction in Romanian foreign policy.

This approach aims to adapt to global challenges and is supported by active diplomacy that consistently promotes the UN's objectives for a safer, freer, and more prosperous world. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.)

Over time, Romania has participated and continues to participate in numerous important committees, bodies, commissions, and programs of the UN. Membership in the UN has allowed Romania to play a significant role within specialized agencies and development programs in the United Nations system.

Romania has consistently demonstrated a genuine commitment to maintaining international peace and security, sustainable development, promoting human rights,

democracy, and The Rule of Law. This commitment is supported by a strong attachment to multilateralism, international law, and the peaceful resolution of conflicts, principles that remain fundamental to its foreign policy.

In support of UN reform, Romania backs initiatives proposed by the Secretary-General and aligns with the objectives of the Political Declaration adopted on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the Organization's founding. (UN Peacekeeping, n.d.)

Furthermore, the country is a promoter of effective multilateral diplomacy, collaborating in global partnerships to address current challenges, including in the fields of technology, digitalization, and artificial intelligence. These areas are essential for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

In 2021, Romania marked 30 years of continuous participation in peacekeeping missions under the UN's auspices, such as those in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), South Sudan (UNMISS), and the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). These contributions reaffirm Romania's support for multilateralism and international security.

Since 2007, Romania, as a donor country for development assistance, has established partnerships with UN development agencies, contributing to initiatives aimed at supporting global progress and reducing inequalities.

3.1 The United Nations General Assembly and International Human Rights Day: A Symbiosis in the Service of Human Dignity

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), as the principal deliberative body of this global organization, plays a fundamental role in the promotion and defence of human rights at the international level. (United Nations, n.d.) This role is manifested through the discussion and adoption of resolutions on a wide range of human rights-related issues, as well as through cooperation with other UN bodies and specialized agencies in this field.

A landmark moment in the history of the General Assembly and in strengthening the international human rights normative framework was the adoption, on December 10, 1948, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (United Nations, n.d.) This monumental document, translated into over 500 languages, proclaims the inalienable rights of all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status.

To mark the importance of the Universal Declaration and promote the respect for human rights worldwide, the General Assembly proclaimed, through Resolution 423 (V) on December 4, 1950, December 10 as International Human Rights Day. This day is celebrated annually worldwide through various events and awareness campaigns, aiming to promote human rights education, combat discrimination, and encourage the respect for human dignity. (United Nations, 2024)

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights represents a foundational text of international human rights law, establishing a series of fundamental principles, such as the universality, indivisibility, interdependence, and interrelation of human rights.

The document recognizes a wide range of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, including the right to life, liberty, security, equality before the law, freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, the right to education, health, and an adequate standard of living.

3.2. United Nations General Assembly, New York, September 24-30, 2024 Main Outcomes

At the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly, which began on September 10, 2024, world leaders focused on human rights during conflicts and crises. In his speech on September 24, 2024, European Council President Charles Michel highlighted the devastating impact of armed conflicts on humanity: "Each bomb that falls in Kyiv, each hospital demolished in Gaza, each village destroyed in Sudan, each of these tragedies represents yet another attack on our humanity." (Michel 2024) These words underscored the urgent need to defend fundamental rights in the face of such atrocities.

Parallel events and bilateral meetings during the General Assembly provided a framework for mobilizing international actors in support of peace and human rights. During this period, International Human Rights Day became not only a symbolic occasion but also a moment to reaffirm the global commitment to the universal principles of human rights, illustrating the importance of collective action to combat injustice and protect human dignity. (United Nations, 2024)

In his speech before the General Assembly, President Charles Michel strongly condemned the terrorist attacks carried out by Hamas and called for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. He emphasized that such actions constitute a severe violation of international law and a direct threat to global stability. President Michel also called for an immediate ceasefire, in line with the International Court of Justice's order, emphasizing the need to avoid further escalation of the conflict in the Middle East. (Michel, 2024)

During a ministerial meeting dedicated to supporting the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Michel reaffirmed the European Union's role as a clear and honest voice in favor of peace and stability. He highlighted the EU's continued support for humanitarian workers operating in extremely challenging conditions and for UNRWA, an essential partner in providing aid to Palestinian refugees. (UNRWA and the European Union, 2024)

At the end of his intervention, President Michel emphasized the importance of respecting international humanitarian law, stating that there cannot be double standards in its application. Respect for universal rights and the consistent application of international norms remain fundamental for the legitimacy and effectiveness of the international system.

