



UNIVERSITY OF CRAIOVA
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
POLITICAL SCIENCES SPECIALIZATION

Revista de Științe Politice.
Revue des Sciences Politiques
No. 88 • 2025

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(Online) - ISSN 2344 – 4452

ISSN–L 1584 – 224X

No. 88 • 2025

Revista de Științe Politice.
Revue des Sciences Politiques





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NOTE of the EDITORIAL BOARD: *Revista de Științe Politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques* is abstracted by/ indexed in:



EBSCO

Political Science Complete (accessed February 13, 2025). Database Coverage List:

<https://www.ebsco.com/m/ee/Marketing/titleLists/poh-coverage.xls> (position 2765)

Subject Social Sciences & Humanities/ Area Studies/ European Studies:

<https://www.ebsco.com/m/ee/Marketing/titleLists/poh-subject.xls> (position 1634)

Central & Eastern European Academic Source (accessed February 13, 2025)

Database Coverage List: <https://www.ebsco.com/m/ee/Marketing/titleLists/e5h-coverage.htm>



ProQuest Database: Political Science Database

ProQuest Political Science Database Title list accurate as of 15 February 2025 (position 1166)

<http://tls.search.proquest.com/titlelist/jsp/list/tlsSingle.jsp?productId=1005684&ga=2.52655656.1051237904.1586630685-491238151.1586630685>



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ICI Journals Master list, <https://journals.indexcopernicus.com/search/details?id=29570>

ICV 2023: 100.00; ICV 2022: 100.00; ICV 2021: 100.00; ICV 2020: 91.36; ICV 2019:94.31; ICV 2018: 97.28; ICV 2017: 88.23; ICV 2016: 78.07; ICV 2015: 65.59; ICV 2014: 65.01 • Standardized Value: 6.55; ICV 2013: 5.04



ERIH PLUS

<https://kanalregister.hkdir.no/publiseringsskanaler/erihplus/periodical/info.action?id=486286>

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2025: h-index: 19; i10-index: 57

2024: h-index: 15; i10-index: 40

2023: h-index: 12; i10-index: 25

2022: h-index: 11; i10-index: 14



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ACNP Catalogo Italiano dei Periodici

<https://acnpsearch.unibo.it/journal/2601620>



Information Matrix for the Analysis of Journals

<https://miar.ub.edu/issn/1584-224X>

WorldCat

<https://www.worldcat.org/title/Revista-de-Stiinte-Politice-Revue-de-Sciences-Politiques/oclc/896853479>

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ORIGINAL PAPER

The option of the tourism economic operators for the legal form of limited liability companies

Lavinia Elena Stuparu¹⁾

Abstract:

The status of tourism as a strategic domain of the Romanian economy places its specific activities under the influence of a rich general and special legislation. In turn, economic operators in tourism are a relevant component of the legal category of professionals and carry out economic activities specific to travel agencies, namely accommodation activities, public catering and other specific services in tourist reception structures as their owner and/or administrator. Despite the permissiveness offered by romanian tourism legislation regarding the legal form in which such subjects can operate on the market, in practice, they predominantly choose the limited liability company. The contextual analysis of the regulatory regime of this legal form of carrying out economic activity and the type of tourism services provided aims to clarify the aforementioned option.

Keywords: *economic operator; professional; limited liability company; tourism activities; tourism legislation.*

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General identification of legal subjects specific to the tourism sector

In Romania, the importance of tourism is highlighted primarily by its own normative qualification as a strategic area of the national economy, namely by the text of article 1 paragraph 1 of Government Ordinance no. 58/1998 on the organization and conduct of tourism activity in Romania. As a framework law on the matter, this establishes its general legal regime, which is subsequently detailed in various aspects by other regulations. Tourism activity benefits from a complex profile, outlined by the multiple legal and economic implications of the specific services and operations in which it can materialize, as well as of the legal subjects involved.

The organization and conduct of tourism activities is mainly the responsibility of economic operators in tourism. The tourism field is not reserved exclusively for them, the legislation allowing a variety of professions specific to tourism activities, included in the Code on the Classification of Activities in the National Economy (e.g. certified guides, guides and persons who temporarily and occasionally provide the guiding profession), as well as the involvement of other associative entities with a specific role (e.g. destination management organizations established as public utility associations; non-profit or patrimonial associations and organizations, of a professional, scientific, cultural, religious or social nature, which have an active role in the activities carried out by the Ministry of Tourism). The vision of the specialized literature on the actors involved in tourism is an extensive one, which implicitly reveals the role of tourists, as well as the state, public authorities and international governmental organizations (Dumitru, 2018: 111-140).

Ordinarily, access to tourism activities is subject to a double check. A first check is carried out in the context of establishment in the chosen legal form, materialized in obtaining the desired legal status and recording in a public register, stages absolutely necessary to be able to start economic activity as a subject of law. The second check is specific to the field in question, namely the one in which the central public administration authorities and/or representative institutions and organizations at national level issue specific authorizations for economic activity in tourism. The terminology used covers the diversity of possible documents, regardless of their concrete title of approvals, attestations, authorizations, certificates, licenses and/or tourism patents. Completing the two types of procedures conditions the establishment and legal operation, implicitly contributing to ensuring the protection of tourists.

In relation to their weight and impact in tourism, the category of economic operators is the one that requires nuances. The terminology "economic operator" has recently been reformulated in terms of meaning in the special legislation in the tourism field. In the meaning of the law, *the economic operator* designates the natural person, the authorized natural person, the individual or family enterprise, the company or other legal person established according to the law, which carries out accommodation activities, public catering and other specific services in tourist reception structures as their owner and/or administrator, respectively the company or other legal person established according to the law, which carries out economic activities specific to travel agencies (art. 1 of the Order of the Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Tourism no. 510/2022).

In this context, it is necessary to clarify the status of economic operators in tourism, firstly by explaining their membership in the legal category of professionals, and secondly by identifying the legal forms nominated by the legislator in which such legal subjects can be constituted and function.

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Economic operators in tourism - category of the legal notion of professional

Regarding the status of professional, we are considering the legal meaning of this term, introduced as a novelty in the national legal system by the Civil Code (on October 1, 2011), which reconfigured Romanian private law by implementing the monistic theory, thus leading to the assimilation of commercial law into civil law. In private law legal relations, professionals are distinguished from ordinary individuals by certain distinctive features (Piperea, 2012: 33) and have a different legal regime applicable to the contractual obligations assumed, set out in the Civil Code (Nicolae, 2015: 468-469) and by certain special laws.

The legal term "professional" has acquired, together with that of "enterprise", the value of a generic notion, being characteristic of private law in general and entailing the application of civil law. Private law legal relationships in which professionals participate are civil legal relationships. In turn, disputes generated by such legal relationships are "civil" disputes, and the civil courts competent to judge disputes with professionals will be notified, subject to the procedures of the Code of Civil Procedure and, where appropriate, of special laws (Stuparu, 2020: 13-14). Consequently, the legal relationships occasioned by the economic activity in tourism, although they have a pronounced commercial character, they no longer have a commercial legal nature, the change in the regulatory system of Romanian commercial law leading to a civil qualification. Currently, civil law is a common source of law in the commercial field, therefore including for the tourist field.

From a normative point of view, the article 3 paragraph 2 of the Civil Code established that "all those who operate an enterprise are professionals". This approach, simultaneously generalist and minimalist, conditions the quality of professional exclusively on the operation of the enterprise (the operation of an enterprise constitutes the systematic exercise, by one or more persons, of an organized activity consisting of the production, administration or alienation of goods or the provision of services, regardless of whether it has a profit-making purpose or not). In an attempt to facilitate the identification of the categories of professionals the legislator established the scope of application of the definition through the nuances brought by Law no. 71/2011 for the implementation of the Civil Code. Thus, the notion of "professional" includes the categories of trader, entrepreneur, economic operator, as well as any other persons authorized to carry out economic or professional activities, as these notions were provided by law on the date of entry into force of the Civil Code (para. 1 of art. 8 of Law no. 71/2011). In our opinion, a fixed classification in the four categories nominated by the legislator is not always possible for private law subjects. In reality, the manner in which the same legal subject participates in the general civil circuit, falling under the incidence of several regulations, although it does not alter its legal quality as a professional, it can be simultaneously classified in one or more of the aforementioned terminological categories. Moreover, the possession of any of the titles nominated by Law no. 71/2011 is not in itself of a nature to confer professional quality.

to the same legal subject, depending on the private law contexts in which it is located, we note that its qualification as a professional is essential. In all cases, for this status it is mandatory to fulfill the condition of operating the enterprise, and when the legislator expressly imposes it, through a special law, this must be combined with the condition of registration in a special advertising register and/or authorization. Any of the titles of trader, entrepreneur, economic operator or person authorized to carry out

economic activities are only terminological titles, imposed by various normative acts, which are not criteria for acquiring the quality of professional, but have the role of entailing a certain legal regime of the existence of the respective legal subject (rights, obligations, formalities, legal status, etc.).

In conclusion, the professional is the natural person, legal person or entity without legal personality who operates an enterprise within the meaning of the Civil Code and, if applicable, under the conditions of special legislation, regardless of the title under which we find it in the legal landscape (Stuparu, 2020: 49). The operation of the enterprise is the essential, indispensable component for any professional and represents the organized activity, systematically exercised by the professional, which has as its object the production, administration or alienation of goods or the provision of services and a lucrative or non-lucrative purpose.

According to the legal principle *specialia generalibus derogant*, tourism legislation that regulates the meaning of the phrase economic operator has the status of a special norm and derogates from civil legislation that acts as a general norm. Being of strict interpretation and application, the special norm, becomes the primary reference point in identifying the types of legal subjects specific to legal relations in tourism.

Consequently, economic operators in tourism represent the special title assigned to legal subjects who meet the conditions established by tourism legislation, being a category of professional established by the Romanian Civil Code. Their quality as a professional does not derive from the title, but is determined by the cumulative fulfillment of the condition of operating the enterprise (within the meaning of the Civil Code), cumulated with the condition of registration in specific public registers when the legal form of establishment requires mandatory registration in the trade register. The subsequent obtaining of the various authorizations imposed by tourism legislation exclusively concerns the legal exercise of economic activity in the field, as a professional.

Specifically, before starting the economic activity in tourism, future professionals such as economic operators who opt for any of the legal forms mentioned in the text of Law no. 265/2022 (article 4) are obliged to request registration in the trade register. Considering its status as a public service of general interest, the trade register ensures the registration and advertising of professionals such as authorized natural persons, individual enterprises and family businesses, the registration and advertising of professionals such as companies, European companies, cooperative societies, European cooperative societies, credit cooperative organizations, economic interest groups and European economic interest groups, with their main headquarters in Romania, the registration and advertising of their branches, as well as of the branches of the listed legal entities with their main headquarters abroad.

Although tourism legislation does not require a mandatory specialized public register to ensure the publicity of legal subjects active in the field, there is nevertheless an electronic database managed by the Ministry of Economy, Digitalization, Entrepreneurship and Tourism, through the General Directorate of Tourism (<https://se.situr.gov.ro/OpenData/OpenDataMain>). Its consultation by any interested person allows access to updated information on the categories of legal subjects active in tourism.

For the purpose of protecting tourists, the offering, marketing, sale of tourist services and packages, as well as the creation of tourist products on the territory of Romania can only be carried out by economic operators in tourism authorized by the

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central public administration authority responsible for tourism, holders of tourism licenses or classification certificates, as the case may be.

Legal forms available to economic operators in tourism

The special legislation in the tourism field delimits the legal forms available to economic operators in relation to the type of activity they carry out. On the one hand, legal subjects who carry out accommodation, public catering and other specific services in the tourist reception structure as their owner and/or administrator may act as natural persons, natural persons of the authorized natural person type, individual enterprise or family enterprise, as well as legal persons of the company type or other legal person. On the other hand, the carrying out of economic activities specific to travel agencies is allowed exclusively to legal persons established as a company or in other legal forms according to the law.

Economic operators of the type of natural persons have recently come to the attention of the national legislator (Order of the Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Tourism no. 510/2022). The terminology covers those natural persons, not constituted in a specific legal form, but only in consideration of their capacity as owners of tourist reception structures with accommodation functions such as apartments and/or rooms for rent in family homes. In their case, the procedure they must follow to operate in the tourism sector is strictly one of authorization of economic activity, by obtaining the classification certificate in accordance with the law from the central public institution responsible for the field of tourism.

The authorized natural person, the individual enterprise and the family enterprise are legal statuses accessible exclusively to natural persons, including those aiming at the quality of economic operators in tourism. Their legal regime is outlined, mainly, by the Government Emergency Ordinance no. 44/2008 on the conduct of economic activities by authorized natural persons, individual enterprises and family enterprises. The three legal statuses are normatively defined as an economic enterprise, that is, as economic activities carried out in an organized, permanent and systematic manner, combining financial resources, labor, raw materials, logistical means and information, at the risk of an entrepreneur, in the cases and under the conditions provided for by law. None of these economic enterprises acquires legal personality, and the natural person who organizes them is generically called an entrepreneur.

As economic enterprises, *the authorized natural person* is organized by a natural person who mainly uses his labor force and professional skills, while *the individual enterprise* is organized by a natural person entrepreneur. In turn, the one called *family enterprise* is organized by 2 or more members of a family. The notion of "family" refers to the husband, wife, their children who have reached the age of 16 on the date of authorization of the family enterprise, relatives and in-laws up to the fourth degree inclusive.

Despite a terminological inconsistency offered by the text of the framework law, important only from a theoretical point of view (we refer to the use of the terms entrepreneur, trader and professional), we note that all natural persons who have access to the status of authorized natural person, individual enterprises or family enterprises have in common: the obligation to register in the trade register before starting economic activity (imposed by Law no. 265/2022 on the trade register), the fact that they operate an economic enterprise (under the terms of G.E.O. no. 44/2006, otherwise the meaning of the notion being consistent with that outlined by the Civil Code for the operation of the

enterprise), the possibility of carrying out the same types of activities (production, administration or alienation of goods or provision of services) and the existence always of an exclusively lucrative purpose.

Individuals who access any of the three legal statuses regulated by G.E.O. no. 44/2008 acquire the status of professional, the result of registration in the trade register (mandatory prior to starting economic activity) and of operating the enterprise. In return their statute of economic operator in tourism derives exclusively from the object of activity of the economic enterprise, being revealed by the existing electronic database in the tourism field.

As differences, imposed by G.E.O. no. 44/2008 depending on the legal status acquired by a natural person, we mention the number of classes of activities allowed, respectively the number of employees, employed with an individual employment contract, concluded and registered under the law. Thus, the authorized natural person can have in its object of activity a maximum of 5 classes of activities provided by the Code on the Classification of Activities in the National Economy, while the individual enterprise can have in its object of activity a maximum of 10 classes of activities provided by the Code on the Classification of Activities in the National Economy. Instead, family businesses are not subject to restrictions on the number of activity classes. Regarding the status of employer, this is recognized by the legislator exclusively to any natural person registered as an authorized natural person and as individual enterprise, with some nuances. As an authorized natural person, they can carry out authorized activities, alone or together with a maximum of 3 employees, while as an individual enterprise they can employ a maximum of 8 employees, third parties. The need to adjust the number of employees can be resolved by accessing the option of changing the legal status of the employer as an individual, G.E.O. no. 44/2008 allowing deletion from one form and registration under the other form, explicitly doubled by the prohibition of the accumulation of the status of an authorized natural person with that of an individual enterprise in the person of the same holder. It is also possible to involve the spouse/ the husband of the owner of the individual enterprise or the owner of the authorized natural person who, without being registered in the trade register and authorized to operate as the owner of the individual enterprise/authorized natural person or without being an employee, may regularly participate in the activity of the individual enterprise/authorized natural person, performing either the same tasks or complementary tasks, under the conditions of the law. Such a situation is recorded as a mention in the trade register, respectively is deleted at the time of termination, under the conditions of the law. In the case of a family enterprise, the economic activity for which it was authorized may only be carried out by its members.

For *economic operators in tourism as legal entities*, tourism legislation allows the option between a company and other forms of legal entity.

Regarding *companies*, we note that the current Romanian Civil Code has introduced a new classification based on the presence or absence of legal personality (Cârpenaru, Piperea, David, 2014: 6), respectively into companies without legal personality (e.g. simple company, joint venture, other forms regulated by law) and companies with legal personality (e.g. company regulated by Law no. 31/1990 on Companies, cooperative societies). In the matter of economic operators in tourism, we appreciate that the notion of "company" currently nominated by the legislator, refers to companies with legal personality (in fact, prior to the changes in the field of private law, the phrase "commercial company" was expressly used). The category of companies is diverse, being the subject of regulation by several normative acts, each of which has the

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role of a framework law that establishes the specific legal status (establishment, organization, operation, modification, cessation of legal existence, etc.).

Companies regulated by the Law no. 31/1990 represent the main choice, including in tourism. These companies with legal personality, set up by natural persons and legal persons with a view to carrying out activities for profit, are still called, in doctrine and case law, commercial companies. This terminology is not altering the content of the legal institution (Angheni, 2019: 120). Companies regulated by Law no. 31/1990 can be established according to article 2 only in one of the following forms: general partnership, limited partnership, joint stock company, partnership limited by shares and limited liability company. The Romanian Law on Companies also regulates the limited liability company with a single shareholder, which is not a variety or a new form, but a limited liability company with a different number of shareholders (Săuleanu, 2012: 116), as well as the European company when it has its main registered office on the territory of Romania. For the latter legal subject, Law no. 31/1990 supplements, to the extent of compatibility, the Council Regulation (EC) no. 2157/2001 on the Statute for European Companies.

Cooperative societies, depending on their object of activity, can be: credit cooperatives - a component of credit cooperative organizations regulated by G.E.O. no. 99/2006 on credit institutions and capital adequacy - and cooperative societies regulated by Law no. 1/2005 on the organization and functioning of cooperation. If credit cooperatives carry out activities specific to credit institutions for the purpose of helping their members, following the legal regime of a joint-stock company (Smarandache, 2013: 26, 31, 39-41), cooperative societies covered by Law no. 1/2005 can be established in various forms, in relation to their object of activity (Găină, 2017: 438-530). Both forms of legal entities are accessible to economic operators active in the tourism sector, while respecting the specificity of their legal regime.

The legislator left the economic operators the option for other legal entities, without limiting the legal forms. We consider that the economic activity of tourism, regardless of its typology, can also be carried out in legal forms such as: autonomous management, national company or society, economic interest group, European economic interest group, European cooperative society, research and development institute in tourism. The argument in favor of this support is represented by the fact that each of these legal entities carries out economic activities, tourist activity can always constitute their object of activity.

The main arguments explaining the option for limited liability companies

The analysis of specific electronic databases in tourism, which ensure the record of economic operators in the field, reveals the overwhelming preference for establishment as limited liability companies. From a legal point of view, we consider that the option is justified, mainly, by the advantages of establishing and operating as legal entities of this type.

Law no. 31/1990 on Companies, subject to numerous and consistent textual amendments throughout its existence (Săuleanu, 2025: 11-14), has succeeded in transforming the limited liability company (with sole or more shareholders) into the most desirable option for Romanian traders, regardless of the economic activity targeted.

