

Article

# Management Challenges Regarding Information Management in Public Organization Structures

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**Citation:** Pleșca (Murariu), M. (2025). Management Challenges Regarding Information Management in Public Organization Structures. *SEA - Practical Application of Science, Issue (39)*, 199-207. <https://doi.org/10.70147/s39199207>

Received: 14 October 2025  
Revised: 29 December 2025  
Published: 30 December 2025



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**Abstract:** The activity of public sector managers is constantly subject to challenges arising from legislative changes, ad-litteram compliance with legislation, but also from demands from citizens. The article aims to analyze the degree of compliance of county council organizations, prefectural institutions, city and town halls in the North-East Region of Romania with regard to the degree of publication of information of public interest. The analysis was carried out by processing data from 2024, monitored by the General Secretariat of the Government and displayed on the website [www.sgg.ro](http://www.sgg.ro). Secondary data analysis was used to highlight the situation of ex officio publication of information of public interest. The study highlighted the fact that public institutions with a more complex organizational structure, with a larger number of employees, which have specialized IT departments, record higher percentages of compliance with regard to the publication of information of public interest, while small city halls with a small number of employees hardly reach the 50% compliance percentage. The institution of the prefect record the highest average compliance among the institutions analyzed.

**Keywords:** Public management, Public organization,

**JEL code:** H76, H83

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## INTRODUCTION

Public institutions in Romania have been perceived for a long time as lacking transparency in their activities, but also in their communication with citizens. The concept of decisional transparency has been regulated in Romania since 2003 by Law no. 52 and is presented in the following manner: "the concept of decisional transparency comes to support the increasingly close collaboration between citizens, on the one hand, and between citizens and public institutions - central and/or local, on the other hand" (Pohoată, 2018, p. 114).

In 2001, sociologist Bruno Ștefan coordinated a market research at the level of local administration in Romania and, among other things, wanted to find out what were the citizens' sources of information regarding the concerns of local public administration representatives (Boboc, 2008).

Table No. 1 presents citizens' responses regarding information sources and reveals that at the level of local public administration, in the early 2000s, no distinct tool for displaying public information such as websites was highlighted.

In 2008, the Institute of Public Policies conducted an analysis of the content of internet pages for 23 cities, 36 municipalities, and the 6 sectors of the Capital (Boboc, 2008).

The most relevant conclusions of the study conducted by the Institute of Public Policy, for the topic of this research article, are presented in Table no. 2.

A look at other countries in the European Union brings information and data of obvious comparability. Norway, now in the first places in the degree of digitalization of public services, in 2002 it recorded much more dynamic results in terms of the existence of the cities' own websites. „Public managers have the possibility of influencing the quality of the data that are produced in their departments” (Kroll, 2015, p. 205).

In Norway, since 2002, 309 municipalities have developed their own website through which they informed citizens about the administrative activity of the cities. The websites also contained tourist information, information on local politics, data on the municipal political organization, general and local news, information on municipal services, but also a page on local political debates (Christensen & Aars, 2002). The study conducted by the aforementioned researchers, for the 309 municipalities out of all Norwegian municipalities, highlights the fact that the websites were not uniform and the degree of updating of the information differed from city to city. However, there were both small and large municipalities that had not created their own websites. The researchers

presented an analysis regarding the time to update the information (Table no. 3)

39% of the study participants appreciated that the website of their institution is updated daily, a very high percentage for 2002, when there were not so many tools for automatically updating information. The activity of public institutions in Romania became much more known to citizens after 2010, with the development and use of modern communication technologies such as email, newsletters or social networks. The development of public organizations' own websites became mandatory as a result of legislative regulations.

"The fundamental objective of public management is to increase the degree of satisfaction of the public interest, being focused on general and specific needs (intra-organizational and extra-organizational). General and specific social needs fully determine the content of the public interest (Androniceanu, 2020, p. 21)." Satisfying the public interest is the main target that every public institution must achieve and this is achieved through strategy, general and specific objectives, attributions and tasks planned and controlled, whenever necessary, by public sector managers.