He also firmly denounced the illegal and unprovoked aggression of a permanent member of the UN Security Council against Ukraine. He highlighted that such actions seriously undermine the international rules-based order and the fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter, including the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states. Michel stressed that adherence to these principles is indispensable for maintaining global peace and security. (Charter of the United Nations, Art. 2, Para. 4)

The President reaffirmed the European Union's support for Ukraine, both through financial and humanitarian assistance and military aid, emphasizing that support for Kyiv is not only a moral duty but also a strategic investment in the stability and security of Europe. (European Union, 2024) Michel also emphasized that a just and lasting peace must be based on the principles of the UN Charter, in which aggressors are held accountable, and victims receive fair reparations. (United Nations General Assembly, 2014)

To underline the gravity of the situation, the President called for the unity of the international community in supporting Ukraine, stating that only through collective and firm actions can future similar acts of aggression be prevented and the respect for international norms be guaranteed. (Michel, 2024)

3.3. Peace and Security

Speaking during the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) debate on September 25, 2024, which focused on the role of leaders in the peace process, European Council President Charles Michel reaffirmed the importance of the responsibility that comes with being a permanent member of the Council. "A permanent seat in this Council is not a privilege, but a responsibility," he stated, emphasizing that the actions of permanent members directly influence the course of history and the situation beyond the walls of this institution.

Throughout the debate, Michel underscored the European Union's role as an active force in supporting global peace and security.

He urged the UNSC members to fully assume their historical responsibilities and to cooperate in addressing current global challenges. "It is time for all permanent members of this Council to rise to the height of their historic responsibility," Michel stressed, calling for a collective effort to prevent conflicts and promote stability.

At the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly, held from September 10 to 24, 2024, European Council President Charles Michel highlighted the urgent need for reforms to the United Nations Security Council. He emphasized that the current structure, which leaves certain regions underrepresented, undermines the legitimacy and effectiveness of the Council. Michel criticized the Council, stating that it increasingly resembles "a zombie" due to its inability to respond swiftly and decisively to global crises.

In this context, Michel proposed concrete measures for reform, including granting permanent seats to Africa and Latin America, which would better reflect the geopolitical diversity of the world. He also stressed the importance of involving

regional organizations, such as the African Union and the Organization of American States, in the decision-making process of the Council. (United Nations, 2024)

These proposals reflect a vision for a more inclusive Security Council, one better equipped to address the complex challenges of the 21st century.

3.4 Democracy

At the roundtable discussion titled "In Defense of Democracy – Combating Extremism," held on September 24, 2024, European Council President Charles Michel emphasized the universal importance of three fundamental principles underlying authentic democracy.

First, equity and inclusion are essential to ensure the participation of all citizens, regardless of origin, religion, or social status, in public life and decision-making processes.

Second, respect for human rights and political freedoms is the cornerstone of democracy, guaranteeing everyone the opportunity to express themselves and participate in societal life without fear of reprisals.

Third, Michel insisted on the necessity of strong and trusted institutions to support the functioning of a democratic state and protect citizens' rights against abuses of power. (Michel, 2024)

President Michel reaffirmed the European Union's commitment to defending democracy with determination and vision, stressing that it remains a central priority in both the EU's external and internal policies. "The possibility to choose is the beating heart of democracy," he stated, emphasizing that the right to choose freely is what defines and legitimizes any democratic system.

Michel delivered a clear message: the European Union will continue to be a stronghold of democracy, defending this fundamental right against any threats, whether they come from within or outside its borders. (European Union, 2024)

In his speech, Michel also warned about the dangers posed by extremism and populism, which erode democratic values. He emphasized that democracy is not only an ideal to defend but also an ongoing process that requires involvement, education, and continuous adaptation to the new challenges of contemporary society. (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 2024)

4. The Summit of the Future

At the UN Summit of the Future on September 22, 2024, world leaders discussed ways in which the international system can evolve to address the complex challenges of the contemporary era. The central themes of the summit included peace and security, digital cooperation, and financing the Sustainable Development Goals. President Charles Michel emphasized that the current generation bears the responsibility of finding effective solutions to these problems, stating: "Finding the best way to address our common challenges is the mission of our generation". (Michel, 2024)

A major outcome of the summit was the consensus adoption of the "Pact for the Future", a joint commitment aimed at strengthening the international system to better respond to the needs of both present and future generations. This pact reflects a collective vision of the need to improve global cooperation in addressing urgent issues, ranging from social inequalities to the regulation of digital technology and climate change. (United Nations, 2024)

Through this agreement, world leaders demonstrated the political will to modernize existing international structures, reaffirming their commitment to the principles of the UN Charter and adapting them to current demands. The pact not only represents a platform for collective action but also a symbol of global unity in the face of the challenges that define the future. (European Union, 2024)

4.1. The Pact for the Future Adopted at the 2024 UN General Assembly

The Pact for the Future, an ambitious document aimed at addressing pressing global challenges and building a better future for all, was adopted during the UN General Assembly in September 2024. The document establishes a series of concrete actions in areas such as peace and security, climate change, sustainable development, human rights, and global governance.