The mixed character of the limited liability company, derived from the combination of the *intuitu personae* element - taken from partnerships companies- with the element of limited liability of associates for social obligations - taken from capital

companies - constitutes a primary point of attraction, including for economic operators in tourism.

The option of establishing a limited liability company with solo shareholder is chosen by those who, although they do not want associations with other persons, pursue the benefits of this legal form. The option of a limited liability company (with many shareholders, but without exceeding the maximum limit of 50 imposed by the legislator) is chosen by those who associate with known and trusted persons, their person and qualities being decisive.

For future shareholders, the option of a limited number is doubled by the advantage of the nature of their liability during the existence of the corporate form. The obligations assumed by any limited liability company are guaranteed, mainly, with the company's patrimony (a constituent element of its legal personality itself), and, in the subsidiary, with the liability of the shareholders, which is practically limited to the contribution assumed according to the law and the constitutive act. This form of liability becomes an advantage because it sets the protection of the personal assets of the shareholders against the company's creditors. In turn, the personal creditors of the shareholders do not have access to the company's patrimony. However, the legislator has recognized certain specific instruments for the recovery of receivables without interfering with the autonomy of the company's patrimony. As an exception, the benefit of limited liability may be lost (Bodu, 2025: 233-243). The company's creditors will be able to pursue the shareholders of the limited liability company that has the status of debtor only in the situations expressly and restrictively provided for by the legislator (e.g., under Law no. 31/1990, if: the shareholders have defrauded the interests of the creditors during the dissolution and liquidation stage of the company; the case of the company's nullity occurs; on the occasion of exercising the right to oppose the decision of the associates to transfer the shares to persons outside the company).

In turn, *the legal regime of the obligation to contribute* to a limited liability company plays a significant role in the option for this legal form, both in consideration of its object and the relationship with the share capital to the formation of which it contributes. Similar to any form of commercial company, the establishment of a limited liability company requires the making of a cash contribution, without this obligation being incumbent on each of the future shareholders who can also choose the option of a contribution in kind (movable, tangible or intangible assets, and/or real estate). The advantage offered by the regulation consists in the modest nature of the value, respectively the amount of this type of contribution, as revealed by the recent amendments to the legal regime of the share capital for which the previously existing mandatory minimum level (of 200 lei) was eliminated. Currently, in a limited liability company, the partners must pay 30% of the value of the subscribed share capital no later than 3 months from the date of registration in the trade register, but before starting operations in the name of the company. The difference in the subscribed share capital must be paid within 12 months from the date of registration, for the contribution in cash, respectively within 2 years from this date, for the contribution in kind.

Economic activity accessible to limited liability companies highlights the advantage of the diversity and plurality of concrete activities that can be carried out simultaneously by such a legal subject. Regarding the object of activity, the constituent act must necessarily mention the main activity and the field of activity, and optionally any other activity, with the nomination in all cases of the related codes from the Code on the Classification of Activities in the National Economy. An extended object of activity,

The option of the tourism economic operators for the legal form of limited liability companies

clearly identified from the moment of establishment, is not only possible in comparison with other types of legal entities, but also avoids the expenses and procedural aspects of subsequent additions.

The legal formalities for establishing as professionals, such as commercial companies, recently simplified by the text of Law no. 265/2022 on the trade register, have become an additional argument for choosing economic operators in tourism. In the broader context of the implementation of digitalization measures, future associates have as an alternative to the classic establishment option that of setting up a limited liability company online (this is possible for any type of commercial company). In the online establishment procedure, the drafting of the constitutive act replaced by the completion of a standard form of articles of association, made available by the National Trade Register Office, by using electronic identification means. The documents required for registration are also transmitted by electronic means and are submitted, according to the new law, in electronic format, signed with a qualified electronic signature, or, as the case may be, in a copy certified by a party with a qualified electronic signature. In turn, the number of these documents has been reduced, it being sufficient for the registration application to be accompanied only by the constitutive act of the future company, proof of the declared headquarters, as well as by the acts or opinions provided for by special laws for the establishment.

In this procedural context, *the reduced period for establishment* must also be mentioned, which is also applicable to any professional subject to registration in the trade register. If the legal requirements for establishment are met, the registrar of the trade register where the application for establishment was submitted issues an admission decision, within one working day from the date of registration of the application with the trade register office or, as the case may be, from the date of completion of all formalities and receipt of all documents and information for establishment and registration. Registration in the trade register is carried out within 24 hours from the date on which it was ordered by the registrar by decision. Subsequently, within a maximum of 3 working days from the date of registration in the trade register, the legal advertising formalities must be carried out, consisting of publishing the decision in the Electronic Bulletin of the Trade Register, respectively in the Official Gazette of Romania.

The bodies that ensure the functioning of a limited liability company benefit from a flexible legal regime, the establishment and exercise of powers being governed by flexible rules compared to the other corporate forms regulated by Law no. 31/1990. In summary, the corporate bodies give rise to the following delimitations: the deliberation and decision-making body is the general meeting of associates, in the case of a limited liability company with a single shareholder, its rights and obligations reverting to the single shareholder; the administration is carried out by one or more administrators (regardless of whether they have the quality of associate or third party), each having the right of representation, unless there is a contrary stipulation in the constitutive act; the control is exercised, on a case-by-case basis, by financial auditors, censors or associates who are not also administrators.

The procedural, time and concrete legal regime advantages, synthetically presented above, individually and together constitute the basic argumentative corpus to explain the preference of economic operators in tourism for the form of a limited liability company. Moreover, this is consistent with the very dominant option of the majority of commercial professionals who have their main headquarters in Romania who choose this corporate type as a priority for organizing their businesses. Inevitably, we recall that in

addition to the legal arguments, when manifesting the option, it becomes relevant, despite the legislative variations in the matter, including the fiscal regime.

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Article Info

Received: November 06 2025

Accepted: November 18 2025

How to cite this article:

Stuparu, L. E. (2025). The option of the tourism economic operators for the legal form of limited liability companies. *Revista de Științe Politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques*, no. 88, pp. 9-18.



ORIGINAL PAPER

Emergency Powers and The Rule of Law: Theoretical Reflections and Legal Realities

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Abstract:

This paper investigates the enduring tension between states of exception and constitutional frameworks, seeking to understand how democratic societies can effectively manage crises such as terrorism, pandemics, or war, without undermining the very legal and institutional norms that define them. Drawing upon a range of theoretical perspectives on sovereignty, legality, and exceptionality, including the works of Carl Schmitt, Giorgio Agamben, and contemporary constitutional theorists, the study critically examines the legal and political implications of emergency powers.

Keywords: *State of exception, Rule of law, Emergency powers, Sovereignty, Fundamental rights.*

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The state of emergency is a tempting instrument that allows states to derogate from fundamental human rights and freedoms in order to combat certain dangers (Sall, 1996: 16). The constitutions of most states include a derogation clause, which sets out the grounds that may be invoked for declaring a state of emergency, as well as the list of non-derogable rights (Constitution of the Republic of Estonia, Art. 130) or the list of rights from which states may derogate (Constitution of the Kingdom of Spain, Section 55). Similarly, international conventions allow states to derogate from their international obligations under certain exceptional circumstances. However, the restriction of individual rights is permitted only to the extent provided by the derogation clauses and solely for the purpose of protecting other rights and freedoms.

However, it is also true that emergencies challenge the state's commitment to the rule of law (Ramraj, 2008: 4) and that the state of emergency puts legality to its greatest test (Sarat, 2010: 1). Indeed, as one author states, once law has been established to maintain social order, emergency remains the enemy of the law, the unrestrained force that threatens to dismantle the meticulously crafted frameworks built upon legal principles and practices (Sarat, 2010: 4). The state of emergency represents a danger to the normal legal order.

Therefore, we tend to place greater trust in those who govern during emergencies. A general pattern is that we are more tolerant toward leaders who are responsible for managing a crisis facing the nation. In times of emergency, we often hear expressions such as "this is not the time to criticize the government," or "the situation cannot be handled any other way," and so on. But sometimes, this perception leads to a lack of scrutiny regarding how exceptional powers have been exercised, and it becomes difficult to distinguish which measures are truly driven by the necessity of addressing an emergency and which are the result of an executive that has grown too comfortable in exercising exceptional powers.

Opinions on how a government should act when faced with a crisis that threatens its existence are divided into two camps.

In short, supporters of legalism argue that crisis situations which endanger the state and the constitutional order must be resolved exclusively through means provided by law. Even if the responses may differ from those adopted in times of peace or under normal conditions, they must always fall within the constitutional framework, thus ensuring that the conformity between the measure and the Constitution is respected. Only by proceeding in this manner can the constitutional state preserve its existence and overcome the crisis (Scheppele, 2009).

On the other hand, proponents of the theory of extra legalism, inspired by the idea that necessity knows no bounds, argue that only by resorting to means that go beyond the legal framework can crises threatening the very existence of the state be resolved.

They argue that legal norms, crafted for predictability and governance under ordinary circumstances, inevitably prove inadequate and ineffective during periods of profound disorder or constitutional crisis (Agamben, 2008: 9).

Although this conceptual distinction provides a certain degree of theoretical latitude, its limitations become apparent when the analysis shifts to empirical data. At present, the state of exception is widely codified in the legislation of numerous states, even if it appears under various denominations and through differing procedures (for instance, the 'state of siege' in the French legal tradition, the 'state of emergency' in the German Constitution, etc.) (Scheppele, 2009).

Moreover, the state of exception has acquired a significant role in international

law as well. Consequently, the emphasis no longer lies merely on its formal incorporation into legislation, but rather on a more nuanced analysis: Does the integration and regulation of the state of exception through constitutions and normative acts truly imply that states consistently adhere to these rules and operate within the confines of the legal framework?

An examination of the COVID-19 crisis in Romania and the Republic of Moldova reveals that the core issue does not lie in the fact that the state of exception derives its legitimacy from *jus scriptum*, but rather in the potential for the arbitrary expansion of executive authority. This chain of events highlights that, although the state of exception was invoked in accordance with the law, it effectively generated a distinct legal regime in practice, thereby undermining the foundational principles of the rule of law.

Essentially, the fundamental issue lies in ensuring that the state preserves both its legitimacy and its capacity to respond to crises without exceeding the boundaries of the legal framework. In other words, we are faced with the risk that the executive power may extend its prerogatives beyond constitutional limits, thereby creating a law of exception, a permanent state of emergency that erodes the principles of the rule of law (Ticu, Diaconu, 2021: 94-97).

When executive authorities acquire powers significantly exceeding those initially prescribed, there arises a danger that they may act unpredictably and evade oversight. Beyond the legitimate need to respond swiftly in times of crisis, be it security threats, natural disasters, or pandemics, it is essential that any exceptional measure remains strictly aligned with the Constitution and the principles of fundamental rights and freedoms.

For this reason, I believe it is imperative to develop a theoretical framework for the state of exception and to clarify the role this ambiguous phenomenon occupies within the modern rule-of-law state.

I. The Sovereign and the Law: Carl Schmitt's Theory of Decision

In the legal framework of the modern constitutional state, if the state of exception emerges as an anomaly, Carl Schmitt regards it as an occasion to revitalize the figure of the individual sovereign and reaffirm its indivisible character. For this reason, in his view, it may be deemed a miracle.

Adopting this perspective, he assigns autonomous significance to the act of decision, as the quintessential expression of sovereignty, a principle encapsulated in his renowned dictum: "*Sovereign is he who decides on the exception.*" Here, the sovereign's authority is defined not through adherence to norms but through the unilateral capacity to suspend the legal order itself, thereby asserting sovereignty's indivisible and transcendent nature (Schmitt, 2005).

In his study of political theology, sovereignty, and the state of exception, Schmitt strongly criticizes liberal constitutional theories influenced by neo-Kantian ideas. He claims these theories ignore or downplay the importance of the state of exception. Instead, they pretend the legal system is a perfect, all-encompassing set of rules with no room for exceptions. Schmitt argues that by ignoring the exception, liberal theories miss a key point: true sovereignty lies in the power to suspend normal rules during emergencies. For him, sovereignty isn't about following fixed laws but about who has the authority to act decisively when crises break the ordinary legal order (McCormick, 1997: 124-129, 148-152).

Inspired by Hobbes, Schmitt emphasizes the need to reinforce sovereign authority, especially during crises that threaten the state's stability. Like Hobbes, he views decisive, centralized power as essential to maintaining order when normal governance is

disrupted.

As a legal theorist affiliated with the Nazi regime, his objective was to surpass the constitutional constraints of the modern state's structure in order to safeguard the continuity of the Weimar State. Schmitt challenges the perspectives of liberal-leaning constitutional theorists, focusing especially on critiquing the ideas of Hans Kelsen, a prominent representative of neo-Kantian rationalist jurists.

Schmitt's critique centers on what he sees as Kelsen's flawed assumption that law operates as a self-contained, exceptionless system. By dismissing the existential role of sovereign authority in navigating crises, Schmitt argues, such theories undermine the state's capacity to act decisively when its stability is threatened.

From the perspective of Kelsen's liberal legal philosophy, the state does not create the legal order but merely enacts laws, abstaining from any intervention beyond this role (Schmitt, 2005: 18).

Liberal theory, which envisions the state as holding a neutral role, either deliberately omits the issue of sovereignty or seeks to circumvent it through its denial (Schmitt, 2005: 23). Within this framework, the legal norm occupies a central position, serving as the foundational element of the entire legal system. As such, sovereignty and the exception, as its most salient manifestation, are excluded *ab initio* from this legal structure. Legal theorists aligned with this perspective systematically eliminate the concept of exception, thereby implicitly nullifying the sovereign decision as well.

However, in Carl Schmitt's view, the legal order rests upon two fundamental pillars: the norm and the decision. The norm is applicable solely under conditions of normality and institutional stability; it proves inadequate in times of crisis or systemic disorder. Thus, by its very nature, the norm cannot contain or integrate the exception. In such exceptional contexts, where the normative framework is suspended or rendered inoperative, the sovereign decision emerges *ex nihilo*, as an act that re-establishes order. Schmitt attributes to the decision a distinct status, considering it a constitutive element in the preservation of the legal order.

According to Schmitt's perspective, every legal order is ultimately grounded in a decision, which, in turn, inevitably leads to the emergence of the exception (Schmitt, 2005: 10). He challenges the traditional definition of sovereignty as the supreme and primary power of governance, arguing that such a definition is functionally inadequate (Schmitt, 2005: 36–40). Instead, Schmitt advocates for a concrete, case-based conception of sovereignty, emphasizing that in moments of conflict or crisis, sovereignty is defined by the actor who holds the authority to decide on matters such as public interest, national security, public order, general welfare, and other fundamental concerns of the state. (Schmitt, 2005: 6)

Nevertheless, the exception does not constitute a universal concept encompassing all forms of security measures, as previously emphasized. Its true character lies in vesting the authority with boundless power. Through this mechanism, a sovereign figure emerges, one capable of suspending the existing legal order and asserting authority by instituting a new normative framework. The sovereign's supreme authority is not diminished by this act; on the contrary, it is reinforced, as sovereignty is defined precisely by the capacity to decide on the exception.

In this context, the sovereign entity holds the authority to decide:

1. whether a state of emergency exists; and
2. what measures are necessary to address and resolve it.

In other words, the sovereign is the one who determines the nature and severity

of the emergency that threatens the survival of the state and its legal order. At the moment of decision, the sovereign entity assumes the role of the guardian of the legal order.

Thus, where is the guardian of the legal order situated in relation to the law itself? In *Political Theology*, Schmitt argues that by making such a decision, the sovereign is, on the one hand, positioned outside the ordinary legal order; yet, on the other hand, since the possibility of suspending the constitution in its entirety depends on him, he simultaneously remains within that very legal order (Schmitt, 2005: 7). In other words, it is an authority that exists simultaneously “here and there,” capable of adapting its position according to the demands of the situation, legitimate and positioned beyond the bounds of legality at the same time.

It is situated within the legal system because it has the power to generate its own order, yet it is positioned beyond the legal system due to its ability to suspend the general normative framework. In this way, Schmitt places the law (in its strict sense as positive law) in a subordinate position to the political realm, allowing politics to prevail over the law. As previously mentioned, Schmitt sought to reaffirm the authority of the sovereign, arguing that it is most clearly manifested in the capacity to decide on the state of exception. By suspending the law, the rule of law could be reshaped in the benefit of the ruler.

Therefore, it is not surprising that Schmitt's contemporary rivals, primarily Hans Kelsen, challenged his exceptionalism, arguing that, in practice, it renders any constitutional provisions completely redundant and irrelevant. In the context of the Weimar Constitution, Kelsen argued that Schmitt's theory reduces the constitution to nothing more than Article 48 (McCormick, 1997: 144).

II. The Rule of Exception: Giorgio Agamben on the Suspension of Law

Although Carl Schmitt remains the most controversial figure in modern theory of the state of exception, Giorgio Agamben's contribution to the reinterpretation of this concept through a radical philosophical-political analysis deserves distinct attention. Agamben's theory of the state of exception is based on ideas such as Walter Benjamin's concept of law-making violence and the biopolitical concepts developed by Michel Foucault, but he directs them along a different conceptual path. Among the significant influences on Agamben, Carl Schmitt is undoubtedly also present. In this context, I will analyze the final work in his trilogy, *State of Exception*, in order to highlight his perspective.

Agamben argues that legal doctrine suffers from a major flaw because, following Schmitt, public law has failed to address the concept of the state of exception in a critical and comprehensive manner. He claims that jurists have treated the state of exception as a mere *quaestio facti* (a question of fact), even though it actually constitutes a genuine juridical problem (Agamben, 2008). The need for such a profound legal analysis, coupled with the reduction of the state of exception to a purely factual framework, reveals a significant gap in the field.

As previously mentioned, the state of exception lies within a zone of ambiguity. Agamben argues that

“only if the veil covering this ambiguous zone is lifted will we be able to approach an understanding of the stakes involved in the difference -or the supposed difference - between the political and the juridical, and between law and the living being” (Agamben, 2008: 2).

Agamben's stated objective is to integrate the state of exception into a theory of sovereignty and politics. In developing his theory, he frequently engages in a dialogue both with the present and with antiquity, particularly Roman law.

In the Middle Ages, necessity was considered the foundation for justifying exceptional measures. According to this view, the state of exception was reduced to a situation of necessity (such as civil war, chaos, crisis, etc.), and necessity, by definition, was regarded as existing outside the legal framework. Thus, the issue of the legitimacy of the state of exception was simplified: the measures taken were justified by the fact that they were indispensable. At that time, necessity was seen as a sufficient reason to break the legal order and was accepted as an explanation, especially in specific, urgent situations. Laws were created for the common good, but under conditions of necessity, it was considered legitimate to depart from them if they proved inadequate in an unexpected or conflictual context.

In the modern era, the historical analysis proposed by Agamben (Agamben 2008: 27–51) highlights the fact that the state of emergency is omnipresent, appearing both in constitutions and in legislation. In practice, most contemporary constitutions include provisions concerning the state of emergency or have adopted specific laws to regulate such situations. Recent examples from various countries, along with the frequent declaration of states of exception, emphasize that the temporary suspension of the normative legal order has become a long-standing governmental practice (Agamben, 2008: 7).