"Public institutions refer to those public organizations created to carry out socio-cultural activities. The essential characteristic of budgetary institutions is that their activity does not generate income that would ensure their full self-financing, their resources being supplemented by from public budgets and/or from own or extra-budgetary revenues (Georgescu & Păvăloaia, 2015)".

Often criticized, public management is subject to political decisions through resolutions adopted by local or county councils and budgetary constraints to which it must identify solutions.

"To identify the elements that ensure performance in an organization, managers' thinking must be adapted to identify each aspect of the activity and identify ways to adapt that will bring performance, through an attitude and behavior based on independence and effectiveness" (Vrabie Gudană & Cristache, 2022).

For a long time, citizens have not had the opportunity to know information about public institutions in Romania, to find out the powers conferred on them by the laws under which they operate, to know the level of public sector salaries or the purchases made for the operation of these entities. This aspect related to financing from public budgets obliges managers in public institutions (directors, heads of services, general secretaries) to demonstrate transparency in spending public money. The preparation for Romania's accession to the European Union brought legislative improvements regarding the management of public institutions and subsequently mandatory requirements were

established for the publication of information of public interest, but also for ensuring decision-making transparency. In this regard, Law no. 544/2001 on free access to information of public interest, Law no. 52/2003 on decision-making transparency in public administration, republished, were adopted. Subsequently, Government Decision no. 831/2022 was adopted for the approval of the Methodological Norms for the application of Law no. 52/2003 on decision-making transparency in public administration.

In 2013, the Romanian Digital Agenda Agency was established, an authority that took the first steps towards the digital transformation of national public institutions. In 2020, the Government created the Romanian Digitalization Authority (ADR), which continued the activity of the Romanian Digital Agenda Agency. ADR manages the National Electronic System (SEN), which is called the "public administration portal" in Romania.

Thus, important steps have been taken at the legislative level, at the central organizational level, but all these steps must be put into practice by managers in public organizations) and at the level of local public institutions and authorities (county councils and city and commune mayors).

Through the National Strategy Anticorruption 2021 – 2025 provided for the general standard for publishing information of public interest, which contains, among other things, mandatory requirements for the publication of data and information relating to: institutional integrity, legislation on the organization and functioning institution, Organization and Functioning Regulations (ROF); organizational chart, list of subordinate institutions, programs and strategies, reports and studies, public procurement, declarations of assets and interests of the institution's staff. Therefore, an extensive list of documents that are mandatory to be displayed on the institutions' website and public authorities.

Our study aims to find out which of the local public institutions (county councils, city halls and prefect's institutions) in the North-East Region of Romania achieves the highest degree of compliance in terms of publishing information of public interest.

## METHODOLOGY

To develop the research, secondary data analysis was used, namely the analysis of monitoring reports on the publication of information in 2024 by public institutions, documents identified on the website of the General Secretariat of the Government, available at [www.sgg.ro](http://www.sgg.ro).

At the same time, the information identified on the website <https://www.recensamantromania.ro> was processed and a list of administrative-territorial units in the North-East Region of Romania was created, which contains county councils, municipalities and the cities in the counties: Bacău, Botoșani, Iași, Neamț, Suceava and Vaslui. No data on the administrative-territorial units called communes were identified on the website of the General Secretariat of the Government, their number in Romania being over 2800, therefore our list does not contain information regarding this form of administrative organization.

Following the analysis and comparison of the monitoring reports for the institutions listed above, 6 county councils, 6 prefectural institutions, 17 municipalities and 29 cities were found in the North-East Region of Romania.

## RESULTS

### Analysis of the degree of publication of public information by county councils in the North-East Region of Romania

County councils are led by a president and two vice-presidents. The maximum number of employees within the specialized technical apparatus is calculated by reference to the number of inhabitants in the county and is communicated annually by the Prefect's Institution. Currently, the Government intends to modify this method of calculating the number of employees.

The position of county secretary general is a public management position and its exercise ensures the legality of the issuance and adoption of administrative acts.

Table no. 4 presents the compliance percentages regarding the publication of information of public interest at the level of the 6 county councils in the North-East Region of Romania.