The main points of the Pact for the Future are:

- Reaffirmation of the commitment to multilateralism: The pact emphasizes the importance of international cooperation and the UN as the central platform for solving global problems. (United Nations, 2024)

- Concrete actions for a better future: The document includes 56 specific "actions" targeting a wide range of areas, from maintaining peace to combating climate change and promoting sustainable development.

- Focus on innovation and technology: The pact recognizes the essential role of innovation and technology, including artificial intelligence, in addressing global challenges and building a better future. (United Nations, 2024)

- Protection of future generations: The document underscores the responsibility toward future generations and the need to ensure them a safe and prosperous future.

Romania actively participated in the 2024 UN General Assembly and supported the adoption of the Pact for the Future. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024) Romania's President, Klaus Iohannis, delivered a speech during the General Assembly, emphasizing the country's commitment to multilateralism and to the values and principles of the UN. Furthermore, the President highlighted the importance of the Pact for the Future and reiterated Romania's support for its implementation.

The President's speech focused on the following themes:

- Defence of Multilateralism and the Rules-Based International Order: The President condemned Russia's aggressive war against Ukraine and emphasized the importance of respecting international law.

- **Combatting Climate Change:** The President reiterated Romania's commitment to the Paris Agreement and stressed the need for concrete actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Promotion of Democracy and Human Rights:** The President underscored the importance of respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as strengthening democracy globally. (Iohannis, 2024)
- **Supporting Sustainable Development:** The President highlighted Romania's commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and emphasized the importance of international cooperation to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. (United Nations, 2015)

The Pact for the Future acknowledges the importance of innovation and technology, including artificial intelligence, in addressing global challenges. (United Nations, 2024)

Romania also recognizes the potential of innovation and artificial intelligence in modernizing the public sector and increasing the efficiency of public services. (Ministry of Research, Innovation, and Digitalization, 2024) The Romanian government has launched a series of initiatives to promote innovation and digitization in the public sector.

Furthermore, during the summit, Romania's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Luminița Odobescu, highlighted the importance of respecting international law, human rights, and democratic values as essential prerequisites for the effective implementation of the "Pact for the Future". (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024) She delivered a speech during the Interactive Dialogue on the theme "Strengthening Multilateralism for International Peace and Security," where she reaffirmed Romania's support for effective multilateralism, centred on the principles of the UN. (United Nations, 2024)

She also emphasized the importance of respecting international law, human rights, and democratic values as key conditions for the implementation of the Pact for the Future.

On the sidelines of the Future Summit, the Romanian minister held a bilateral meeting with Saudi Arabia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud. The two officials discussed the status of bilateral relations, emphasizing the significant potential for increased trade and investment exchanges, as well as interest in expanding cooperation in areas such as transport, agriculture, and cybersecurity. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024) The meeting also provided an opportunity for an exchange of views on the developments of Russia's aggressive war against Ukraine and the escalating tensions in the Middle East.

Additionally, Minister Luminița Odobescu met with Mantas Adomenas, the Secretary-General of the Community of Democracies (CoD). The Romanian official expressed support for the Secretary-General's work at the start of his mandate, which began in August 2024, and reiterated Romania's full willingness to cooperate in promoting the CoD's objectives. (Community of Democracies, 2024) The two

officials discussed the challenges to democracy and human rights, as well as the CoD's future priorities

The Pact for the Future includes priorities related to democracy, inclusive governance, and fundamental rights, and this meeting highlights Romania's role as an active partner in promoting these values. (United Nations, 2024) The challenges to democracy discussed in the meeting align with the pact's objectives, which propose the creation of global mechanisms to protect democratic institutions.

5. National Strategy for Research, Innovation, and Smart Specialization 2022-2027

This strategy is a concrete expression of how Romania aligns its national policies with the commitments made under the Pact for the Future.