For example, this can be observed in Germany in 1923, in France on several occasions in 1925, 1935, and 1937, in the United Kingdom in 1920, and in Italy following the 1908 earthquake (Agamben, 2008: 11–22). More recently, the state of exception has also been invoked during the pandemic period.

All these examples essentially reflect contemporary political manifestations of a vision that anchors the state of exception in necessity and urgency. Viewed through the lens of necessity, the state of exception implies the existence of a gap within the law. The problem lies in the fact that this perception seeks to fill the gap, claimed to have emerged in a moment of necessity, through legal means. Far from being a response to a normative void, such a justification of the state of exception actually creates another gap, one meant to protect the norm and the legal order, yet undeniably situated outside the legal sphere.

In his writings, Giorgio Agamben brings to the forefront a remarkable concept “the exception-as-the-rule”, emphasizing that in today's political landscapes, the exception has come to function as the norm.

What does Agamben mean when he says that the exception has become the rule? He interprets Carl Schmitt's perspective on the miraculous nature of the exception. As previously mentioned, Schmitt seeks to attribute saving qualities to the act of deciding what constitutes an exception. Only in this way will sovereignty, in its personal dimension, regain its vitality, and the exception will acquire a redemptive role.

When the exception was integrated as a routine part of the legal order, it lost its miraculous character. The state of exception, that moment of decision, thus became a repetitive entity, a regular component of the law.

In this context, Agamben argues that Schmitt's attempt to correlate the exception with the norm has failed, because once the exception becomes routine, it loses its original significance. Agamben's analysis of the state of exception is, in fact, a critique of the failure of Schmitt's model of the exception (Huysmans, 2008). Thus, when the exception becomes the rule (being used frequently and excessively), what Schmitt anticipated or

desired is compromised: The sovereign and the exception cease to play the role of the savior, becoming just a regular part of the order, a mere repetition. Today, the state of exception no longer appears as an anomaly, but transforms into a governmental technique. The practical result is the expansion of executive power, allowing it to assume legislative power through various decrees and legal measures. As Dürantaye states, one of Agamben's main goals is to demonstrate that exceptional circumstances are not so rare in the life of the state (Dürantaye, 2009: 336).

III. Business as Usual: The Model of Stability in a Changing World

The Business as Usual model rejects the attempt to respond to crises and emergencies by introducing constitutional or legal amendments. Therefore, a state of emergency does not justify a deviation from the normal legal system. The legal system already provides the necessary responses to these crises, without the legislative or executive powers acquiring additional powers not foreseen in the Constitution.

Therefore, the establishment of a state of emergency cannot be used as a reason to suspend any part of the legal system. In this regard, Judge Davis argued in the case of *Ex parte Milligan* that the constitution maintains its applicability equally in times of war and in times of peace (*Ex parte Milligan*, 1866: 120–121).

Additionally, the Business as Usual model requires that the government cannot legally exercise any special authority to manage emergency situations unless these powers are clearly stipulated in the constitution.

As Judge Davis stated:

„It is insisted that the safety of the country in time of war demands that this broad claim for martial law shall be sustained. If this were true, it could be well said that a country, preserved at the sacrifice of all the cardinal principles of liberty, is not worth the cost of preservation. Happily, it is not so.” (*Ex parte Milligan*, 1866: 126).

Benjamin Constant, in a similar manner, suggested the following:

„All the mediocre minds, ephemeral conquerors of a fragment of authority, were full of all these maxims [public safety and supreme law], the more agreeable to stupidity in that they enable it to cut those knots it cannot untie. They dreamt of nothing else but measures of public safety, great measures, masterstrokes of state; they thought themselves extraordinary geniuses because at every step they departed from ordinary means. They proclaimed themselves great minds because justice seemed to them a narrow preoccupation. With each political crime which they committed, you could hear them proclaiming: Once again we have saved the country! Certainly, we should have been adequately convinced by this, that a country saved every day in this manner must be a country that will soon be ruined.,, (Constant, 1988: 43-138).

A strategy like this is not intended to prevent governments from resorting to exceptional measures. However, it is designed to minimize the likelihood of the government using emergency powers in situations that are not emergencies, or the excessive use of these powers by the government.

Therefore, the introduction of clear prohibitions on certain government actions or the recognition of certain rights as non-derogable can make it more difficult for those in power to exercise extraordinary powers that would deviate from or violate such absolute

prohibitions. Such an approach is necessary given the tendency of governments to infringe upon constitutionally protected rights in times of crisis.

IV. The General Normative Framework of Emergency in Romania

The legal framework governing the state of emergency in Romania can be analyzed through the lens of the three main theoretical models highlighting elements that partially align with each, yet showing a predominant tendency towards the Business-as-Usual model, albeit with risks of sliding toward the normalization of the exception.

The President of Romania's authority to declare a state of emergency reflects Carl Schmitt's assertion that "sovereign is he who decides on the exception," positioning the President as the actor who suspends the normal legal order. However, unlike Schmitt's unconstrained sovereign, the Romanian constitutional system imposes checks: under Article 93 of the Constitution, the President's decree must be submitted to Parliament for approval within five days. This mechanism attempts to anchor Schmitt's sovereignty within constitutionalism, though its safeguards remain fragile in practice.

According to Article 93 of the Constitution, the President of Romania may declare a state of siege or a state of emergency, in accordance with the law, across the entire country or in specific administrative-territorial units. The President is required to submit the measure to Parliament for approval within five (5) days of its enactment. If Parliament is not in session at the time of the declaration, it must be convened by law within no more than 48 hours after the state of siege or emergency is decreed. Parliament shall then remain in session throughout the duration of the declared state of siege or emergency.

The President's authority to declare a state of siege or a state of emergency, as outlined in the Constitution (Muraru, Tănăsescu, 2008, pp. 868–877), pertains to exceptional domestic circumstances, distinct from cases of external armed aggression. This competence is bivalent, allowing the President to enact either a state of siege or a state of emergency, depending on the situation. Furthermore, the territorial scope of such declarations may extend to the entire country or be limited to specific administrative-territorial units where the crisis arises.

The President declares a state of siege or state of emergency through a decree. This decree must be countersigned by the Prime Minister and published, without delay, in the Official Gazette of Romania (Gîrleşteanu, 2012, 223).

During a state of siege or state of emergency, the exercise of certain fundamental rights and freedoms may be subject to limitations, provided such restrictions are strictly proportionate to the exigencies of the situation and comply with the safeguards outlined in Article 53 of the Constitution (Ticu, Diaconu, 2021: 94-95). Furthermore, the following prohibitions shall apply without exception:

- a) Any infringement upon the right to life, except in cases resulting from lawful acts of armed conflict;
- b) The use of torture, inhuman or degrading treatment, or punishment under any circumstances;
- c) The prosecution or conviction of individuals for acts not explicitly criminalized under national or international law at the time of commission;
- d) Restrictions on the right to unimpeded access to justice, including fair trial guarantees.

Thus, the President's decree establishing a state of emergency constitutes an administrative act devoid of legal force. This conclusion arises from Articles 61(1) and

115 of the Constitution, which vest legislative authority, the power to enact primary regulatory measures, exclusively to the Parliament (as the supreme legislative body) and the Government (exercising delegated authority). Since the President lacks legislative competence under this framework, any decree issued cannot hold the status of a normative act equivalent to law. Furthermore, the requirement for parliamentary approval of the decree within five days of its issuance reinforces this distinction. If the decree carried the force of law, submitting it to Parliament, whose decisions are subordinate to statutory legislation, for validation would be logically inconsistent. The necessity of such approval underscores the decree's nature as an administrative act (Măță, 2020: 90).

The organic law governing states of siege or emergency does not automatically restrict fundamental rights and freedoms upon declaring an exceptional state. Instead, most provisions require explicit activation through measures specified in the President's decree. This framework ensures proportionality, enabling authorities to tailor restrictions to the situation's specific needs rather than imposing uniform limitations on all rights for the duration of the emergency. Without such a system, merely declaring an exceptional state would instantly curtail every right listed in the law. To balance adaptability and proportionality, the majority of provisions in the organic law are not directly applicable but depend on enforcement decisions formalized in the presidential decree.

Moreover, in Decision No. 152/2020, the Constitutional Court also expressed this interpretative direction by rejecting the constitutional challenge brought by the People's Advocate against specific provisions of Government Emergency Ordinance No. 1/1999. The Court underscored that when issuing such a decree, the President operates as a state authority exercising public power in service of a legitimate public interest. This clarifies the legal character of the decree as a normative administrative act, which formally establishes the exceptional legal regime. Through this administrative mechanism, the President fulfills a statutory mandate: delineating emergency measures tailored to the exigencies of the crisis, as well as specifying the fundamental rights and freedoms subject to temporary restriction during the exceptional state.

As we can see, Romania's Constitution (Article 93) strictly regulate the procedures for declaring a state of emergency, requiring parliamentary approval within five days. This mechanism ensures that the executive power does not operate in a legal vacuum but rather within the boundaries of existing laws. This reflects the *Business as Usual* philosophy, which insists on maintaining legal norms even during crises.

However, the Romanian Constitutional Court operates within a specialized and narrowly defined jurisdiction. Its competencies are explicitly and restrictively enumerated by the Constitution and organic laws. Among them, the power to review the constitutionality of presidential decrees is absent. This legal lacuna means that a presidential decree, especially one issued during a state of emergency and carrying the force of law, effectively evades any constitutional validity check. It cannot be reviewed by the Constitutional Court, nor can it be challenged before the ordinary courts. In practice, such a decree may violate constitutional norms without being subject to legal scrutiny. This situation leads to a paradox: although the Parliament must approve the emergency decree, its approval does not represent a substantive constitutional review.

Such a dynamic aligns with Schmitt's warning that the sovereign, in deciding on the exception, may place himself above the law. If the President were to legislate during the state of emergency, thereby usurping the legislative role of Parliament he would commit a grave violation of the constitutional order, an act that could be interpreted as a coup, cloaked in legality.

Moreover, the Constitutional Court has previously acknowledged that certain emergency measures enacted by the President via decree were not provided for in Article 26 of Government Emergency Ordinance No. 1/1999, the primary legal framework governing states of emergency. (Decision No. 152/2020 of the Constitutional Court: 100-101) The President, in that instance, acted outside the legal framework, derogating from existing norms through an administrative act. Still, the Court refrained from invalidating these measures, citing its limited competencies under Article 146 of the Constitution, which exclude the power to review presidential decrees of this nature.

This legal void, where emergency powers exist without adequate judicial oversight, demonstrates the enduring relevance, and danger, of Schmitt's theory. The sovereign's capacity to define the exception can, in the absence of robust constitutional safeguards, transform from a temporary safeguard of the legal order into an instrument for its suspension or erosion. In the Romanian context, the constitutional architecture attempts to balance sovereign emergency powers with parliamentary oversight, but the lack of judicial control over presidential decrees during states of exception creates a fragile equilibrium that risks tipping toward authoritarianism, undermining the democratic and rule-of-law commitments expressed in Article 1(3) of the Constitution.

Also, Giorgio Agamben warns that modern states increasingly treat emergencies as routine governance tools, eroding legal boundaries. Romania's introduction of the state of alert (via Government Emergency Ordinance No. 21/2004) exemplifies this trend.

This legal construct (state of alert) is not mentioned anywhere in the Romanian Constitution. It was introduced by the executive branch, specifically the Government, through an emergency ordinance, acting as a delegated legislator. In doing so, the Government effectively modified the constitutional framework by adding a new exceptional legal regime, a move which, in our view and that of numerous constitutional law scholars, exceeded its legal powers (Dănişor, 2020).

The original wording of Article 4 of the Ordinance suggests that the state of alert was initially conceived as a lower-intensity version of a state of emergency, one that would still allow public authorities to restrict the exercise of certain rights and freedoms. However, according to Article 53 of the Romanian Constitution, such restrictions can only be imposed by a law passed by Parliament, a formal and deliberate legislative act. An emergency ordinance, as an executive act issued by a temporary delegation of power, lacks the democratic legitimacy and constitutional authority required to limit fundamental rights.

With the adoption of Law No. 55 on May 15, 2020, the possibility of restricting rights and freedoms was explicitly permitted. The Government could issue a decision declaring a state of alert and establishing restrictive measures for a period of 30 days, applicable throughout Romania, in order to reduce and control the effects of the pandemic.

During the period in which the state of alert was in effect, numerous government decisions were issued to extend this exceptional status. However, many of the measures adopted during this time were discriminatory, disproportionate in relation to the circumstances that supposedly justified them, and significantly infringed upon the existence and substance of fundamental rights and freedoms.

Some may argue that these rights continued to exist in the legal patrimony of individuals and that only their exercise was temporarily suspended, until such time as the individuals were vaccinated, tested, or officially confirmed to be ill. Yet this justification cannot withstand serious legal or philosophical scrutiny. At the time, no one could determine the exact duration of this so-called "temporary suspension." In fact, the objective reality

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revealed a trend toward the *permanentization* of what was initially presented as a provisional restriction. (Bucharest Court of Appeal, Civil Judgment No. 1796/2021).

This concern is reinforced by the nearly two-year duration of the state of alert, a period in which fundamental rights remained curtailed under a regime of emergency governance. Furthermore, public statements by authorities and ongoing legislative initiatives, both from primary and delegated lawmakers, suggested an openness, if not an intention, to institutionalize these emergency measures.

One can also observe a significant shift in the nature of restrictions imposed during this period: a transformation from *repressive* prohibitions (targeted responses to existing epidemiological situations) to *preventive* ones (aimed at hypothetical, future threats). This evolution marks a profound change in the legal and political logic of emergency: from reactive measures designed to manage real, present dangers, to anticipatory control mechanisms that govern life based on potential future risks.

This shift echoes the core critique of Giorgio Agamben in his analysis of the “state of exception.” Agamben warns that modern governments increasingly govern through emergencies, suspending the rule of law not to restore it, but to entrench a new norm where exceptional measures become the standard mode of operation. In this context, the legal and constitutional order is not merely temporarily set aside, it is fundamentally reconfigured. What was once an exception becomes the rule, and the distinction between law and its suspension collapses.

In Romania’s case, the state of alert became a vehicle for the normalization of emergency governance. As Agamben explains, the danger is not only that rights are suspended, but that citizens become accustomed to living in a state where such suspensions are continuous, open-ended, and justified by the mere invocation of potential threats.

The preventive nature of the newer restrictions reinforces Agamben's claim that the state of exception no longer functions to address concrete crises but instead serves as a permanent apparatus of control. By governing through what *might* happen, authorities are no longer bound by actual events, but operate within a horizon of speculative risk. This makes the legal order fundamentally unstable, as it becomes subordinated to administrative discretion rather than democratic legitimacy.

Furthermore, regarding the procedural framework for challenging administrative acts issued under Law No. 55/2020, article 72 stipulated that its provisions would be supplemented by general administrative law, while explicitly excluding the application of several articles, including Article 42 of Government Emergency Ordinance (GEO) No. 21/2004.

A closer analysis reveals significant ambiguities. The first paragraph of Article 72 references general administrative law, particularly Law No. 554/2004 on administrative litigation, which governs the possibility of contesting government decisions declaring or extending the state of alert. However, the second paragraph of Article 72 explicitly states that for the state of alert instituted to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, the provisions of Article 42 of GEO No. 21/2004, which allow judicial review of emergency measures, do not apply. This contradiction creates legal uncertainty.

Article 42(3) of GEO No. 21/2004 originally provided the right to challenge, through administrative litigation, decisions extending or declaring the state of alert, as well as measures adopted during such periods. By excluding this article, Law No. 55/2020 effectively shielded these administrative acts from judicial review. Furthermore, Law No. 55/2020 failed to establish alternative procedures for contesting emergency measures,

resulting in a legal vacuum where government decisions during the state of alert bypassed judicial oversight.

The Constitutional Court addressed these issues in Decision No. 392/2021. The Constitutional Court found that Article 72(1) of Law No. 55/2020 lacks clarity and predictability. Consequently, the provisions do not meet the legal standards of foreseeability and clarity, rendering them unconstitutional under Article 1(5) of the Constitution, while also violating Article 52(1) and Article 21.

The Court emphasized that effective judicial remedies require court rulings to be issued within the timeframe during which administrative acts remain applicable. However, Law No. 55/2020 lacks procedural rules to ensure swift resolution of cases challenging administrative acts that declare or extend emergency measures. Applying standard procedures under Law No. 554/2004 would prevent courts from ruling within 30 days, making any subsequent decision ineffective in overturning the legal consequences of those administrative acts.

This creates a violation of the right to effective access to justice, as individuals harmed by administrative acts cannot efficiently challenge them during the period when those acts are legally active.

The Constitutional Court's Decision No. 392/2021 clarifies that the right to justice is only meaningful if individuals can concretely and effectively remove the harmful effects of contested administrative acts while those acts are still in force. When assessing whether a citizen's right to access justice was upheld, the state must demonstrate that the legal tools provided could genuinely and promptly nullify the challenged act's effects during its enforcement period. As highlighted in ECHR jurisprudence, merely enshrining the right to justice in law, even in the Constitution, is insufficient if practical barriers render it ineffective. The purpose of the European Convention on Human Rights is to protect real, tangible rights, not theoretical or illusory ones. Thus, the absence of expedited procedures to resolve challenges against emergency-related administrative acts undermines the right to an effective judicial remedy.

In conclusion, the Romanian experience during the pandemic illustrates, with striking clarity, the dangers outlined by Agamben and Carl Schmitt. The erosion of constitutional safeguards, the extension of temporary suspensions into indefinite restrictions, and the shift from reactive to preventive governance all reflect a broader tendency: the transformation of the exceptional into the ordinary, and the law into a tool of its own suspension (Ticu, Diaconu, 2021).

V. The General Normative Framework of Emergency in The Republic of Moldova

The Republic of Moldova's legal framework for managing emergencies, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, provides a compelling case study to evaluate the interplay between extra legalism and the Business as Usual model. By examining Moldova's emergency measures and the Constitutional Court's response, we can situate its approach within these theoretical paradigms.

According to the law of the Republic of Moldova on Civil Protection, the Parliament declares a state of emergency in the event of danger or the occurrence of exceptional situations (Law on Civil Protection No. 271/1994, Art. 5). Unlike Romania, immediate emergency measures are not implemented upon declaring the state of emergency; instead, they are progressively adopted by the competent authorities of the Republic of Moldova.

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Under Art. 17 of the Civil Protection Law, to enable public authorities to fulfil executive and operational functions for the prevention and management of exceptional situations, such as those arising from natural disasters, large-scale accidents, catastrophes or other hazardous phenomena, the Commission for Exceptional Situations of the Republic of Moldova is established, chaired by the Prime Minister. Such restrictions must align with obligations under international treaties on fundamental human rights to which Moldova is a party. They may not involve discrimination against individuals or groups based solely on race, nationality, language, religion, sex, political beliefs, or social origin (Law on the State of Emergency, Siege, and War Regime No. 212/2004, Art. 5).

Legalism, as we can see, which emphasizes strict adherence to constitutional and legal frameworks, is initially reflected in Moldova's structure. The Constitution (Art. 54) and Law No. 212/2004 permit temporary restrictions on rights during emergencies, provided they comply with international human rights obligations. The creation of the Commission for Exceptional Situations (CES), led by the Prime Minister under Art. 17 of the Civil Protection Law, exemplifies an institutionalized mechanism for crisis management under parliamentary oversight.