County councils have complex organizational structures, in which there are departments, services and compartments responsible for achieving their objectives. Each county council has an IT department that provides support for the IT services in the institution. From the analysis of data for 2024, at the level of the 6 county councils, we note that the highest percentage of publication of public information was achieved by Bacău County with 86%, while the lowest was recorded by the county of Iasi with 54%.

Three county councils: Botoșani, Iași and Vaslui recorded percentages below the annual average for the country, which is 76%. The average of the 6 county councils, in terms of the degree of

publication of public information, is 73%, 3% below the percentage recorded at the Romanian level.

#### **Analysis of the degree of publication of public information by municipalities in the North-East Region of Romania**

Municipalities are cities that have an important social, economic or cultural role. They are led by a mayor who is the main authorizing officer of credits, assisted by one or two deputy mayors. The general secretary of the municipality approves the legality of the mayor's draft decisions and provisions.

The analysis of administrative organization identified 17 municipalities in the North-East Region of Romania. This number includes, of course, the 6 county seat municipalities.

There are significant differences between some municipalities, the criterion related to the number of inhabitants shows the huge discrepancies between them: Roman municipality (48,644 inhabitants) and Fălticeni municipality (12,578 inhabitants), according to the 2021 population census.

It can be seen in table no. 5 that the highest level of information publication is recorded by the municipalities in the county Neamț with an average of 89%, the lowest average is recorded at the level of municipalities in Suceava County with a value of 57.20%. Municipalities with a smaller number of inhabitants such as Fălticeni or Vatra Dornei recorded percentages of 46% in 2024, the lowest percentages among the 17 municipalities analyzed.

#### **Analysis of the degree of publication of public information by cities in the North-East Region of Romania**

Cities are administrative and economic centers with a smaller number of inhabitants than municipalities. The local council of the administrative-territorial unit adopts decisions, which are most often carried out by the mayor and a deputy mayor. The general secretary of the municipality ensures that the requirements of legality in the field of adopting administrative acts are met.

The analysis highlighted the fact that there are 29 cities in the North-East Region of Romania. The average calculated for these cities, regarding the degree of publication of public information, is only 44.14%. The monitoring carried out by the General Secretariat of the Government highlighted the fact that there are cities that have recorded values below 25%: the city of Brosteni recorded 0 percent of public information publication. Other mayoralties such as Salcea and Liteni in Suceava County had a percentage of 14%, the administrative-territorial unit Milișăuți recorded a percentage of 22% (Table no. 6).

The calculated average of the degree of compliance with the standards for the ex officio display of public information for the cities in Vaslui County is 56%.

It is known that the number of employees in a city hall is lower than that in a municipal hall, the number of employees in an administrative-territorial unit being calculated by reference to the number of population in the locality, and we appreciate, following the examination of the compliance percentages, that there is a decrease in the degree of publication of public information from municipality to city. One of the explanations could be the fact that there is no specialized staff at the level of city halls to monitor the performance of this activity and even upload the mandatory information to be posted on the city hall website. There are no IT departments within city halls, the service is usually outsourced, and most of the time the activity is carried out with delay.

#### **Analysis of the degree of publication of public information by the prefect's institutions in the North-East Region of Romania**

At the level of each county, the institution of the prefect was established in 1991, which has, among other responsibilities: and control and guidance of decentralized public services, responsibilities in organizing the electoral process, responsibilities in managing emergency situations.

The institution's organizational chart is standard for all 41 prefectures, and is approved by Decision No. 906 of October 22, 2020 for the implementation of some provisions of Government Emergency Ordinance No. 57/2019 on the Administrative Code. The institution is led by a prefect who is the tertiary credit authorizing officer and who has two sub-prefects in the case of counties or 3 sub-prefects in the municipality of Bucharest.

The guidance and control of the prefect's institutions are carried out by the Ministry of Internal Affairs through specialized departments.

The analysis highlights the fact that the Institution of the Prefect – County Botoșani had the highest degree of compliance regarding the publication of information of public interest in 2024, and the lowest was recorded by the Prefect's Institution - Bacău County, with only 60%. At the national level, the average degree of compliance is 82%, while the average of the 6 degrees of compliance for the prefect's institutions in the North East Region is only 74%, therefore below the national average.