The National Strategy for Research, Innovation, and Smart Specialization, developed by the Ministry of Research, Innovation, and Digitalization, defines the strategic framework for transforming Romania's research and innovation system by 2030. It is based on a firm commitment to recognizing excellence, stimulating performance, and strengthening collaboration between the public and private sectors. Science, innovation, and entrepreneurship are seen as essential pillars of sustainable development, in the context of local, national, and international interconnectedness. The strategy proposes four general objectives: the development of the research, development, and innovation system; supporting innovation ecosystems associated with smart specializations; mobilizing towards innovation; and intensifying European and international cooperation. This approach reflects an integrated vision of Romania's economic and technological development, based on high-value-added investments and increased productivity. (Ministry of Research, Innovation, and Digitalization, 2024)

Minister Sebastian Burduja emphasized that this strategy represents more than a programmatic document: it is a vision focused on economic growth through the promotion of meritocracy and the recognition of research achievements. In his view, objective assessments, based on transparent criteria and indicators, provide a solid foundation for resource allocation. The principle of "better more for fewer than less for many" guides the prioritization of investments, emphasizing excellence and attracting elite human resources. The strategy aims not only to attract European funds through programs such as Horizon Europe but also to improve research conditions and infrastructure to stimulate the return of Romanian researchers from the diaspora and attract international specialists. (Burduja, 2024)

A central element of the strategy is the creation of an attractive innovation ecosystem that supports entrepreneurs and encourages risk-taking. This includes developing modern facilities, challenging research programs, and a favourable environment for collaboration between the public and private sectors. The document also emphasizes the importance of technology and know-how transfer to the Romanian private sector, thus strengthening the country's economic

competitiveness. Romania aspires to become a significant player in the international talent flow, transforming into an attractive destination for researchers and innovators from around the world. (Executive Unit for Financing Higher Education, Research, Development, and Innovation, 2024)

The strategy resulted from an extensive consultation process, carried out in partnership with the Ministry's experts, the Executive Unit for Financing Higher Education, Research, Development, and Innovation (UEFISCDI), research organizations, the Romanian Academy, as well as academic and private sectors. (Ministerul Cercetării, Inovării și Digitalizării, 2024) This partnership demonstrates a participatory and integrated approach to defining national priorities, highlighting the commitment to aligning Romania's research and innovation system with international standards.

5.1 National Strategy in the Field of Artificial Intelligence 2024-2027

The National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence (SN-IA) establishes the directions for the development of artificial intelligence in Romania for the period 2024-2027 (Executive Unit for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Financing, 2023, p. 12) and promoting excellence and trust in these technologies. (Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digitalization, 2021, p. 24)

General Objective and Mission:

The SN-IA aims to support the adoption of AI technologies for economic growth and social well-being, aligning Romania with European and international standards and regulations. The document aims both to capitalize on national innovative potential and to manage the risks associated with AI usage through an appropriate governance and regulatory framework. (Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digitalization, 2024, p. 7)

Specific Objectives:

The strategy focuses on six major directions:

1. Education and AI Skills – Developing human resources through training and increasing digital literacy.
2. Infrastructure and Data – Building a resilient national infrastructure and expanding access to data sets.
3. Research, Development, and Innovation (RDI) – Strengthening the national AI research and innovation ecosystem.
4. Technology Transfer – Supporting collaboration between research and the business environment to leverage RDI outcomes.
5. AI Adoption in Society – Expanding the use of AI solutions in the public sector and socio-economic domains.
6. Governance and Regulation – Creating an ethical and transparent regulatory framework. (Minister of Research, Innovation and Digitalization, 2023)

Anticipated Results:

The implementation of the strategy is expected to generate:

- Increased capacity for training in the field of AI, both for specialists and the general public.
- Development of digital infrastructure and reusable national datasets.
- Enhanced economic competitiveness through the integration of AI technologies in both the public and private sectors.
- Improved public services and quality of life through the use of AI solutions in healthcare, education, transportation, and national security.
- Promotion of Romania as an important regional and international player in the field of AI.

5.2 European and International Context:

The strategy is aligned with European initiatives, such as the European Strategy for AI and the Coordinated Plan on Artificial Intelligence, emphasizing Romania's commitment to contributing to the development of a common regulatory framework and promoting ethical practices in AI. Internationally, Romania aims to become a strategic partner, engaging in global standardization and cooperation for the development of AI technologies. (European Commission, 2018)

5.3 Challenges

Romania faces a series of systemic challenges that limit the development and integration of artificial intelligence (AI) at the national level. Underfunding of research is one of the biggest issues, with the country allocating a percentage of its GDP for research and development far below the European average. This leads to a lack of modern technological infrastructure, which hinders both the attraction of talent and the implementation of large-scale projects. (Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digitalization, 2024)

Specifically, fragmented and inconsistent funding discourages long-term initiatives in the field of AI, directly impacting Romania's competitiveness on the international stage.