Moldova's pre-pandemic framework aligned with the Business as Usual model. Law No. 212/2004 originally included an exhaustive list of permissible measures. However, amendments to Law No. 212/2004 (via Law No. 54/2020) introduced vague provisions such as "other necessary measures" (Art. 20(k)), diluting legalism's predictability.

By endorsing phrases like "other necessary measures," Moldova implicitly accepts that emergencies require deviations from normal governance. This mirrors Benjamin Constant's warning that appeals to "public safety" justify arbitrary power. More critically, Article 225(3) of the Administrative Code barred proportionality reviews of emergency measures. The absence of proportionality review exacerbates this, as unchecked executive action undermines the rule of law. Thus, while Moldova's original laws reflected Business as Usual principles, the 2020 amendments mark a departure toward extra legalism.

The Law on the Regime of Emergency, Siege, and War expanded executive authority during emergencies. The extra legalist perspective, inspired by Schmitt, posits that crises necessitate measures beyond ordinary law. Moldova's pandemic response exemplifies this: the CES was granted open-ended authority to adopt "any necessary measures," creating a parallel legal regime.

Also, Agamben's notion of the "exception becoming the rule" is evident here. Emergency powers were normalized through legislative amendments, institutionalizing executive dominance. The prohibition on judicial proportionality review (Art. 225(3)) reinforces this dynamic, enabling the executive to operate in a legal gray zone, a governmental technique that erodes the distinction between normal and exceptional governance. By formalizing ambiguous emergency powers, Moldova risks reinforcing extralegal practices and undermining constitutional governance in favor of executive discretion.

In response, a group of deputies filed a complaint with the Constitutional Court, challenging the constitutionality of provisions in the Law on the Regime of Emergency, Siege, and War.

On June 23, 2020, the Constitutional Court of Moldova partially upheld the deputies' claims regarding the COVID-19 pandemic-related state of emergency.

The Court acknowledged that phrases like "other necessary measures" or "other

necessary actions" are indispensable in emergency contexts, as rigid or exhaustive legislative frameworks could hinder executive flexibility. It emphasized that Parliament cannot feasibly anticipate all required measures for every emergency. Flexible regulation of emergency powers was deemed both acceptable and necessary.

This decision underscores the tension between Moldova's legalist aspirations and its extra legalist realities. The Court's reasoning that flexibility is indispensable yet risky, reflects the broader theoretical struggle to balance governance efficacy with democratic accountability.

VI. Final Remarks

The experiences of Romania and Moldova during the COVID-19 pandemic clearly show the ongoing tension between crisis management and the respect for constitutional principles. Both countries faced the same challenge: how to act quickly in an emergency without undermining the law and the protection of human rights. Their methods differed, but the results reflected Giorgio Agamben's warning that "the exception becomes the rule." Temporary emergency measures gradually turned into normal governance tools, blurring the line between extraordinary and ordinary legal systems.

Carl Schmitt's theory is also present here. In Romania, the President's power to declare a state of emergency, though limited by the Constitution, risked resembling Schmitt's idea of a sovereign who operates both inside and outside the law. Similarly, Moldova's amendments, allowing open-ended "necessary measures," gave the executive broad authority to reshape legal limits. In both cases, weak judicial oversight highlighted how fragile constitutional protections can be under executive pressure.

The pandemic revealed a deep paradox: even as states relied on legal systems to justify emergency powers, those same systems sometimes enabled the erosion of their foundations. Romania's extended state of alert and Moldova's vague laws showed how temporary crisis measures can quietly evolve into permanent governance strategies, shifting from reacting to real threats to managing hypothetical risks an example of Agamben's "state of exception" becoming the norm.

Yet the cases also show that Constitutional Court reviewing emergency laws reflected a strong societal demand for accountability. Even in emergencies, the rule of law remains essential. Any restrictions on rights must be strictly limited by law and continually reviewed. Judges, lawmakers, and civil society are vital in preventing emergency powers from becoming authoritarian tools.

Romania and Moldova's experiences show that necessity must not justify despotism. Strong democracies do not abandon legal limits in crises; they ensure that emergency actions stay rooted in the legal framework. As the pandemic taught us, legality is not a barrier to resilience, it is its foundation.

Acknowledgement:

"This work was supported by a grant of the Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digitization, CNCS - UEFISCDI, project number PN-IV-P8-8.3-ROMD-2023-0158, within PNCDI IV."

Authors' Contributions:

The authors contributed equally to this work.

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Article Info

Received: November 03 2025

Accepted: November 18 2025

How to cite this article:

Gîrleşteanu, G. L., Ghibu, I. A. (2025). Emergency Powers and The Rule of Law: Theoretical Reflections and Legal Realities. *Revista de Științe Politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques*, no. 88, pp. 19-34.



ORIGINAL PAPER

Vertical separation of power – a means of guaranteeing freedom in states governed by the rule of law

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Abstract:

The separation of powers is most often understood only as a horizontal one, between the organs or systems of organs that exercise the three functions of the state – legislative, executive and judicial. The vertical separation of powers is either neglected or metamorphosed into a technique for organizing the state form, with no direct connection to the purpose of the other separation: effective guarantee of the rights and freedoms of the subjects. In fact, its purpose is the same, and the two forms of separation are an integral part of the system of guarantees constitutionally synthesized in the concept of the rule of law. Our study draws attention to the way in which the analysis of the state form must be resituated, in order to then focus on the way in which the history of the Romanian political and constitutional system has made any discussion about tempering the unity of the state seem like a betrayal of the unity of the Romanian nation. Following the criticism of this excessive attachment to a certain restrictive understanding of state unity, we finally show how the current Romanian constitutional framework should be revised, even in the restrictive manner in which it is interpreted by the Constitutional Court, so that the vertical separation of powers can be transformed into a means of guaranteeing fundamental rights and freedoms, which contributes to the building of an effective rule of law.

Keywords: *unitary state, regionalization, separation of powers, rule of law, human rights.*

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The separation of powers is a theory concerning the limits of political power. It is based on the idea that those who hold power tend to abuse it, and that, in order to guarantee individuals' freedom in relation to such potentially oppressive power, its exercise must be organized in such a way that dividing it among several authorities enables them to restrain one another. Its purpose, however, is not-as is often misunderstood-the organization of power, but rather the guarantee of liberty, through a particular way of limiting power, one that is intrinsic. The separation of powers is therefore not a technique for exercising power, but a technique for guaranteeing the rights and freedoms of individuals. It is a means of achieving the rule of law, serving as a structural principle that constitutes this type of state. This is why the French revolutionaries established, in 1789, through Article 16 of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, that "a society in which the guarantee of rights is not assured, nor the separation of powers determined, has no constitution." The very existence of the state-in the form of a state in which no individual is the master of power, that is, one in which power is political-was thus linked to two principles: the guarantee of rights and the separation of powers. All modern states must be founded on these forms of limiting power. It is not an open option, but a normative requirement, without which their establishment is not possible.

Power, according to the typical understanding that emerged from the theory of its separation, is divided among the organs of the state that exercise its three essential functions - legislation, the execution of laws through acts of authority, and the resolution of conflicts between subjects - all positioned in a relationship of functional equality and mutual control, based on the central idea that powers cannot be combined. Thus, it is a horizontal separation of power, ensuring that none of the powers can be superior to the others. Power, once divided in this way, cannot be verticalized. Yet, to prevent such verticalization, it is necessary that the central power, even if separated, should not be able to establish a relationship of domination over individuals and the sub-state communities to which they belong. The horizontal separation of powers must therefore be complemented. Without this complement, as Benjamin Constant observed as early as 1793, "all the precautions we have accumulated are not sufficient to guarantee either the constituted powers against one another when they are divided, or the citizens against these powers when they unite." (Constant, 1991: 371). No matter how well it may be divided among several holders, a centralized power can still become excessive simply by being too centralized. It must be restrained through the establishment of a counterbalance - a non-centralized power that is sufficiently autonomous from it to be able to oppose it. From the very beginnings of the theory, the separation of the state's central powers (the horizontal separation) has been only one technique of limiting power, situated within a broader system. This broader system includes the vertical structuring of power, the pluralistic structuring of intermediary bodies, and the autonomy of civil society, understood primarily as the autonomy of the bourgeois economy in relation to political power. (Dănișor, 2017a: 21-33). This entire system has as its primary purpose the guarantee of individual rights.

The manner in which the vertical separation of powers is implemented gives rise to different forms of the state. Often, these forms are linked to the degree of pluralism (ethnic, linguistic, religious, etc.) within a society, based on the idea that a society that is unitary from these perspectives must necessarily be organized as a unitary state, while the presence of a certain degree of pluralism requires a form of verticalization of the separation of powers, established through decentralization, regionalization, or federalism.

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In reality, however, if we consider the primary purpose of the vertical separation of powers - namely, the protection of individual rights against the excessive centralization of power - then the form this separation takes, and therefore the form of the state itself, should be linked to the manner in which these rights are safeguarded. It should be regarded as a means of achieving the rule of law, not merely as a way of exercising power, even when that power is democratically constituted.

All modern governments are centralized. "For several decades, many have sought to determine the origins and context of the organization of the modern central government [...]. Beyond the inherent historical interest of such research, its importance lies in the idea that many of the problems of modern government are determined by the conditions present at the time of its creation. This also applies to the institutional origins of the governmental system. The form and institutional order established at the moment of the organization's birth constitute a predominant and determining factor in its subsequent life." (Groenveld, Wagenaar, Van Der Meer, 2010: 51-52). Now, in Europe, there have been two forms of this centralization: one that passed through an intermediate phase between the empire and the nation-state - that of the absolute monarchy - and another that emerged directly in opposition to the empire.

The absolute monarchies established in Western Europe during the transition from feudalism to modernity declared themselves independent from the Holy Roman Empire. The absolute monarch was free from any external subordination to the kingdom, including to the power of the Emperor. This independence was secured through the development of two fundamental ideas: the first, that the King recognizes no power superior to his own in temporal matters (*rex qui superiorem non recognoscit*); and the second, that the King is emperor within his own kingdom (*rex in regno suo est imperator regni sui*). Moreover, Bossuet defined the absolute nature of monarchical power precisely through its independence. According to him, a fundamental characteristic of monarchical power is that it is "absolute, which means independent." (Bonney, 1989: 58).

Internally, the absolute monarch was likewise free from any form of constraint. He did not derive his power from the feudal nobility, being above it (*seigneur "par-dessus"* or sovereign "*fief-feux*"), and the absolute monarchy was thus genetically different from an "aristocratic seignury" (J. Bodin). Although absolute monarchs skillfully used feudal contractual rules and the techniques of incorporating territories by force, they simultaneously fought against feudalism-first symbolically, by refusing to personally perform any procedures related to vassalage contracts, and later legally, by recognizing serfs as legal subjects and thereby securing the loyalty of the common people against the very essence of the feudal system. The existence of ministers or councils did not in principle limit royal power in any way: the former were merely the King's secretaries, while the latter had only a consultative role. Royal power was therefore a *potestas absoluta*-that is, an undivided legislative sovereignty. The power of the absolute monarch was traditionally conceived as being above the laws (*princeps legibus solutus*), but it should be clearly understood that this meant being above the laws he himself made, in the sense that "the law could not be greater than the lawgiver." (Bonney, 1989: 16), but not above divine or natural laws, nor above the fundamental laws of the kingdom. It was undivided sovereignty, and not arbitrary power, that made the monarch's authority a *potestas absoluta*. The second method of breaking free from the logic of the feudal system was the centralization of justice in the hands of the King and his courts. This feature, particularly pronounced in England, is considered an ideal-typical characteristic of

absolute monarchies. It allowed for the unification of the kingdom's customs, thereby granting the central power an indirect sovereignty over the law.

The modern state emerged in Western Europe as a distinct form of political-legal power, when all intermediate political powers linked to feudalism were abolished. It follows that all local or territorial collectives, typically former fiefs, no longer possess autonomous power in relation to the political power of the state. Even in regionalized or federal states, the power of intermediate collectives is framed and constrained by the state.

The centralization of power entails establishing a direct political-legal link between the state and its subjects. The liberation of dependent peasants created this condition, as the central power (whether monarch or collegial government) removed the intermediate level of feudal lords from the vertical structure of power, creating a new category of subjects directly dependent on it. This direct link between the state and the citizen is ideal-typical for the modern constitution. However, this direct dependence also eliminates the protection previously provided by intermediate levels. This is why, given that the power of modern states is by nature centralized, it becomes necessary to structure it vertically in order to guarantee freedom. The vertical separation of powers is likewise ideal-typical for this type of state. Consequently, a state that does not implement some form of vertical separation of power-distributing it between a central authority and local autonomies to guarantee the liberties of citizens within these autonomies-is not a modern state.

In the cultural space of Eastern Europe, which included the Romanian lands in the 19th century, the process of centralization did not have the same meaning. Feudalism in this cultural area, including the Romanian one, differed from Western feudalism in many respects, particularly regarding the relationship between the state and the church and the dialectical interplay between the centralization and decentralization of political power. From a historical perspective, we can "hypothesize that the extent to which a society is affected by the crisis of adaptation of its feudal structures reflects the degree to which it is engaged, due to its conception of power and politics, in a process of innovation controlled through a dynamic of system differentiation, the construction of a public sphere, and the generalization of a hierarchical and bureaucratic power." Conversely, civil societies [...] less affected by the feudal crisis, and more capable of self-regulation around an uncontested center, were less exposed to such a dynamic. (Badie, 1981: 333). Similarly, Eastern European society, based on Orthodox Christianity, which served as the foundation for a "political regime close to caesaropapism [a system uniting temporal and religious power]," did not pave the way for the formation of an autonomous temporal sector, nor, consequently, for the development of state rationality. (Badie, 1981: 334).

The unitary Romanian state, at the time of its formation, was situated within this second logic. It was created largely against the will of the major European powers. They accepted the union of Wallachia and Moldavia in 1859 more to prevent either from dominating the principalities exclusively than to establish a Romanian state. In the view of the great powers, the form of this union was not a unitary state. The Romanians pursued a policy of *fait accompli*, electing the same Ruler in both principalities and attempting to build, from that starting point, a true union-a difficult process. But we will not delve here into the history of this process. What matters for our purposes is that the unity of the state was asserted against the imperialism of the great powers. As a result, the legal characteristics of this unity were constructed against this imperialism, rather than as a result of developing an internal logic that would have taken into account the vertical structuring of power to prevent its abuse-so that local powers and central authority would

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mutually constrain each other, and our freedom would be guaranteed by an additional vertical separation to complement the horizontal one.

The type of state form constructed by the Romanians was, consequently, defined legally, in an oppositional and extrinsic manner, unlike the type of state built in Western Europe, which was defined primarily in a substantial and intrinsic way, based on opposition to the feudal system and religious metaphysics. In the Romanian lands that united in 1859, there had been no Western-style feudalism. Thus, the centralization of power and the unitary character of the state were constructed in opposition to forces external to Romanian society, as a requirement for independence from a foreign power. For this reason, the unitary character of the state was perceived as an aspect of independence from the empires that had dominated the region, rather than as the centralization of political power over local autonomies. When Romanian constitutions affirm the unitary and indivisible character of the state, they are, in fact, asserting the independence of the Romanian state and the impossibility of any of the united provinces being separated from the unitary state to be attached to a foreign power.

This is the reason why Romania, even though it took as a model for its first modern Constitution of 1866 the Belgian Constitution of 1831, did not follow that model with respect to local autonomy or the political character of citizenship. Regarding the form of the state, the Romanian state was declared indivisible—a provision not found in the Belgian Constitution. The explanation is historical and circumstantial: the Romanian Constituent thus marked the union of the Romanian Principalities into a single state as irreversible. However, the legal consequences of this provision go far beyond a mere political declaration. Legally speaking, a state is indivisible when a single political power is exercised over the entire territory. This means that the legislator is prohibited from granting local communities any authority that would confer upon them any part of sovereignty. Federalism is therefore excluded, and decentralization must fit within the framework established by indivisibility. This is the legal reason why the demands of the Bessarabians, formulated on March 27, 1918, by the Sfatul Țării, that the union with Romania be established on federalist principles (Bessarabia to have its own Parliament, approving local budgets and appointing all local administrative bodies; the province to be represented proportionally to its population in the Romanian Parliament) (Badie, 1981: 318) were not taken into consideration.

It is evident that this way of normatively shaping the form of the state depends on understanding state unity as independence and inalienability—that is, through external opposition. The major differences between Romania's 1866 Constitution and its Belgian model regarding center-periphery relations result from this type of understanding. The Belgian Constitution was concerned with local autonomy. It therefore established the principles that the legislator was to respect when regulating provincial and municipal institutions:

1. Direct elections, with exceptions explicitly provided by the Constitution;
2. The assignment of competencies to provincial and municipal councils concerning all matters of provincial and municipal interest, without affecting the approval of their acts in the cases and according to the procedures established by law;
3. Publicity of council meetings within the limits provided by law;
4. Publicity of budgets and accounts;
5. Intervention by the King and the legislative power to prevent councils from exceeding their powers and to ensure that they did not compromise the general interest.

By establishing these principles, Belgium created clear relationships and precise limits in center-periphery relations.

In contrast, Romania's 1866 Constitution was elliptical in this regard, stipulating only that laws would be based on a "more complete" administrative decentralization and communal independence. The vague and imprecise provisions gave rise to a centralist regime, which steadily intensified under the laws of 1892 and 1903, with the Ministry of the Interior exercising enormous power over local authorities. Critics of the system pointed out that centralization and bureaucratization had nullified the noble principles of the Constitution (Negulescu, 1906: 321-324). However, it must be noted that these principles were scarcely regulated, since the Romanian Constituent, unfortunately, departed from the Belgian model in this regard, even though the 1859 Central Commission's draft reproduced the Belgian text exactly, and the Ad-hoc Divan had requested approximately the same principles (Filitti, 1934: 68-69).

But should we, once we recognize that European societies aiming to establish a modern constitution are different, speak of multiple modernities, or can we still subsume this diversity under common principles? I believe that the shared evolution of these political-legal spaces, which experienced different historical realities, can be discerned if we operate a second type of contextualization, alongside the historical one: cultural contextualization. Romania shares with Western Europe a modern culture. Understanding this allows us to see why the Romanian state, although it builds its unity not against the feudal fragmentation of power but against imperialism, must still pay attention to processes of local autonomy and decentralization, if not even the federalization of political power. If the unity of the Romanian state was created against external powers and understood as the independence and inalienability of sovereignty and territory, should the Romanian state not also be concerned with the vertical separation of powers to guarantee freedoms? I believe it should, and the Romanians' desire to build a modern state demonstrates this. However, for this separation of powers to be effectively realized, we must overcome the idea that any discussion of local autonomy, regionalization, or federalization is a discussion about the alienation of national sovereignty. It therefore becomes essential to first reframe the understanding of unity.