## CONCLUSIONS

The study highlighted the fact that none of the institutions analyzed in the North-East Region A 100% compliance rate was identified regarding the publication of public information on its own website.

At the level of the 6 county councils analyzed, the average is 73%, while the average compliance for the ex officio publication of public information at the national level is 76% for county councils.

The analysis of the compliance level of the 17 municipalities in the North-East Region showed an average of 66.71%. The data was extracted from the report on the compliance level of cities in Romania, which showed an average of 44.14%, but we note that the report includes all 325 cities in Romania.

Regarding the average obtained for the degree of compliance of the 29 cities in the North-East Region, we consider that the percentage of 44.14% denotes a weak concern of managers within public institutions to display information of public interest. The specialized apparatus of city halls is often undersized and IT services are outsourced .

The study reveals that the highest degree of compliance is found in prefectural institutions with a percentage of 74%, but still below the national average of 82%.

A possible explanation is given by the fact that these institutions have a website with a unitary structure at the country level, created by specialists from the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The functional organizational structures of institutions are standard for all 41 counties and for the municipality of Bucharest, as provided for by the operating legislation. At the same time, at the level of the prefect's institutions, there are specialists who have responsibilities regarding the publication of information of public interest.

Therefore, the administrative-territorial units analyzed in the North-East Region of Romania: county councils, cities, but also the prefect's institutions have a measurable degree of compliance, in terms of publishing information of public interest, but below the average calculated at national level.

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**LIST OF TABLES**

**Table no. 1**

Citizens' sources of information regarding the activity of public institutions

Information/communication sources	%
From personal sources (relatives, friends, colleagues, neighbors, etc.)	30
From local newspapers	28
From direct meetings with city hall representatives	15
From unofficial meetings with representatives of local authorities (at church, at the stadium, etc.)	11
From the central press	5
From the newsletters published by the city hall	3
From other sources	4
I don't know/not applicable	4

*Source: (Ștefan, coord., 2001) cited in (Boboc, 2008, p.119)*

**Table no. 2**

Selection of study conclusions Institute for Public Policies

No. of documents	Conclusion description
1.	16.6% of municipal mayors did not send any response to the investigators' requests, even though they were violating the law by doing so.
2.	30.4% of municipal mayors and 30.4% of city mayors did not have a website (in January 2008).
3.	51.6% of the city halls at the municipal level, although they have a website, had not published the activity report for the previous year.
4.	38.7% of the city halls at the municipal level and 10.3% of those at the city level did not have a link to the "Local Council meetings" on their website, which would provide, for the benefit of citizens, public management decisions and the dates of convening these meetings, especially since some of them are also public.

*Synthesis after (Boboc, 2008, p.121)*

**Table No. 3**

Frequency of updating information on the website of Norwegian municipalities

Update frequency	Percentage %	Number of municipalities
Daily	39	97
Once every 2 - 3 days	32.1	80
Once every 2 – 3 weeks	11.2	28
Once a month	9.2	23
Every 2-3 months	2.8	7
Every 6 months	1.6	4
Less frequent/no update at the time of the study	4	10
Total	100	249

*Source: (Christensen & Aars, 2002, p.37)*

**Table no. 4**

Analysis of the degree of publication of public information by county councils in the North-East Region of Romania in 2024

No. crt.	Councils county (2024)	Publication level A OF INFORMATION
1	Bacau	86%
2	Botosani	68%
3	Iași	54%
4	Neamț	84%
5	Suceava	80%
6	Vaslui	66%
	Average of the 6 councils counties in the North East Region of Romania	73.00%
	Country average	76.00%

Source: Processing after <https://sgg.gov.ro/1/transparenta-decizionala-monitorizare/>

**Table no. 5**

Analysis of the degree of publication of public information by municipalities in the North-East Region of Romania in 2024