Another major obstacle is the low level of digital literacy. The general population faces difficulties in adopting new technologies, and basic digital skills remain underdeveloped, creating a significant gap compared to other European Union member states. This lack affects not only end-users but also personnel within public administration or companies wishing to adopt AI.

For example, AI solutions require a base of trained users to implement and maintain them efficiently, and Romania still lacks a robust plan for educating the population in this regard. (Romanian Authority for Digitalization, 2023)

Another challenge is the *fragmentation of resources and efforts*. Academic institutions, research organizations, and private companies rarely collaborate strategically, hindering the creation of coherent and efficient ecosystems. Moreover, the lack of centralized coordination for research and innovation projects leads to duplication of efforts and waste of resources. This is further exacerbated by the

absence of open data platforms and a shared digital infrastructure that would enable efficient collaboration between these entities. (Ministry of Education, 2021)

Additionally, *resistance to change* poses a significant barrier. In both the public and private sectors, implementing AI solutions is often perceived as complex or even threatening to the organizational status quo. Employees fear job automation, and managers struggle to justify the necessary investments for adopting such technologies. This reluctance is fuelled by a general lack of knowledge about AI's benefits and how it can improve organizational processes. (Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digitalization, 2024, pp. 8–9)

Finally, *the current legislative framework* is insufficient to regulate AI usage in a manner that ensures user safety and ethics. Without a clear set of rules, companies and public institutions hesitate to invest in AI technologies, fearing potential legal or reputational risks. Romania needs to strengthen its regulations to create a trustworthy environment that encourages the responsible development and adoption of these technologies.

5.4 Methodology

The process of drafting the *National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence 2024-2027* was based on a comprehensive and inclusive methodology that integrated multiple perspectives and expertise from various fields. The document was developed between 2021 and 2023 by an interdisciplinary team of experts in technology, digitalization, research, public policy, and entrepreneurship. The goal of this effort was to create a strategic framework tailored to Romania's realities and needs while aligning with European and international initiatives.

A key element of the methodology was the extensive public consultation process, which included dedicated sessions for academia, public administration, the private sector, and civil society. This stage aimed to validate the proposed objectives and measures, identify the strengths and weaknesses of Romania's AI ecosystem, and build a shared vision among the stakeholders.

The feedback collected was incorporated into the final strategy, providing a solid foundation for effective implementation. (Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digitalization, 2024, pp. 5–6)

The strategy also relied on detailed analyses of the national and international context to identify both opportunities and risks associated with AI development in Romania. The document includes a synthesis of European initiatives, such as the AI Act and the European AI Strategy, ensuring consistency with the European Union's development directions.

At the national level, existing policies and strategies, such as the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR), were analysed to identify synergies and complementarities with other digital transformation initiatives. (European Commission, n.d.)

Another important aspect of the methodology was the *definition of objectives and measures based on clear principles*. The strategy includes six general objectives

and 13 specific objectives, each with well-defined performance indicators. The action plan is structured into stages and priorities, with measures adaptable based on implementation progress and technological developments. (Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digitalization, 2024, pp. 7–9) Monitoring and evaluation of progress were also integrated into the methodology. (Eurostat, n.d.)

Specific indicators were defined for each objective and measure, aligned with relevant statistical data at both the national and European levels. This monitoring framework ensures transparency and accountability in implementing the strategy, providing decision-makers with up-to-date information for adjusting plans if necessary. The strategy was grounded in a collaborative approach, relying on partnerships between public institutions, academia, and the private sector. This synergy was considered essential for developing a robust national AI ecosystem capable of addressing both internal needs and global challenges. (European Commission, n.d.)

A recent example highlighting Romania's commitment to the objectives of the *Pact for the Future* is the approval, during the Government meeting on September 18, 2024, of the *National Strategy for the Development and Support of Digitalization through Digital Innovation Hubs*, proposed by the Ministry of Research, Innovation, and Digitalization (MRID). This strategy establishes a clear operational framework for allocating €24 million to the seven European Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs) in Romania.

6. Digital Innovation Hubs

Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs) were established to connect industrial and commercial companies, as well as public administrations, with advanced digital solutions using cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data, and cloud computing. These hubs act as essential regional centres for supporting digital transformation and enhancing economic competitiveness at both regional and national levels.