In the view of Romanian historiography, the unity of the state is seen as a necessary consequence of the unity of the people: a people that is unitary in terms of ethnicity, language, culture, etc., must be organized into a unitary state. In this understanding, the issue of minority protection is seen as a matter of tolerance. The dominant people-the one organizing the state in a unitary form-tolerates a certain degree of diversity. In such a vision, the state is considered "ours," belonging to the Romanian ethnicity, while other ethnicities are tolerated, regarded as so-called "cohabiting nationalities." However, they are not the foundation of the state; only the "Romanian" people constitute its foundation. This perspective is shared by a significant portion of Romanian jurists.

This type of understanding promotes a spiritualist collectivism that is entirely incompatible with the individualist ideas of modernity. According to these ideas, all people are equal. Politically speaking, this means that they are citizens, independent of their identity affiliations-ethnic, linguistic, religious, and so on. The foundation of the modern state is the community of citizens, not any ethnic, linguistic, or religious community. In this vision, the unity of the people means its indivisibility; that is, from a legal perspective, the prohibition of creating different legal regimes for individuals based on their membership in primary identity groups-the very groups that would form the basis

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of the people's unity in the historical view described earlier. Legally, the unity of the people means the equality of all its citizens, regardless of ethnicity, language, religion, or other similar affiliations.

The historical perspective, therefore, comes into conflict with the legal perspective regarding the concept of the unity of the people. From a legal standpoint, the unity of the people does not necessarily imply the unitary character of the state. The fundamental difference arises from the fact that the historical view is centered on the autonomy of the group in relation to an external opponent, whereas the legal view is centered on the protection of equality and, more broadly, on the protection of individual rights and freedoms. In the historical perspective, unconditional loyalty to the unitary state is promoted, with any attempt to question it equated to an attack on national identity. In the legal perspective, however, unconditional commitment is directed toward the protection of individual freedoms and equality before the law as guarantees of these rights, with the absence of vertical separation of powers being regarded as an attack on liberty. In Romania, the first perspective has always been privileged over the second. Consequently, constitutional norms regarding the form of the state and equality before the law have often been interpreted by jurists through a historical lens, which has generated numerous problems, given that the two perspectives are fundamentally contradictory.

In 1923, when Greater Romania was drafting a new constitution, political federalism seemed inconceivable to the Romanian people and political class. This was natural to some extent, considering the historical circumstances of the creation of the Romanian state, as mentioned earlier. The autonomy of the historical Romanian provinces, which had separated from neighboring empires to unite with Romania, was conceived only in opposition to external powers, and the union was meant to be marked as irreversible. Yet the need for federalism was reflected in the design of national representation, which was conceived more in terms of what was called integral federalism. Thus, the 1923 Constitution recognized, alongside different political collectivities, representation for "sectoral" collectivities: economic, social, cultural, etc. (Héraud, 1976: 171). Article 70 of the new Constitution stipulated that "members of the chambers of commerce, industry, labor, and agriculture, gathered in separate colleges, elect from among themselves one senator from each category and for each electoral district. These special electoral districts are established by the electoral law, their number not exceeding six," while Article 71 provided that "each university elects, from among its members, by vote of its professors, one senator." Thus, although Article 1 of the Constitution maintained attachment to the unitary form of the state, stating that "The Kingdom of Romania is a national, unitary, and indivisible state," the Romanian constitutional system did not entirely exclude federalist ideas. The diversification of representation criteria was complemented by representation of territorial communities in the Senate, as Article 69 stipulated that "members elected to county councils and members elected to urban and rural communal councils, gathered in a single college, elect, by equal, direct, and secret obligatory vote, one senator from each county." However, the new Constitution of Greater Romania did not dare to adopt political federalism, even though the Bessarabians, as we have seen, had requested it, and the Romanian Prime Minister had promised to respect this demand even before the union was voted on in the Sfatul Țării. This reflects a misunderstanding of this form of federalism, perceiving it as a threat to national unity.

Regarding regionalization, it has always clashed in Romania with the ethnic understanding of relations between the center and local communities. Whenever it is discussed, the issue of local autonomy is transformed from one concerning the vertical

distribution of competencies into one concerning the ethnic autonomy of the Hungarian minority, which is a majority in part of Transylvania. This is why neither the Romanian majority nor the Hungarian minority understand that local autonomy is a guarantee of individual freedom, serving as the vertical expression of the principle of separation of powers. The fear of ethnic autonomy for the Hungarian minority may be understandable, but its consequences far exceed the historical conflict between Romanians and Hungarians in Transylvania, profoundly affecting the understanding of the public sphere and, from there, the universal protection of rights and freedoms. The unitary form of the state does not, in principle, prevent regionalization. Several European unitary states have introduced such regional structures. Romania does not do so because it has not been clearly understood that this moderation of centralism is a guarantee of freedom for everyone, not only for the Hungarian minority.

The only remaining option is that of decentralization. In 1866, in the Constitution adopted to address the systemic problems created during the reign of A.I. Cuza, this decentralization was not very well regulated, as noted above. In 1923, an opportunity arose to develop it further. One could argue that the Romanian state had an obligation to do so, given that, along with the newly annexed territories, it also incorporated significant national minorities. The question, then, is whether the new Constitution adequately and normatively framed such decentralization.

Decentralization must be implemented in two ways. The first involves the transfer of certain competencies from the central government to territorial units for the benefit of organs elected by these units, which operate with a degree of autonomy from central authority. The second involves the real participation of local communities in the formation and exercise of central power. We have seen that some senators were elected indirectly by local councilors, which satisfied the second requirement. However, the first requirement was far from being fulfilled. Article 108 of the 1923 Constitution remained as deficient in terms of decentralization as its 1866 counterpart, leaving regulatory competence in this area to the legislator, since it merely stated that “county and communal institutions are regulated by law.” It is true that the Constitution stipulated that “these laws shall be based on administrative decentralization,” but it provided no details regarding this decentralization. The only constitutional guarantee was the election of members of county and communal councils. The consequence was that the Romanian state did not experience real decentralization during the interwar period.

Unfortunately, this misunderstanding regarding the real stakes and consequences of choosing the form of the state persisted even in 1991. The post-communist Romanian Constitution declared the unitary form of the state irrevocable, eliminating any possibility of discussion about introducing any form of political federalism. It removed the influences that theories of integral federalism had on the 1923 Constitution, eliminating the diversity of representation criteria, excluded the representation of local communities in the Senate by establishing direct voting for senators, and listed administrative-territorial units exhaustively, making the introduction of regionalization a matter of constitutional revision—a particularly difficult procedural challenge. It also did not define decentralization or local autonomy. The 2003 revision did not resolve any of these issues. Moreover, although it introduced a competence for the Constitutional Court to resolve constitutional legal conflicts between public authorities, it did not open the way for local authorities to refer matters to the Court—something that would have been natural if central powers violated constitutionally guaranteed local autonomy. Under these circumstances, local autonomy remains merely an illusion.

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To make it a reality, the constitutional framework would need to be revised, starting from the idea that local autonomy is a technique of the rule of law—that is, a means of limiting power to guarantee freedom, not a technique for exercising power. The question, then, is how the vertical separation of powers should be detailed in Romania’s contemporary Constitution, which establishes the rule of law as a constitutional principle that subordinates the democratic technique of exercising power. (Dănişor, 2017b: 9-28).

We will now show how the constitutional texts regarding local public administration and the participation of members of these communities in the formation and exercise of central power should be revised, following the structure of the 1991 Constitution.

The current text of Article 120, titled “Basic Principles” (of local administration), is as follows:

1. Public administration in administrative-territorial units is based on the principles of decentralization, local autonomy, and the deconcentration of public services.
2. In administrative-territorial units where citizens belonging to a national minority have a significant proportion, the use of the minority language shall be ensured in writing and orally in relations with local public administration authorities and with deconcentrated public services, under the conditions provided by the organic law.

We propose that the organizing principle of local administration should be that of free self-government. Article 120 should be formulated as follows: “Local communities shall govern themselves freely, under the conditions of the law.” Formulated in this way, the text would truly enshrine a principle, since a principle is a limit on power, including the normative power of the state. It would be a constitutive principle, meaning “a normative idea that we place at the foundation of our social existence, to constrain society to be what we are able to tolerate it being. Consequently, constitutive legal principles refer to the (re)construction of society through norms, just as the principles of knowledge refer to the (re)construction of reality through reason. In the case of understanding reality, principles function to halt the infinite regression of explanation, cause by cause, by instituting a primary cause, one that has no further cause. [...] In the case of establishing normativity, each norm has a cause, until, to avoid legislating infinitely, we must stop at some norms that have no further cause, that are self-caused, that produce themselves from themselves. These norms, which we claim to be self-produced, are constitutive legal principles. They are the foundation of legal action over social reality and the human integrated within it, and at the same time, they are its limits. [...] Their legality does not derive, in our eyes, from anything external to their ‘existence,’ but from the fact that they ‘stop’ society, placing a maximum boundary, a frontier of what society can compel us to do. Principles thus become, from a foundation situated at the base of the social, an upper limit of it, beyond which we react against society, momentarily breaking the fabric that binds us, in order to restore it to its foundation, to reposition it ‘rightly.’ [...] By ensuring the reasonableness of the constraints society may impose, constitutive legal principles provide the minimally necessary protection for individuals so that they can exist as autonomous beings relative to the society they are obliged to integrate into. From the individual’s perspective, principles transform from norms of constraint into rights against normative constraint”** (Dănişor, 2025: 35). Such a principle is precisely that of the free self-government of local communities, as it limits the normative power of the central political authority in order to guarantee individual rights.

A guarantee of the free self-government of local communities (Nica, 2005: 114–116) lies in the fact that it “is fundamentally a freedom of the citizens. This freedom of administration is the necessary complement to freedom of association and freedom to engage in enterprise, in order to ensure a balance between equality and liberty in a democracy” (Benoit, 2022: 117–121; Nica, 2005: 114–116). Considering this freedom as a fundamental freedom of individuals (and not of groups), it would benefit from specific judicial protection and could be reconciled with the prohibition of collective rights by the unity of the people.

Decentralization, as a technique for exercising power, must be regulated within this framework. It involves transferring administrative responsibilities to territorial communities through organs elected by these local communities, which operate with a degree of autonomy-up to a certain point-in administrative matters, relative to central authorities. The most effective method of granting autonomy is, without doubt, the direct universal election of the deliberative and executive bodies that administer these communities.

In order for genuine local autonomy to exist-understood as freedom of administration-local elections must be political in nature, not merely administrative. This means that all constitutional principles regarding the universality, equality, secrecy, and free expression of the vote apply to local elections. Additionally, provisions concerning political pluralism are also applicable. The political character of local elections is particularly significant when local representatives constitute the intermediate electoral body for choosing members (or some members) of the upper chamber of Parliament, as is the case in France, or as was the case in Romania under the 1923 Constitution. In such a system, the Senate, unlike the other chamber, becomes a forum for representing local communities and a guarantee of their autonomy.

The current constitutional regulation appears detailed regarding local public administration authorities, but we believe it is excessive to constitutionally determine exactly which authorities exist, just as it is excessive to constitutionally specify which administrative-territorial units exist. Regulation would be more flexible if the Constitution set out only the principles, which, in our view, should be: establishing the local authorities through which local autonomy is realized by a law adopted with a qualified majority of the two chambers of Parliament sitting together; the election of authorities by the local communities; the participation of these communities in regulating the electoral system for local elections through their representatives in the Senate; and prohibiting Government intervention in the electoral system while strictly limiting the Government’s ability to affect the existence of the authorities through which local autonomy is exercised.

A constitutional text based on these ideas could be formulated as follows:

1. The authorities of public administration through which local autonomy is exercised shall be established by a law adopted with a two-thirds majority of the members of Parliament and shall be elected by the citizens of the respective local communities.
2. The competence to regulate local elections belongs to the Senate. The Government is prohibited from issuing ordinances in the field of local elections.
3. The dissolution or removal from office of the authorities of public administration through which local autonomy is exercised may be requested by the Government, through a motivated decision, to the local communities that elected them, if the Government finds serious violations of the law that have led to repeated annulments by administrative courts of the acts of the respective authority. The Government’s decision may be challenged before the administrative courts.

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And since free self-government is an individual right, not a collective competence, citizens should be able to participate in setting the local agenda and in local decision-making. We believe that a constitutional article in the section on local autonomy should explicitly address citizen participation, with the following formulation:

1. The law shall establish the conditions under which voters in an administrative-territorial unit, through the right to petition, may request the inclusion on the agenda of the unit's deliberative bodies of a matter within their competence.
2. Under the conditions provided by law, draft normative acts or public policies of local interest may, at the initiative of the competent deliberative bodies, be submitted to the decision of the voters of the administrative-territorial unit through a referendum.

For local autonomy to be a reality, local communities should be represented in the Senate. As the jurists responsible for drafting the constitutions of 1991 and 2003 proposed, senators should be elected indirectly by the elected members of local councils. The text could be formulated as follows:

1. The Senate ensures the representation of local communities.
2. The members elected to councils representing local communities, assembled in a single electoral college, shall elect, by equal, direct, secret, and freely expressed vote, a number of senators for each county proportional to its population, under the conditions established by the electoral law.

For free self-government to be effective, local communities must have sufficient organizational, legal, and financial instruments to ensure a degree of decision-making autonomy. The legal means of free self-government include: the existence of an autonomous local regulatory authority, contractual freedom, financial autonomy, and functional autonomy.

In a decentralized unitary state, local authorities possess their own regulatory power. The principle of free self-government does not imply the existence of an independent normative power of local authorities, separate from the regulatory authority of Parliament or the central administration. The regulatory competence of local authorities is granted by the legislator, either explicitly or implicitly. The legal order remains unified, and the regulatory power of local authorities merely allows them to adopt general and impersonal measures that are subsidiary to the law and to the acts organizing its implementation issued by the central administration. The scope of local regulatory power may vary depending on the precision of the enabling law and any intervention by the regulatory authority of the central administration. However, and this is essential, the constitutional guarantee of local autonomy imposes certain limits on the legislator. The legislator cannot affect the autonomy of local communities by law except under specific conditions-namely, for reasons of general interest that cannot be satisfied by local means and only under strict conditions of proportionality. To ensure that the relative regulatory autonomy of local communities does not become a mere illusion, it is preferable that the legislator be required to regulate the normative sphere of local community organs, defining areas in which only local communities, through their elected bodies, may issue regulations. In other words, matters concerning local communities should be regulated, through administrative acts and within the limits of the law, by those who best understand the needs of these communities-their elected representatives. The legislator, in turn, must be constrained by a constitutional obligation to establish such areas of administrative regulation reserved for the organs of local communities.

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Based on these premises, the Constitution of Romania should include, in the section on local public administration, a new article entitled “Regulatory Autonomy”, with the following provisions:

1. The normative competences exercised autonomously by local public administration bodies shall be regulated by law.
2. The law shall determine the areas in which the competence to adopt normative administrative acts belongs exclusively to the bodies of local public administrations.

The principles of normative hierarchy assume that a lower-ranking normative act can be repealed or amended by a normative act superior to it in the normative hierarchy. This rule is moderated by the constitutionalization of the principle of normative autonomy of local communities, which implies that a normative act issued by the central authority cannot repeal or amend a normative act of local community authorities if it expresses local normative autonomy, as this is constitutionally guaranteed. By infringing on the administrative regulatory domain of local communities, Parliament or the Government would violate constitutional provisions. Consequently, there should be a procedural mechanism to control the respect of the limits of the repeal or derogatory powers of the Legislature and the Government in relation to the autonomy of local communities. We believe this mechanism could be formulated as follows:

1. Parliament is the sole legislative authority in the field of local autonomy. The domains of local autonomy can only be regulated through organic laws. The Government may not adopt acts that regulate local autonomy or restrict its exercise.
2. Public administration authorities responsible for implementing local autonomy may refer to the Constitutional Court to rule on the constitutionality of laws regulating local autonomy or those that they consider restrict its exercise.
3. Resolution of conflicts of competence between the Government or the central specialized public administration and the public administration bodies responsible for implementing local autonomy falls within the jurisdiction of the High Court of Cassation and Justice.

In the absence of such a constitutional provision guaranteeing local autonomy, all principles of organizing a decentralized unitary state in which local autonomy is constitutionally guaranteed remain ineffective. In fact, under the current state of the Romanian constitutional system, this competence-regulating mechanism is often lacking or insufficiently defined from a normative perspective. Once constitutionally guaranteed, local autonomy must first be protected against possible abuses by the legislative power. The Legislator must itself respect the constitutional principle of local autonomy. However, for this principle to become effective, an independent body must be able to resolve legal conflicts between the Legislator and territorial communities. Logically, this body should be the one that controls the constitutionality of laws, that is, under our current constitutional system, the Constitutional Court. The problem is that at present the Court resolves constitutional legal conflicts only between central powers, not between these powers and territorial communities. According to Article 146(e) of the Constitution, the Court may be referred by the President of Romania, the Presidents of the two Chambers, the Prime Minister, or the President of the Superior Council of Magistracy. Bodies representing autonomous territorial communities cannot use this constitutional mechanism to obtain protection of local autonomy against possible violations by legislative acts. Regarding the

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control of compliance with the division of spheres of competence between the executive and local administrations, this competence should belong to ordinary courts, since it is a matter of legality once the competences of local administrations are delegated by law. Of course, under the current administrative litigation system, local administrations can obtain annulment of central administration acts, but the means are indirect. They should be made direct.

Local autonomy must be translated into functional autonomy of the organs of local communities. While the state's deconcentrated services are placed under its control through a territorial representative of the executive power (in Romania, the prefect), the services of decentralized local public administration authorities must be organized and operate independently of the Executive or its representatives. This means that, in a decentralized unitary state, the organization and functioning of the services of local public administration authorities through which local autonomy is exercised is determined by those authorities themselves, within the limits of general principles regulated by law.

Since the tendency of the central authority in unitary states is to limit the autonomy of territorial units by intruding into the organization and functioning of public services, in order to prevent possible abuses, the organization and functioning of local community services should be left within their competence, with the legislator establishing only the general framework through law. This would prevent situations in which the legislator or government specifies personnel or local service needs without taking into account the actual, specific requirements of the respective communities.

Another method used by the central authority to limit the functional autonomy of local administrations is the establishment of mechanisms through which one territorial administrative unit is subordinated to or placed under the tutelage of another territorial administrative unit. The principle of local autonomy in a decentralized unitary state prohibits the use of this procedure. If the exercise of a competence requires the joint action of several territorial administrative units, they may, by law, be authorized to organize the modalities of their joint action. Local communities themselves are competent to decide the manner of their collaboration. The legislator only authorizes and frames this competence but cannot impose or restrict collaboration, except under conditions of necessity and proportionality, which are, if not formally, at least materially constitutional.

Building on these guiding principles, we believe that a new provision should be introduced in the Constitution of Romania, entitled "Functional Autonomy", which would provide:

1. The organization and functioning of the services of local public administration authorities through which local autonomy is exercised shall be decided by those authorities themselves, within the limits of general principles established by law.
2. The establishment of any subordination or tutelage of one territorial administrative unit over another is prohibited. If the exercise of a competence requires the joint action of several territorial administrative units, they may, by law, be authorized to organize the modalities of their joint action.