No. of documents	Municipalities in the North-East Region of Romania (2024)	County	Publication level A OF INFORMATION
1	Bacau	Bacau	68%
2	Moinești	Bacau	60%
3	Onesti	Bacau	70%
	<b>Average calculated at the level municipalities in-county Bacau</b>		<b>66.00%</b>
4	Botosani	Botosani	74%
5	Dorohoi	Botosani	68%
	<b>Average calculated at the level municipalities in-county Botosani</b>		<b>71.00%</b>
6	Iași	Iași	84%
7	Pașcani	Iași	60%
	<b>Average calculated at the level municipalities in-county Iași</b>		<b>72.00%</b>
8	Piatra Neamț	Neamț	86%
9	Roman	Neamț	92%
	<b>Average calculated at the level municipalities in-county Neamț</b>		<b>89.00%</b>
10	Suceava	Suceava	60%
11	Falticeni	Suceava	46%
12	Rădăuți	Suceava	56%
13	Câmpulung Moldovenesc	Suceava	78%
14	Vatra Dornei	Suceava	46%

	<b>Average calculated at the level municipalities in-Suceava County</b>		<b>57.20%</b>
15	Vaslui	Vaslui	64%
16	Huși	Vaslui	58%
17	Barlad	Vaslui	64%
	<b>Average calculated at the level municipalities in-county Vaslui</b>		<b>62%</b>
	<b>Average of municipalities in the North East region of Romania</b>		<b>66.71%</b>
	<b>National average the level cities in Romania</b>		<b>54%</b>

Source: Processing after <https://sgg.gov.ro/1/transparenta-decizionala-monitorizare/>

**Table no. 6**

Analysis of the degree of publication of public information by cities in the North-East Region of Romania in 2024

No. of cards	Cities ( analysis year 2024)	County	Publication level A OF INFORMATION
1	Buhuși	Bacau	50%
2	Comănești	Bacau	38%
3	Dărmănești	Bacau	60%
4	Slănic Moldova	Bacau	44%
5	Târgu Ocna	Bacau	58%
	<b>Average calculated at the level cities in the county Bacau</b>		<b>50%</b>
6	Bucecea	Botosani	42%
7	Darabani	Botosani	24%
8	Flămânzi	Botosani	26%
9	Săveni	Botosani	82%
10	Ștefănești	Botosani	70%
	<b>Average calculated at the level cities in the county Botosani</b>		<b>49%</b>
11	Harlau	Iași	56%
12	Podu - Iloaiei	Iași	26%
13	Târgu Frumos	Iași	78%
	<b>Average calculated at the level cities in the county Iași</b>		<b>53.30%</b>
14	Bicaz	Neamț	60%
15	Roznov	Neamț	40%
16	Târgu - Neamț	Neamț	60%
	<b>Average calculated at the level cities in the county Neamț</b>		<b>53.33%</b>
17	Broșteni	Suceava	0%
18	Cajvana	Suceava	24%
19	Dolhasca	Suceava	42%
20	Frasin	Suceava	72%
21	Gura Humorului	Suceava	34%

22	Liteni	Suceava	14%
23	Milișăuți	Suceava	22%
24	Salcea	Suceava	14%
25	Siret	Suceava	32%
26	Solca	Suceava	46%
27	Vicovu de Sus	Suceava	54%
	<b>Average calculated at the level cities in Suceava county</b>		<b>32.18%</b>
28	Murgeni	Vaslui	38%
29	Negrești	Vaslui	74%
	<b>Average calculated at the level cities in the county Vaslui</b>		<b>56%</b>
	Average of cities in the North East Region of Romania		44.14%
	<b>Average calculated at the level national for cities from Romania</b>		<b>54%</b>

Source: Processing after <https://sgg.gov.ro/1/transparenta-decizionala-monitorizare/>

**Table no. 7**

Analysis of the degree of publication of public information by the prefect's institutions in the North-East Region of Romania in 2024

No. of documents.	prefect's institutions	Size percentage
	2024	
1	Bacău	60%
2	Botoșani	88%
3	Iași	80%
4	Neamț	72%
5	Suceava	68%
6	Vaslui	76%
degree compliance environment for the 6 institutions of the prefect of the North-East Region		74%
Medium grade national compliance		82%

Source: Processing after <https://sgg.gov.ro/1/transparenta-decizionala-monitorizare/>