Minister Bogdan Ivan explained that DIHs facilitate the transfer of know-how between the public and private sectors and enable the integration of innovative companies, especially start-ups and SMEs, into digital ecosystems. Each hub is funded with €3.4 million, entirely covered by European funds. (Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digitalization, 2024)

DIHs are designed as "one-stop shops" to help companies and public institutions become more efficient and competitive, both in their production processes and the services they offer. Each hub brings together technology experts who provide technical support and consultancy for the digital transformation of businesses and public administrations. (Ivan, 2024)

6.1 Benefits of Digital Innovation Hubs

DIHs bring a range of essential advantages to the digital economy:

1. They support the digital transformation of the European Union at the regional level.
2. They increase business competitiveness by promoting innovative solutions.
3. They allow companies to "test before investing" in digital technologies.
4. They encourage the implementation of sustainable technologies in both the private and public sectors.

The funding for these hubs is provided through a partnership between the European Union's DIGITAL program (50%) and the Smart Growth, Digitalization, and Financial Instruments Program (50%).

This combination of European funds ensures the full functionality of DIHs, offering concrete support for accessing European financing and integrating digital technologies into administrative and economic activities. (European Union, 2024)

Digital Transformation in Five Strategic Areas

Digital transformation through DIHs is implemented based on five key directions:

1. Digital Public Administration – Modernizing administrative processes using advanced technologies.
2. Digital Economy – Building a resilient economy based on digital technologies.
3. Digital Education – Developing digital skills for the population and businesses.
4. Cybersecurity – Protecting critical digital infrastructures.
5. Digital Communications and Future Technologies – Promoting advanced connectivity and innovative digital infrastructures. (Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digitalization, 2024)

6.2 Regional DIH Network

Romania has seven European Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs), distributed regionally:

1. FIT EDIH – Central Region.
2. Wallachia eHub – South-Muntenia Region.
3. CiTyInnoHub – South-East Region.
4. eDIH-DIZ – North-East Region.
5. DIGIVEST – West Region.
6. DIH4Society – North-West Region.
7. Transilvania DIH – North-West Region.

These hubs actively contribute to integrating digital technologies into public and private sectors, strengthening Romania's capacity to address digital challenges and positioning the country as a regional leader in this field.

In conclusion, Romania's efforts to integrate digital technologies and strengthen innovation capacity in the public sector are closely tied to its commitments within the United Nations framework. Active participation in the UN General Assembly and support for adopted documents, such as the *Pact for the Future*, highlight Romania's role as a responsible partner in promoting global governance based on democratic principles, innovation, and sustainability.

Through initiatives like the *National Research, Innovation, and Smart Specialization Strategy* and the *National Digital Platform*, Romania demonstrates not only its commitment to UN principles but also a concrete vision for integrating advanced technologies to benefit its citizens. In doing so, the country takes an active role in shaping a better future, rooted in innovation, sustainability, and global cooperation.

Conclusions

- Romania's participation in the 2024 UN General Assembly and endorsement of the Pact for the Future represents more than diplomatic formality; they underline a sustained commitment to multilateralism and the principles of sustainable development. By aligning with such global frameworks, Romania demonstrates its willingness to engage in shaping international norms, while also internalizing these principles in national policies. This alignment reinforces Romania's legitimacy and relevance as an actor in the global governance system.

- The strategic development and implementation of national policies—such as the National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence and the Smart Specialization Strategy—highlight Romania's effort to embed innovation into the very structure of public administration. These initiatives are aimed at improving the effectiveness, transparency, and responsiveness of public institutions. However, the success of these reforms is directly linked to overcoming systemic issues, including inconsistent funding, fragmented research efforts, and limited coordination between key stakeholders.

- Romania's external engagements, particularly in peacekeeping operations and partnerships with international organizations, position the country as an active promoter of democratic values and human rights. These actions signal that innovation in governance extends beyond the technical dimension and must also be anchored in strong institutional ethics and strategic diplomacy. Romania's contributions to international stability underscore the country's dual commitment to domestic innovation and global responsibility.

- Despite the progress made, significant challenges remain—chief among them being the underdevelopment of digital skills in both the public and private sectors. Closing this gap will require a long-term investment in education, training, and digital infrastructure. The creation of inclusive ecosystems that bring together government, academia, civil society, and the private sector will be essential in fostering a resilient and forward-looking administrative culture capable of navigating future global crises.

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