Local autonomy also implies financial autonomy. This means that the respective local communities must have resources that allow them to fully exercise their competences and enjoy a broad margin of discretion in how these resources are used. Local authorities do not possess genuine fiscal power, as they cannot create taxes or levies except when authorized by the legislator. The state determines the resources of local communities, whether these are transferred from the central budget or constitute the communities' own resources, since even the latter are established by local councils only within the limits and

conditions set by law. However, the fiscal power of the legislator is not without limits. The law must always determine the share allocated to local administrations from taxes and levies of any kind (Constitution of the Republic of France, art. 72-2). This is because, if the state is the one controlling fiscal matters, it must not excessively centralize financial resources only to redistribute them from the center to territorial units, as this process tends to turn into political pressure on the organs of local communities through which they exercise their autonomy, influencing the use of public funds based on the interests of the ruling parties rather than the actual needs of the local communities. The legislator creates taxes and levies, fiscal policy being its exclusive competence, but it must normatively frame the power of the central administration in order to guarantee local administrations the level of resources necessary for their functioning, in accordance with the needs of the communities they govern. The allocation of resources between the central and local administrations through law is a minimal method of ensuring the financial autonomy of the latter.

To guarantee local communities that the state does not abuse its power to redistribute public revenues, the financial resources of territorial administrative units derived from taxes and levies collected directly by them, in accordance with the law, must represent a significant portion of their overall own resources. At the same time, the state is obliged to regulate mechanisms that ensure equal opportunities for territorial administrative units with respect to the generation of their own resources.

Another method by which the central authority tends to limit local autonomy is the transfer of responsibilities from the central power to territorial units, or the creation or expansion of the competences of local administrations without providing the necessary resources for their effective exercise. Therefore, any transfer of competences from central authorities to territorial administrative units must be accompanied by the allocation of resources equivalent to those previously devoted to their exercise by the central public administration authorities (Constitution of the Republic of France, art. 72-2). Any creation or expansion of the competences of local public administration authorities that results in increased expenditures for territorial administrative units must be accompanied by the determination, by law, of the financial resources necessary for their effective exercise (Constitution of the Republic of France, art. 72-2).

On the other hand, local financial autonomy is affected by the tendency to impose mandatory expenditures on local administrations through law or acts of the central administration. In this way, the structure of local budgets is decided from the center, and the resources they have autonomously to meet local interests become insufficient. Therefore, the determination of the structure of local budgets must be left within the competence of local administrations, with the legislator merely establishing its general principles.

Based on these principles, we believe that the Constitution of Romania should include an article explicitly guaranteeing the financial autonomy of local community administrations, which could be formulated as follows:

1. The state is obliged to provide territorial administrative units with the resources necessary for exercising local autonomy, which they may use freely. The law establishes only the principles governing the exercise of this freedom.
2. The law must determine the share allocated to local administrations from taxes and levies of any kind.
3. The financial resources of territorial administrative units derived from taxes and levies collected directly by them, in accordance with the law, must represent a significant portion of their overall own resources.
4. Any transfer of competences from central authorities to territorial administrative

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units must be accompanied by the allocation of resources equivalent to those previously devoted to their exercise by the central public administration authorities.

5. The creation of any new competences or the expansion of the competences of local public administration authorities that results in increased expenditures for territorial administrative units must be accompanied by the determination, by law, of the financial resources necessary for their effective exercise.
6. The state is obliged to regulate mechanisms that ensure equal opportunities for territorial administrative units with respect to the generation of their own resources.

Another aspect of local autonomy is the ability of authorities representing local communities to contract freely. The state's role should be limited to supervising the legality of contracts, without influencing the terms of the contracts or imposing contractual partners on local administrations. For this reason, we believe that the Constitution of Romania should explicitly guarantee the contractual autonomy of local community administrations. The provision could be formulated as follows:

1. Local public administration authorities may freely conclude all contracts necessary for the lawful fulfillment of their mission.
2. The law establishes the mechanisms for supervising the legality of these contracts.

As we believe has emerged from the analyses above, only a consistent modification of the current constitutional framework can make the vertical separation of powers an effective technique for limiting power, turning it into a means of guaranteeing fundamental rights and freedoms, and contributing to the realization of the rule of law, which, according to Article 1(3) of the Constitution of Romania, is a constituent principle, that is, a fundamental limit of norm-setting, without which the state as a political power cannot exist. The revision proposals analyzed above fall within the framework outlined by Article 152 of the Constitution, as interpreted so far in the jurisprudence of the Constitutional Court of Romania, that is, a unitary state that cannot be regionalized. However, it should be noted that this jurisprudence narrows the notion of a unitary state, which is not expressly imposed by the Constitution, meaning that the proposals we have advanced could, if the frame of reference is changed-broadening the concept of a unitary state beyond mere decentralization-be extended.

Acknowledgement:

"This work was supported by a grant of the Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digitization, CNCS - UEFISCDI, project number PN-IV-P8-8.3-ROMD-2023-0158, within PNCDI IV."

Authors' Contributions:

The authors contributed equally to this work.

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Article Info

Received: November 03 2025

Accepted: November 18 2025

How to cite this article:

Dănișor, D. C., Dănișor, M. C., Gîrleșteanu, G. L., Nica, E. M. (2025). Vertical separation of power – a means of guaranteeing freedom in states governed by the rule of law. *Revista de Științe Politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques*, no. 88, pp. 35-50.



ORIGINAL PAPER

The Social and Educational Challenges of Teaching Romanian as a Foreign Language

Laviniu Costinel Lăpădat¹⁾

Abstract :

Teaching Romanian as a foreign language poses an eclectic array of challenges generated mainly by the complex social and educational diversity of our learners. We, as teachers, are not afforded the luxury of being simple generators of linguistic information as we are compelled to socially contextualise that information, adapt not only our curriculum, but our personal didactic approaches in order to better fit the intricate backgrounds of our learners. In my didactic activity, at the Department of Applied Modern Languages, I have been repeatedly confronted with many situations and particular cases generated by students who had decided to learn a language (Romanian, more specifically), other than their mother tongue. I had the opportunity to capture and write down various reasons and motivations that could help someone make the decision to start studying Romanian. It should be specified before even embarking on specific considerations, that I have always appreciated any materialized approach in learning new contextualised linguistic, social and cultural skills.

Keywords: *Romanian, foreign language, challenges, linguistics, culture.*

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Introduction

Romanian is a pluricentric European language with a modest global presence but a growing strategic relevance in mobility, research, and regional labour markets. Teaching it to non-native speakers is therefore less a matter of handing over grammatical inventories than of orchestrating social participation: helping adult learners act, be recognised, and be heard in Romanian-speaking spaces. This paper analyses the social and educational challenges of that task by focusing on five interlocking domains: learner diversity, mediation and intercultural competence, language ideologies, digital ecologies, and assessment ethics. Stoian observes that social media has transformed face-to-face communication into online communication mediated by smart devices (Stoian, 2019: 126), and that education functions as a starting engine for the activities that run within each society (Stoian, 2019: 125). Bărbuceanu notes the symbiosis between computer technology and education can no longer be overlooked (Bărbuceanu, 2022: 241-242); moreover, in RFL, teaching must adapt to the requirements of a communicative situation, aligning theoretical elements with specific learner needs (Burtea-Cioroianu, 2022: 135-136). This aligns with the call to incorporate motivational strategies explicitly in teaching so that engagement is durable (Lăpădat and Lăpădat, 2023: 144).

A first premise is that social heterogeneity is not a backdrop but a constitutive condition of learning Romanian today: age, schooling trajectories, literacy histories, religion, migration status, and multilingual repertoires all shape access to grammar, lexis, and discourse. A second premise is that teaching is an act of mediation between texts and people, between languages, and between expectations and realities. The CEFR's recent elaboration of "mediation" as a mode of communication, now detailed with descriptors and illustrative scales legitimises what experienced teachers already do: they enable people to understand one another across linguistic and social difference. Romanian-focused scholarship has expanded that orientation by connecting it to translanguaging and intercultural practice, offering a vocabulary for the work teachers already perform even when institutional documents lag behind.

Working within these premises, the article offers an integrated account of contemporary challenges and workable responses. It argues that (i) learner diversity demands diagnostic attention to prior literacies and language biographies; (ii) intercultural competence must be operationalised as ongoing mediation rather than culture-as-information; (iii) translanguaging practices selectively harnessed can expand learners' semiotic capital; (iv) digital infrastructures reshape participation and therefore require deliberate design for presence, feedback, and community; and (v) assessment should reward intelligibility and sociopragmatic fit rather than unattainable imitation of native models. These claims are framed for concision and transferability so that they can be enacted in varied RFL contexts, irrespective of institutional size or resources.

Learner diversity as the primary pedagogical variable

Diversity is often invoked as an abstract virtue; in RFL it is a stubborn, material reality. Learners may arrive with highly developed academic literacies in languages that use different scripts; others may have interrupted schooling or limited literacy in any language. These differences are not deficits; they are determinants of what counts as accessible input, feasible tasks, and meaningful outcomes. Research on adult L2 classrooms shows that when teachers recognise multiliteracy profiles and design for them, participation and learning increase because learners can engage in meaning-making rather than rehearsing failure. In a translanguaging-aware account of adult education, Wedin and

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Berg show how purposeful movement across languages, modalities, and texts sustains engagement and makes room for complex identities in class (Wedin and Berg 2024, 88–90).

Another axis of diversity is motivational ecology. Some learners pursue Romanian for professional licensing, others for family integration, still others for academic mobility. Motivation intersects with social identity and language ideologies: if Romanian is framed as “hard” or marginal, learners may anticipate failure or limited returns. A decade ago, Lemnaru suggested reframing such fatalism by foregrounding attainable, context-bound communicative purposes, arguing for methods “articulated with the cultural dimension” and oriented to practical action rather than stockpiles of grammar (Lemnaru, 2013: 451–454). Paraphrased, her point is that learners invest when they can see a path from classroom utterance to social participation.

A third variable is prior language repertoire. Learners routinely deploy other languages as cognitive tools: to plan, to hypothesise, to check meaning. Prohibiting those resources can silence participation and slow uptake. Plurilingual pedagogies accept that using other languages does not dilute Romanian; it scaffolds Romanian. When this is done judiciously, e.g. allowing rapid L1–L2 meaning checks or small-group problem solving that toggles among languages, the result is more time on task and less communicative avoidance. Empirical work on adult classrooms confirms that translanguaging is most useful when oriented toward producing Romanian-medium output and when learners are coached in “shuttling” between resources toward a public-facing product (Wedin and Berg, 2024: 88–90).

Social positioning also matters. Learners may confront racialisation, religious stereotyping, or precarious work. These realities enter the classroom as anxiety, silence, or urgency, and they shape which genres and registers matter. Here, the teacher’s professional role includes ethical attention to identity-safe participation: inviting voice without exposure, protecting dignity during feedback, and legitimising diverse accents. Intercultural communication research in RFL cautions explicitly against treating “culture” as lists of facts; instead, it advocates guiding learners to interpret speech events through both their own and Romanian frames so that mismatches can be anticipated and repaired (Bloju, 2023: 289–291).

Finally, intelligibility is an equity issue. When evaluation indexes learners against native-speaker norms, those who bring different phonotactic habits are systemically penalised. An intelligibility-first stance, prioritising prosody, lexical selection, and interactional repair, better aligns with the communicative demands learners actually face. It also reduces the social costs of accentedness by emphasising mutual responsibility for understanding. In Romanian contexts where exposure to diverse accents is already typical (e.g., international campuses, metropolitan workplaces), normalising intelligibility serves both fairness and authenticity.

Granular profiling is the practical instrument that turns respect for diversity into design. Before instruction begins, teachers can map three dimensions: (a) decoding fluency (handwriting, print literacy, digital navigation), (b) control of morphosyntax in languages the learner already knows, and (c) interactional habits (preference for writing before speaking, tolerance of overlap, expectations around turn-taking). Such profiling is not testing; it is a quick situational analysis that prevents mis-matches between task demands and learner resources.

The same diagnostic spirit applies to pronunciation. Rather than pursuing segmental perfection, RFL classes can target four high-yield features: rhythmic grouping,

prominence, vowel length contrasts, and repair moves. Short activities that foreground chunking and post-hoc reflection (“what made that sentence clear?”) produce measurable gains in comprehensibility without shaming accents. This aligns with intelligibility-first approaches and with Romanian settings where accent diversity is already a social fact.

Finally, diversity includes institutional expectations. As internationalisation accelerates, the pressure for rapid certification can compress timelines unrealistically. Teachers can respond by distinguishing seat time from exposure and by advocating contact-rich opportunities beyond class (tandems, moderated forums, purposeful volunteering). Where policies are inflexible, transparency about realistic trajectories protects learners from over-promising and keeps trust intact.

Mediation, interculturality, and language ideologies

The CEFR’s 2020 Companion Volume reframed “mediation” as a central mode of communication. Romanian-focused scholarship has deepened that turn by specifying classroom consequences. Huțanu and Jieanu synthesise mediation descriptors with translanguaging practices and argue that teachers should design tasks that require learners to re-express meanings across texts, modalities, and languages, not merely reproduce forms (Huțanu and Jieanu, 2019: 176–180). Paraphrasing their claim: when learners mediate content for someone else, they practise the communicative labour they will need most in real life - selecting, reformulating, and calibrating stance for intelligibility.

Intercultural competence, likewise, becomes actionable when treated as mediated comparison rather than cultural display. Bloju’s analysis insists that teaching “through culture” means situating language in social practice and guiding reflection on both target and home cultures so that learners can interpret and be interpreted with fewer misfires (Bloju, 2023: 289–291). Under this view, interculturality is neither folklore nor tolerance; it is a discipline of attention to frames, values, and interactional expectations that vary across communities.

Translanguaging has sometimes been caricatured as permissiveness. Wedin and Berg’s adult-education study offers a more precise picture: multilingual practices increase participation when they are purposefully tied to meaning-making and when teachers scaffold shuttling between resources to build Romanian-medium output (Wedin and Berg 2024, 88–90). Paraphrasing their conclusion, translanguaging is a pedagogy of movement, not of retreat: learners traverse language resources to assemble meaning and then return to Romanian to make that meaning public.

De-centring the native-speaker ideology follows from the same logic. If the goal is mediated intelligibility in real interactions, non-native models and teacher voices are not obstacles but assets, attainable, intelligible, and context-relevant. This stance opens space to attend to prosody and discourse management (topic initiation, repair, turn-taking), which predict understanding more than minute segmental accuracy. In practice, that means designing feedback around listener needs and interactional success rather than around abstract imitation of monolingual norms.

Ultimately, mediation reaches beyond language: it is a relational ethic. Teachers in RFL settings often broker access to institutions, services, and public life by helping learners interpret forms, procedures, and expectations. Research in Romanian contexts frames this as professional mediation rather than extracurricular benevolence, urging institutions to acknowledge and support it (Lungoci, 2024: 91–92). Insofar as social inclusion is part of higher education’s mission, such recognition is overdue.

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Digital ecologies and technology-mediated participation

The digital turn is not a temporary workaround; it is the durable ecology in which much RFL work now unfolds. Online and hybrid formats redistribute affordances and burdens: they extend access across borders while risking thin participation, delayed feedback, and platform fatigue. Evidence from Romanian higher education during and after COVID-19 documents both the fragility and the promise of these environments. Trifan reports that synchronous videoconferencing and asynchronous work demanded new forms of planning and yielded challenges around visibility and workload, while also creating opportunities for mixed-mode continuity (Trifan, 2023: 170–172).

Designing for presence means three things. First, engineer visibility: clear agendas, micro-tasks with deliverables, and recurrent check-ins that make participation legible without surveillance. Second, engineer feedback: short cycles of targeted response using audio or quick text annotations so that distance does not calcify into silence. Third, engineer community: stable small groups, predictable rituals, and channels where learners can ask for help without performative exposure. These moves convert platform heavy-lifting into social scaffolding.

Digital tools also enable richer semiotic repertoires. Screen-sharing, collaborative documents, and mobile voice notes allow teachers to model text-to-speech mediation and learners to rehearse public-facing genres (emails, service requests, brief oral updates) under conditions that resemble their future use. Romanian work on learning technologies recommends integrating, not stacking tools so that effort concentrates on interaction rather than interface; the research-backed guidance is to combine the “best parts” of multiple technologies to serve communicative competence (Pruneanu, 2023: 1450–1451). As Maria-Magdalena Lăpădat reminds us, “digital transformation in language learning is effective only when it enhances meaningful interaction and fosters learner autonomy” (Lăpădat, 2023: 270). This observation aligns closely with RFL teaching, where technology should serve communicative goals rather than dominate them.

Assessment in digital contexts introduces ethical stakes. Remote proctoring can erode trust; conversely, open-resource tasks may better mirror authentic communication, where reference to sources is normal. A considered compromise is performance assessment that asks learners to mediate information for a specific audience under time constraints, evaluated for clarity, adequacy, and stance, criteria that discourage plagiarism and reward intelligibility. Digital equity matters as well: bandwidth, device access, and quiet space are not universal, so institutions should either provide infrastructure or adjust evaluative stakes accordingly.

Finally, teacher workload and boundaries deserve explicit management. The always-on affordances of messaging platforms can dissolve separation between feedback and personal time. Institutions should normalise response windows and provide templated communication in Romanian and a contact language for routine matters. Research in Romanian settings suggests that without such structuring, online teaching “requires more time and effort” from teachers and more isolated work from learners (Trifan, 2023: 170–172).

One persistent worry in online RFL is the erosion of spontaneity. Yet digital environments can be designed to cultivate it differently. Timed voice threads with a single take, or quick “interpret for a peer” tasks using short Romanian clips, create conditions for unrehearsed speech while remaining inclusive to diverse time zones. Collaborative annotation of authentic texts (noticeboard announcements, health information, transport updates) trains the mediation moves learners need outside class.

Digital participation also reconfigures the teacher's voice. Brief screencasts that show drafting and revising a Romanian paragraph make writing processes visible; audio replies to selected submissions humanise distance and model target prosody. Pruneanu's synthesis emphasises precisely this integrative stance: combine tools to serve communicative competence and to increase speaking time, not to showcase platforms (Pruneanu, 2023:1450–1451).

A digitally mature RFL ecology also invites learners to co-design. Opt-in corpora of learner-curated phrases encountered in the wild build a living repository of Romanian in use; rotating curation roles distribute responsibility. Where technical constraints preclude such tooling, low-tech alternatives (photo boards of signs, shared glossaries) preserve the participatory logic.

Assessment, ethics, and the professionalism of mediation

Assessment is where ideologies harden into consequences. If tests valorise error-free morphosyntax detached from meaning, learners who are otherwise communicatively successful will be ranked as failing. Conversely, if assessments value intelligibility, sociopragmatic fit, and strategic competence, they legitimise diverse trajectories toward effective Romanian. Romanian scholarship has begun to articulate this shift, urging evaluation practices that align with CEFR-informed descriptors and that make room for mediation tasks where learners reformulate and explain information for others (Huțanu and Jieanu, 2019: 176–180).

Intercultural ethics should also inform feedback. Bloju's insistence on a reflective, two-sided intercultural stance implies that error correction is never neutral; it positions identities and can wound dignity if it ridicules accents or beliefs (Bloju 2023, 292–294). A professionalism of mediation therefore includes commitments to respectful language about language, to transparency in criteria, and to the normalisation of accent diversity. In multilingual cities, the “unmarked” accent is already plural; assessment should reflect that civic fact.

Professionalism additionally requires a research-engaged stance toward pedagogical choices. Lemnaru's early argument for practical, culturally articulated methods prefigured current calls to ground innovation in evidence rather than fashion (Lemnaru, 2013: 453–455). That stance fits digital ecologies: Pruneanu's synthesis cautions against techno-solutionism and recommends integrating tools to serve communication, not the reverse (Pruneanu, 2023: 1450–1451). Across settings, the professional through-line is the same: make design choices legible to learners, align them with intelligibility, and persist long enough for routines to become culture.

A final ethical dimension concerns institutional recognition of mediation as labour. As Lungoci observes, the teacher's role in Romanian education already includes brokering understanding among stakeholders (students, administrators, colleagues) and across languages; naming this explicitly allows workload calculations, training, and support to be aligned with reality (Lungoci 2024, 91–92). Professional development on mediation, conflict-aware language, plain-language rewriting of bureaucratic text, and strategies for multilingual interaction would align daily practice with the values universities claim to hold (Lungoci, 2024: 91–92).

Conclusion

The social and educational challenges of teaching Romanian as a foreign language are neither defects of the language nor mere obstacles to be neutralised. They

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are the contours of the work itself: mediating across diversity, ideologies, and media so that adult learners can act with Romanian in the worlds they inhabit. Research across Romanian and comparative contexts converges on a pragmatic humanism: legitimise learners' repertoires, design for presence, reward intelligibility, and cultivate intercultural reflexivity. None of these moves requires elaborate materials; they require disciplined judgement and institutional backing. With such alignment, RFL classrooms become laboratories of civic inclusion, places where people practise the democratic art of understanding and being understood.

From an institutional perspective, assessment reform endures when it is transparent and auditable. Rubrics that specify what counts as intelligible Romanian in everyday tasks, clarity of reference, appropriate register markers like *te/vă*, successful repair, help align teacher judgement and learner effort. Public exemplars anchor expectations and reduce the interpretive gap that breeds distrust. In the Romanian literature, mediation-aware descriptors are also advocated for speaking and writing, signalling a shift from imitation to interaction.

Ethically robust assessment also anticipates multilingual realities. Where learners operate in Romanian-English or Romanian-French workplaces, tasks can allow limited, purposeful use of those languages as scaffolds, provided the output is Romanian-forward and interactionally effective. Wedin and Berg's account of shuttling between resources supports this principled flexibility (Wedin and Berg, 2024: 86–88).

Viewed in sum, professionalism in RFL is a disciplined mix of stance and skill: a commitment to humanising, mediation-oriented teaching and a repertoire of techniques that enact it reliably. The goal is not to remove difficulty but to make it productive and socially anchored. When institutions adopt this posture, newcomers gain access to participation and Romanian gains new speakers who can act with the language in public. More broadly, the argument here is minimalist and transferable: focus on intelligibility over imitation, mediation over mere explanation, and participation over performance. These priorities do not require elaborate curricula; they require coherent professional judgement exercised consistently across modalities and under conditions of social complexity. In short, teach for use. Now and next.

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Article Info

Received: November 03 2025

Accepted: November 16 2025

How to cite this article:

Lăpădat, L. C. (2025). The Social and Educational Challenges of Teaching Romanian as a Foreign Language. *Revista de Științe Politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques*, no. 88, pp. 51-58.



ORIGINAL PAPER

Structures of Linguistic Harmonisation and Adaptation(s) in Teaching Legal English

Maria-Magdalena Lăpădat¹⁾

Abstract:

Many learners see legal language as an opaque code only intelligible to a small elite. The truth is more prosaic yet more intricate. Legal English is a specialized variety that draws on long legal traditions, strict institutional routines, and a dense technical lexicon. Teaching it at the Faculty of Law, University of Craiova, becomes a complex practice not only because of the linguistic hurdles of terminology and phraseology but because the classroom is a meeting point of distinct legal cultures. In Romania, a Latin legal heritage refined through French influence and continually reshaped by European Union norms must be re-expressed in English for international mobility, academic success and professional communication. The task is to harmonize what students already know in Romanian civil law with the discourse conventions of English used across different common law and EU contexts. This paper argues that the core of effective teaching lies in designing a shared linguistic platform, then guiding students through successive adaptations: mapping concepts across legal systems, aligning registers, negotiating genres, and practising translation-sensitive moves. The goal is functional intelligibility without loss of legal precision, communicative fluency without erosion of doctrinal nuance, and pragmatic readiness for the hybridized linguistic ecology of contemporary European law. The following pages develop a compact narrative in five movements: an introduction to the problem, a theoretical frame for harmonisation and adaptation, a view of harmonisation as classroom architecture, a view of adaptation as classroom practice, and a conclusion that outlines a workable synthesis for the Romanian context.

Keywords: *ESP, teaching legal English, adaptation, context, terminology*

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1. Introduction

Every cohort of first-year law students brings into the Legal English classroom an implicit map of law. That map is largely civil-law oriented, rooted in codified reasoning, and coloured by Romanian doctrinal vocabulary. When the class opens, the first linguistic reality they encounter is not just unfamiliar English words but a new pattern of speaking and writing the law. They must learn how English legal discourse sets out authority, how it frames issues, and how it expects arguments to travel from rule to application. They must also learn that legal English is not a single uniform code. There is a family resemblance among the Englishes of the UK, the EU's multilingual legislative workflow, and the United States, but each differs in sources, style, and institutional expectations.

A practical problem follows. Students know Romanian legal concepts articulated through Latin and French traditions. They must now operate in English, which is tied to common law genres and to EU drafting practices that cultivate plainness, consistency, and multilingual concordance. The demand on teaching is therefore dual: to build a common linguistic ground where everyone can stand and to design successive adaptations that allow learners to move between systems without losing balance. In this sense, teaching Legal English is both a harmonising project and a set of micro-adaptations calibrated to students' prior knowledge, their legal aspirations, and the constraints of the genres in which they will have to speak and write.

This harmonising stance is not optional in a European setting. As Martina Bajčić notes, "many scholars speak of a hybridization of legal languages in the EU," a point that places English at the centre of a new communicative space where legal cultures negotiate meaning every day (Bajčić 2018, 8). The classroom at Craiova is one locus of that negotiation. Our local task is to prepare students to navigate multidirectional flows: from Romanian into English, from civil law into common law discourse, from national practice into EU multilingual drafting, and from the academy into professional practice. The rest of this paper sets out a practical way to do so.

2. A theoretical frame for harmonisation and adaptation

Legal English has often been discussed as a special register or sublanguage. One concise formulation, addressed to the general issue of specialized varieties, states that "we study legal language as a kind of second language, a specialized use of vocabulary, phrases, and syntax that helps us to communicate more easily with each other" (Ramsfield 2005, 145; Bain Butler 2013). This characterization matters pedagogically. Treating Legal English as a second language inside English legitimizes a full didactic toolkit: needs analysis, genre awareness, scaffolded input, controlled production, feedback cycles, and corpus-aided noticing. It also provides a theoretical bridge to ESP, English for Specific Purposes, where the goal is functional adequacy in real tasks rather than abstract mastery of the whole language. In the ESP tradition, an oft-cited lesson is that "ESP courses help students become more proficient in their field of study," precisely because instruction is aligned with disciplinary communication (Xhaferi and Xhaferi 2011, 434).

Harmonisation is a legal and linguistic idea. In European private law, the harmonisation of contract rules and the translational discipline that accompanies that enterprise have been widely discussed. Comparative lawyers are vital intermediaries in that conversation because they see both the doctrinal shapes and the linguistic surfaces that must align across languages (Onufrio 2007). Linguistically, harmonisation means that

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textual artefacts in different languages must convey equivalent effect and similar pragmatic force within institutional workflows. EU legal English is particularly instructive because it becomes a pivot language for multilingual concordance while retaining fidelity to national law concepts. As Bajčić argues, the outcome is a hybridized linguistic ecosystem where English is central, yet its legal meanings remain conditioned by translation into and out of twenty-plus languages (Bajčić 2018).

Adaptation, by contrast, is the teacher's craft in action. It concerns the calibration of input to learners' previous knowledge, the adjustment of tasks to their legal aims, and the modulation of register to fit genre. The adaptation task is partly linguistic and partly sociocultural. Students at the University of Craiova are schooled in a civil law approach to reasoning and in Romanian institutional writing practices. They must acquire habits of English legal clarity, typical sentence economies in drafting, and the discursive moves by which argument is framed. The teacher must adapt exercises so that students recognize the continuity of legal ideas beneath different linguistic packages.

A useful mini-model is to see harmonisation as the architecture and adaptation as the furniture. The architecture is the shared platform: core vocabulary, a small set of canonical genres, the most frequent syntactic and phraseological patterns, and the pragmatic norms for address, citation, and hedging. The furniture is movable: tasks that can be rearranged for case-note writing, memo drafting, clause editing, and oral advocacy. The two build on research across translation studies and legal linguistics. For example, Maria Magdalena Lăpădat, in work on mobile-assisted learning, underscores that technology-supported environments can systematize noticing and practice, while reminding us that learners' success depends on clear communicative aims. In her words, "MALL has revolutionized the traditional paradigms of language learning," offering flexible routes to vocabulary acquisition (Lăpădat 2023, 266).

The lexical distinctiveness of legal English can be identified as a central teaching challenge. We must look closely at the lexical characteristics of Standard English versus legal English used in written documents, so that students learn to recognize register cues and collocational routines. Denisa Bărbuceanu's work on terminology and language industries also points to the competence building translators and legal communicators need, a reminder that our students will operate in a labour market where terminology management is a professional asset. Hence the observation that "translators need to develop specific competences by examining the linguistic nature of legal texts" (Bărbuceanu 2020, 39).

3. Harmonisation as classroom architecture

The first semester is given to building common ground. The platform has four beams: conceptual mapping, core lexicon, textual genres, and discourse moves. Each beam consolidates what students already know in Romanian and aligns it with English forms they will actually use.

The conceptual mapping beam starts with legal families. Students work through condensed contrasts between civil law and common law, not to claim one as superior but to sensitize learners to genre and authority differences. A short set of anchor concepts proves very useful: sources of law, role of precedent, structure of a claim, and institutional forms of decision. We treat this not as pure legal theory but as discourse templates. A Romanian civil code article is a concise rule expression; a common law case report is a layered narrative of facts, issues, holdings, and rationales. EU legislation, finally, models an intentionally plain and terminologically controlled English. Presenting these side by

side allows learners to see the pragmatic distribution of English stylistic choices across institutions. It also prepares them for Bajčić's hybridization thesis at a micro-level: when students later draft clauses or summarize judgments, they are primed to choose the appropriate English voice for the task (Bajčić 2018, 8).

The core lexicon beam is a curated vocabulary of about 500 high-value items grouped by function rather than topic. Function groups include authority verbs (hold, rule, find, dismiss), analytical linkers (therefore, however, in so far as), procedural terms (appeal, jurisdiction, standing), and contract staples (consideration, breach, remedy, damages). The initial aim is not rare terminology but high-frequency words that drive legal reasoning. Students meet each item in model sentences drawn from open legal corpora and EU materials. They also map Romanian equivalents and annotate any conceptual mismatch. This step builds the "platform" because it creates a bilingual web of meanings. Some terms are stable across varieties, while others signal registration into a specific field of discourse, reinforcing the need to make register shifts visible.

The genre beam selects a few canonical forms and explores them deeply rather than sampling many superficially. Three genres anchor the course: the case brief, the objective memo, and the contract clause set. Each genre is introduced with a short rhetorical profile: communicative purpose, audience expectations, organisational moves, and stylistic cues. Texts are short, authentic, and chosen for discursive clarity rather than doctrinal difficulty. This is where harmonisation overtly encounters adaptation: Romanian-trained students must learn to reconstruct a case into a common law-like brief, even when the case is civil-law in origin, and they must write an objective memo in a neutral, graded English style without importing civil-law citation habits. An EU regulation excerpt then illustrates how English is used as a shared drafting language among non-native professionals and how terminological discipline secures multilingual coherence. On that point, comparative legal translation scholarship argues that harmonisation is partly a translational craft deployed to ensure European internal consistency, which in turn conditions how we should train students to write in English (Baaij 2012, 1–3; Onufrio 2007).

The discourse moves beam is the pragmatic toolkit. Students learn to present issues, state rules, apply facts, and conclude with warranted claims. They practice hedging and signalling certainty; they learn how to phrase limited conclusions, and how to cite authority unobtrusively. This beam operationalizes the idea, again from ESP practice, that proficiency is task-bound and purpose-sensitive. The literature on ESP for law courses shows that when course design truly reflects learners' field, performance improves because the language is immediately useful. Hence the simple but powerful observation quoted earlier that ESP training "helps students become more proficient in their field of study" (Xhaferi and Xhaferi 2011, 434).

Creating the platform also involves a careful stance on difficulty. We prioritize clarity over technicality, then extend to precision. This is aligned with plain language practices in EU drafting and converges with Romanian scholarship that foregrounds the need to make the lexical and syntactic features of legal English explicit. Such clarity does not dilute legal rigor. It unlocks it. Students who can reliably produce basic issue statements and orderly argument paragraphs can later insert technical content without destabilizing the sentence frame.

If EU legal English is central to multilingual concordance in law making, then the classroom should make room for its style. Bajčić's sentence about hybridisation becomes a boundary stone. It tells students to expect variety and to cultivate agility in a

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space where English meets Romanian doctrine and EU drafting discipline (Bajčić 2018). It also protects them from an unnecessary anxiety: they are not required to sound like a nineteenth century English barrister to be competent in twenty first century European legal communication. At the same time, a broader linguistic insight from our local scholarship underscores that language is inseparable from culture. As Lavinia Costinel Lăpădat puts it, “Culture is not simply a backdrop to language, it is its pulse, its rhythm, its atmosphere” (Lăpădat 2025, 70). Placing this insight beside EU drafting discipline reminds learners that harmonisation is both institutional and cultural.

4. Adaptation as classroom practice

If harmonisation is the building, adaptation is the furniture. It moves daily to fit learners’ prior knowledge, their evolving aims and the genres they must perform soon. Adaptation begins with a simple premise that: “Motivation is one of the most important factors in foreign language teaching and learning” (Lăpădat and Lăpădat 2023). Keeping motivation high is not a matter of theatricality but of visible relevance. Students need to see that today’s task solves tomorrow’s problem.

Adaptation is where teaching becomes a craft. It answers three situated questions. Who are these learners and what do they already know? What communicative tasks will they face in the near future? How can we design practice that bridges the two? The following adaptive routines aim to do exactly that.

The first routine is needs analysis in action. Rather than a one-off questionnaire, we run a rolling check of learners’ aims through micro-prompts embedded in weekly tasks. Students annotate what they found hard and what they still need to say in English in their other law classes. The ESP literature insists on this alignment between course content and real needs; the research shows that when learners see connection between tasks and their disciplinary future, motivation stays high. The simple truth, as the ESP for Law study summarizes, is that carefully targeted courses promote field-relevant proficiency (Xhaferi and Xhaferi 2011, 434).

The second routine is contrastive micro-translation. Students translate a single sentence or short paragraph from Romanian sources into English and back. We choose clauses and fragments that foreground one specific problem, such as subject placement, prepositional attachment, or a term that has close English near-equivalents with different doctrinal reach. We treat success not as literal mimicry but as functional equivalence measured against the communicative goal. The approach resonates with comparative legal translation perspectives, where translation is the site of harmonisation work rather than a mere conduit from one language to another (Onufrio 2007; Baaij 2012, 5–9). A supporting observation from Romanian pedagogy in a different domain captures a recurrent micro-difficulty: “Some confusion among foreign students also occurs when two or more prepositions express the same relationship” (Burtea Cioroianu 2024, 52–53). Legal English drafting is full of prepositional choices with doctrinal consequences, so early, explicit practice prevents ambiguity from accumulating in clauses.

The third routine is register drilling. Students are shown pairs of sentences, one in everyday English and one in a legal register, and asked to diagnose and reproduce the differences. This explicitly implements the observation from Craiova scholarship that we must train students to recognize and produce the “lexical characteristics of Standard English versus legal English used in written documents.” The drill is not just about vocabulary but about phrase shape and length. Learners often realise that legal writing prefers explicit reference anaphora, reduced ambiguity, and a stable rhythm of clause

linking. The routine is supported by local reflections on the media-saturated learning environment. “Nobody can deny that today, our students ... live in a media world, in which most of the data is delivered by visual input, through diverse high-tech devices” (Bărbuceanu 2020, 39). Short, high contrast slides help learners notice what matters in register.

The fourth routine is genre rehearsal. For case briefs, we teach the discipline of the Issue Rule Application Conclusion arc, but we adapt its use in civil law contexts by letting students write an IRAC style analysis of an article from the Romanian Civil Code combined with a short appellate summary from an ECJ judgment. The alternation de centres common law habits and presents the arc as a general reasoning aid rather than a foreign template. The rehearsal continues with memos that constrain sentence length and clause structure to reduce cognitive load, then gradually relax these constraints as fluency grows. Contract clause drafting closes the sequence. Here, harmonisation is visible in the tension between English common law style and EU plain drafting. We ask students to express obligations and conditions in crisp, testable English but also to track Romanian conceptual origins, annotating where equivalence is structural rather than lexical. This helps them discover that the same functional frame can host different doctrinal contents (Bajčić 2018; Baaij 2012).

The fifth routine is mobile-assisted spaced practice for terminology and phraseology. Vocabulary items and typical collocations are scheduled for recall over weeks, backed by short contextual prompts. Lăpădat’s account of mobile-assisted learning supports this practice by identifying the way flexible digital repetition reshapes acquisition. The effect in our classroom is practical: students arrive with the right words ready for use because the platform has served them at the right time and at the right level of difficulty (Lăpădat 2023, 266).

The sixth routine is metalinguistic reflection supported by reading in Romanian scholarship on legal language and on the social-technological frame of education. Andreea Stoian’s discussion of the “role of education and the systemic changes determined by the evolution of technology” helps students see why communicative clarity and source awareness are now professional obligations, not ornamental style (Stoian 2019, 126). We bring these reflections into the classroom so that students see their training not as isolated drills but as a response to the wider ecology of legal communication.

Many students treat reading as a vocabulary delivery system rather than as a training ground for inference and judgment. Here Lăpădat and Lăpădat’s formulation is a compass: “Reading has long been treated as a multiplier skill in language education” (Lăpădat and Lăpădat 2025, 260). If a single text can deliver hundreds of lexical items and many grammar patterns, then cultivating inferential reading is efficient and necessary. In practice, the course uses short opinions, regulation excerpts and professional guidance documents as reading laboratories. Learners track hedges, boosters, reporting verbs and the placement of authority. They underline concessive pivots and test how those pivots alter the warrant for a conclusion. They rehearse the act of reading like a lawyer without aping an alien tone.

Adaptation also faces the grammatical layer head on. Romanian learners of English sometimes struggle with article usage, prepositional governance, and the syntax of complex noun phrases typical of legal drafting. Here we profit from research on Romanian learners’ grammatical hurdles. Burtea Cioroianu’s work on “Grammatical Structures Difficult for Foreign Students to Integrate” does not target Legal English directly, yet it maps structural pain points that we see mirrored when law students write

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in English. We therefore build explicit microsessions on determiners in definitions, noun preposition patterns in jurisdictional phrases, and participial modifiers in conditions and warranties. The attention to structure is not separate from harmonisation; it is the micro level at which harmonisation either holds or fails (Burtea Cioroianu 2024, 52–53).

A natural question is how to handle the variety within English legal registers themselves. Students notice that a US Supreme Court opinion has a different tone from a UK Supreme Court judgment and both differ from EU Commission guidance. We choose to treat this as an adaptive lens rather than a source of confusion. Learners are invited to extract the core moves that recur across jurisdictions, then to adjust tone and citation conventions. The class learns, for example, that English legal writing often favours shorter sentences in professional practice than in older judicial prose, and that EU drafting promotes sentence transparency as a means of multilingual concordance. This creates a pragmatic harmony in students' minds: the common structure of analysis is stable, while tone and detail adjust to venue.

Technology is present but humbler than the rhetoric that sometimes surrounds it. The mobile tool schedules vocabulary and brings quick examples to hand. Classroom time is reserved for the human interaction that builds confidence: collaborative drafting, peer revision, and oral rehearsal. Here again, translation aware scholarship helps re centre attention on meaning, not gadgetry. Lăpădat's theoretical and practical MALL work supports a classroom culture in which the decisive question is always communicative adequacy rather than technical display (Lăpădat 2023).

Students need to grasp how English is used as a medium for multilingual legal coherence. A short reading unit based on Bajčić addresses this. We frame the unit around a concluding quotation that continues to guide the course: "many scholars speak of a hybridization of legal languages in the EU." The sentence is both a diagnosis and a reassurance. It tells students that variation is normal and that their task is not to become monolingual in an imagined pure Legal English, but to become agile in a hybrid space where English meets Romanian legal thought and EU multilingual discipline (Bajčić 2018, 8).

Adaptation, then, is not improvisation. It is a planned set of small moves that respond to actual learners while preserving the integrity of the harmonised platform.

5. Conclusions

Teaching Legal English at the Faculty of Law, University of Craiova, is a sustained act of harmonisation and adaptation. It is harmonisation because we are building, with each cohort, a shared platform where Romanian civil law reasoning and English legal discourse can coexist fruitfully. It is adaptation because each group of learners arrives with different strengths, aims, and uncertainties that must be negotiated through tasks, feedback, and pacing. The aim is modest but vital: functional competence that respects legal precision and cultural nuance, ready to serve study and practice in a hybrid European environment.

The paper has adopted a narrative that begins with the problem and pursues a sequence of solutions that remain within the reach of an instructor's weekly schedule. The recommended platform is small but sturdy: a mapped conceptual core, a functional lexicon, a canon of three genres, and a set of pragmatic moves. The recommended adaptations are routine rather than spectacular: continuous needs analysis, contrastive micro translation, register drilling, genre rehearsal, mobile assisted spaced practice, and

reflective reading that situates the learner inside a Romanian and European conversation about legal language.

The quotations seeded throughout the discussion were chosen to be brief and pointed, not as ornaments but as hinges. They secure the argument at key joints. From ESP we borrowed the plain assertion that courses aligned to field tasks improve performance. From translation theory and EU legal linguistics we borrowed the anchoring idea of hybridization and the necessity of cross lingual equivalence as a craft rather than a miracle. From Craiova scholarship we borrowed reminders about lexical distinctiveness and the need to cultivate terminology competence, as well as an awareness that the technological shaping of education is not a distant generality but a daily fact in our classrooms. Together these sources give our local practice a wider legitimacy and a clearer sense of purpose.

The stakes are more than academic. Romanian law graduates increasingly operate in arenas where English serves as a connecting medium. Contracts, case commentaries, and regulatory submissions travel through English even when addressed to non-Anglophone institutions. The precise management of meaning in that medium is a professional responsibility. Teaching must therefore make students comfortable with the practical uses of Legal English, alert to its cultural and institutional cues, and confident in their ability to adapt their civil law knowledge into English frames without deforming doctrine. When they can do that, the classroom has done more than improve vocabulary; it has trained a bilingual legal intelligence attuned to the pragmatic realities of European legal communication.

The greatest pedagogical challenge is to uphold clarity without flattening complexity. Every teacher of Legal English knows the temptation to oversimplify. Yet the very complexity of our teaching environment is our opportunity. It invites students to see that law is not a set of isolated systems but a conversation among traditions, and that language is the medium by which those traditions meet. When students learn to move across registers, to respect the weight of a term while choosing a plain phrasing, and to hear the difference between a civil law article and a common law holding without resorting to stereotypes, they become translators of legal culture in a non metaphorical sense. They carry understanding across.

This synthesis is achievable. It does not require vast new resources, only consistent attention to harmonisation and adaptation as complementary principles. It asks us to design a shared platform that is lean and useful, then to move furniture as learners require. It asks us to make room for both Romanian doctrine and European multilingual practice. It asks us to treat mobile technology as a tool for memory rather than a substitute for thinking. It asks us to keep sentences clean and arguments orderly, to choose our examples with care, and to let students rehearse the moves until they can perform them under pressure.

If there is a single conviction that emerges from the Craiova experience, it is that Legal English is learnable in this harmonised, adapted way. Students who begin by seeing legal English as opaque can end by recognising it as a disciplined yet flexible medium. They will still respect its technical density, but they will no longer fear its unfamiliar surface. They will have learned to harmonise and to adapt, and in doing so they will have acquired a transferable craft. The classroom's modest rituals of vocabulary practice, genre rehearsal, and translation reflection become habits of mind that accompany them into internships, moot courts, and, later, into practice.

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To close, I return to a set of compact formulations that have guided our work and that may serve as a brief credo. First, legal English is a specialized variety, best taught as a practical second language inside English, with tasks anchored in law. Second, harmonisation is the architecture of shared understanding in a multilingual legal order. Third, adaptation is the furniture of daily teaching, arranged around learners' needs and legal futures. Fourth, clarity is not the enemy of rigor but its condition. Fifth, technology helps when it serves memory and exposure, not when it distracts from thinking. These convictions are not new, but their deliberate combination classroom has proven steady and productive. They are, I submit, a usable structure for linguistic harmonisation and adaptation in teaching Legal English.

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Article Info

Received: November 03 2025

Accepted: November 18 2025

How to cite this article:

Lăpădat, M. M. (2025). Structures of Linguistic Harmonisation and Adaptation(s) in Teaching Legal English. *Revista de Științe Politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques*, no. 88, pp. 59-68.



ORIGINAL PAPER

The Social Integration of People with Disabilities in Romania: Perceptions, Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract:

People with disabilities represent one of the most vulnerable social categories in Romania, often confronted with marginalization and discrimination, as well as to exclusion and unequal access to employment, healthcare, education, and public participation. This article is structured in two sections. The first section provides a conceptual overview regarding vulnerability and disability, emphasizing the main factors that contribute to and sustain vulnerability, as well as national data on the distribution and living conditions of people with disabilities. The second section presents a sociological study that examines community perceptions and attitudes toward persons with disabilities, the degree to which their rights are recognized, and the main barriers that limit their social inclusion. The survey explores social awareness regarding public policies, legal frameworks supporting disability, and community attitudes toward people with disabilities, which assess the levels of acceptance and social integration. It further examines perceived discrimination in education, the healthcare system, interactions with authorities, and participation in the labor market.

Keywords: *disability, vulnerability, public perceptions, sociological survey, social inclusion, Romania*

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Introduction

In today's context, social groups are increasingly exposed to multiple types of risks- whether social, cultural, or economic. Therefore, it is necessary to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the context that sustains vulnerability, starting from the identification of its specific causes and consequences to the development of suitable intervention and prevention strategies.

Among all categories at risk, people with disabilities are among the most affected, as they face a persistent form of vulnerability that limits their access to resources, services, education, civic participation, and social integration.

In Romania, persons with disabilities continue to face major challenges, reflected in restricted access to healthcare and education, low participation in the labor market, ongoing negative social stereotypes, and a public infrastructure that remains unadapted to their specific needs. The analysis of these realities requires both a clear understanding of the institutional and legislative mechanisms and a closer examination of social perceptions, the barriers they experience, and possible actions to enhance equality and inclusion.

Conceptual Framework

The term vulnerable group is directly associated with the notion of vulnerability, defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as the reduced capacity of individuals or groups to anticipate, respond to, and recover from the impact of disasters.

In Romania, in a general sense, vulnerable persons are considered to be “individuals or families who are at risk of losing their ability to meet daily living needs as a result of situations such as illness, disability, poverty, drug or alcohol dependence, or other circumstances that generate economic and social vulnerability” (Law on Social Assistance no. 292/2011, Article 6, letter p).

Thus, vulnerability represents the result of a complex interaction between various factors that limit the ability of individuals or social groups to exercise their rights, to access services and opportunities, or to protect themselves against risks. The most common characteristics associated with vulnerable groups include risks present across all dimensions of life, which contribute to the acquisition, maintenance, and intensification of vulnerability. These risks are related to the following dimensions:

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>
Material dimension (Popescu, 2011; World Health Organization, 2021)	✓ Low material resources, inadequate living conditions ✓ Economic dependence
Social and participation dimension (<i>Law on Social Assistance no. 292/2011</i> ; WHO, 2011)	✓ Limited access to education and healthcare services, lack of social support, social exclusion, inability to take advantage of opportunities or to protect oneself from risks ✓ Vulnerability is understood as weak

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	social integration
Identity and legal dimension (<i>Government Ordinance no. 137/2000, art. 4</i>)	✓ Ethnic and cultural differences generate forms of discrimination that reinforce inequality of opportunity in relation to the general population ✓ Vulnerability is linked to social status and leads to stigmatization and discrimination
Access to resources and public policy dimension (<i>National Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Promotion Program 2006–2008; Law no. 116/2002</i>)	✓ Low access to resources, external support for ensuring minimum living conditions ✓ Vulnerability is both structural and individual

Disability is a dynamic concept, the meaning of which changes depending on the context. Its interpretation emphasizes the role of social and environmental barriers in shaping the experience of persons with disabilities, which highlights the perspective of the “social model”. In this approach, the surrounding environment becomes a decisive factor in how a person with disabilities lives and perceives their own condition (Gheorghiu, 2025, p. 333).

Thus, persons with disabilities include those “who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others” (United Nations, 2006, Article 1).

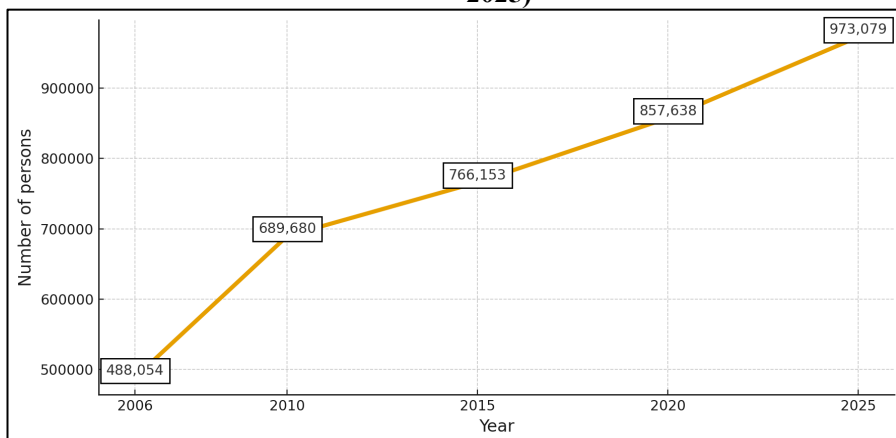
According to the World Health Organization, “disability results from the interaction between individuals with a health condition, with personal and environmental factors including negative attitudes, inaccessible transportation and public buildings, and limited social support” (World Health Organization, 2021).

Current global trends encourage the use of the term “disabled person” (as perceived by society) instead of “person with disabilities”, to illustrate that disability is not an attribute of the individual but of the person–environment relationship.

Statistical overview of disability in Romania

Based on the data published by the National Authority for the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (ANPDPD, 2025), the total number of persons with disabilities is 973,079, a figure that has almost doubled from 2006. This situation is the result of various demographic, social, and administrative factors, including population aging, limited access to services, and insufficient social support systems.

Chart 1. Evolution of the number of persons with disabilities in Romania (2006–2025)

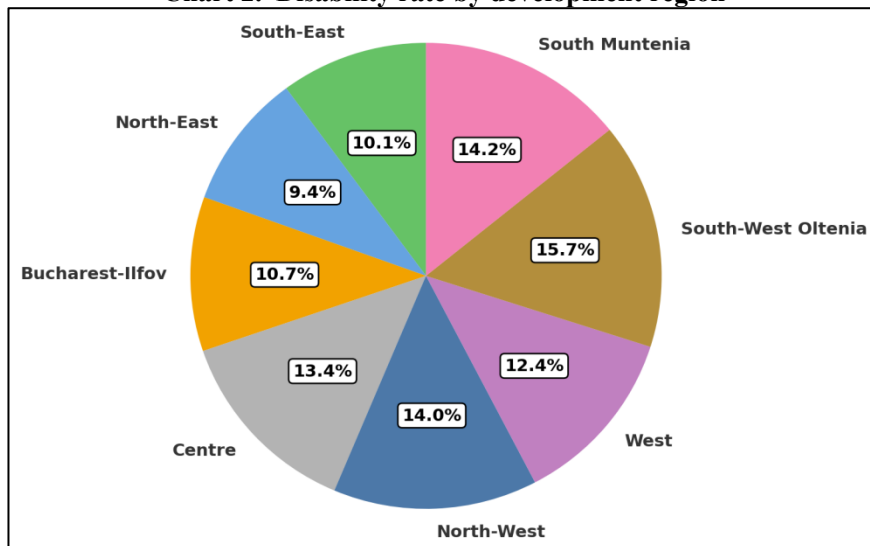


Source:

Data processed by the authors based on National Authority for the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ANPDPD (2025). Retrieved from: <https://anpd.gov.ro/web/transparenta/statistici/>

At the national level, the share of persons with disabilities is 4.45%, with notable regional disparities: the highest percentages are found in the South-West Oltenia (15.7%), South-Muntenia (14.2%), and North-West (14.0%) regions, while the lowest values are recorded in the North-East (9.4%) and South-East (10.1%) regions.

Chart 2. Disability rate by development region



Source: Data processed by the authors based on ANPDPD (2025)

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The distribution of persons with disabilities differs from one region to another and is directly influenced by the socio-demographic characteristics of the counties. In large, densely populated, and highly urbanized counties (such as Bucharest, Prahova, Iași, or Cluj), the highest values are observed, while in small, sparsely populated counties with a low level of urbanization (such as Covasna, Tulcea, or Ialomița) the values are lower.

These differences suggest that the number of persons with disabilities varies depending on several factors, including demographic composition, degree of urbanization, access to medical and social services, infrastructure development level, and administrative capacity for assessment and certification.

Table 1. Number of persons with disabilities by county

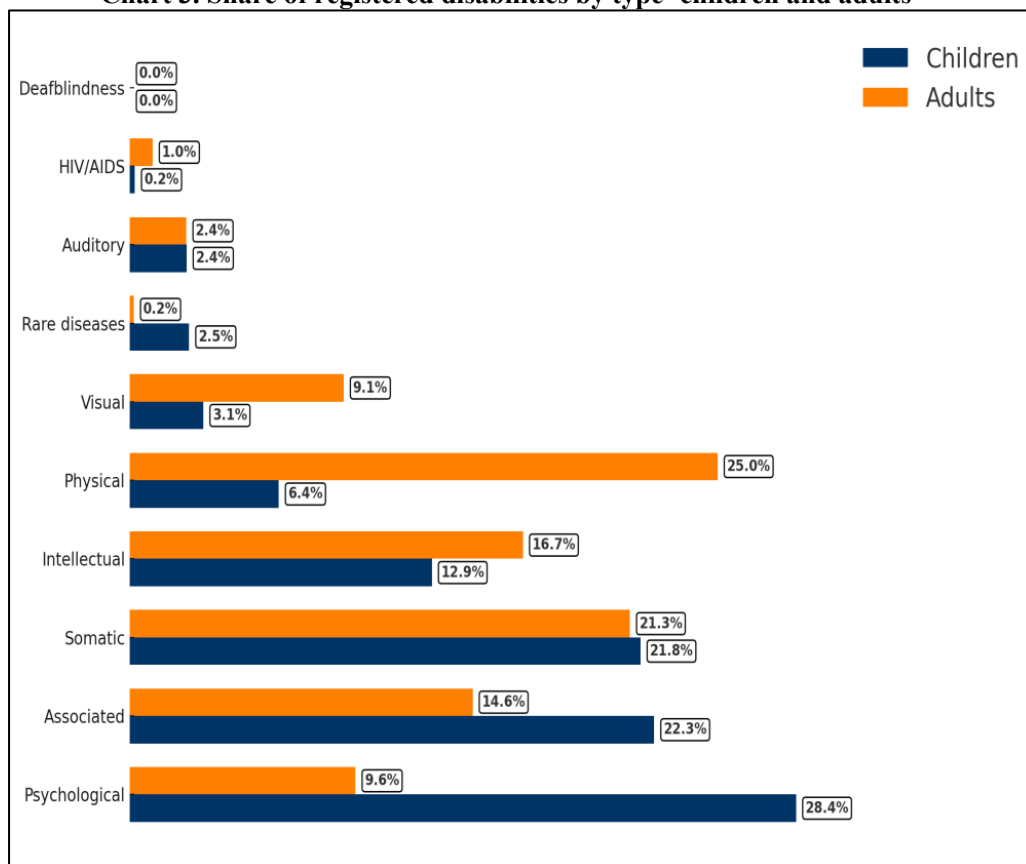
<i>Development Region</i>	<i>County with the highest number of persons</i>	<i>No. of persons</i>	<i>County with the lowest number of persons</i>	<i>No. of persons</i>
North-West	Cluj	33,838	Sălaj	17,363
Centre	Mureș	27,835	Covasna	7,212
North-East	Iași	36,316	Botoșani	17,027
South-East	Constanța	23,131	Tulcea	9,137
South-Muntenia	Prahova	38,884	Ialomița	11,300
South-West Oltenia	Olt	32,799	Gorj	14,409
West	Timiș	28,095	Caraș-Severin	17,572
Bucharest-Ilfov	Bucharest	82,969	Ilfov	19,116

Source: Data processed by the authors based on ANPDPD (2025)

Certain types of disabilities occur more frequently among adults, while others are more prevalent among children. For children, the most frequently reported disabilities include psychological disabilities (28.4%), associated disabilities (14.6%) and intellectual disabilities (12.9%). In the case of adults, the distribution is different: physical disabilities represent the predominant category (25.0%), followed by associated disabilities (22.3%), somatic disabilities (21.8%), and intellectual disabilities (16.7%).

These differences highlight the need for policies, specialized services, and interventions that are adapted according to age group and type of disability.

Chart 3. Share of registered disabilities by type -children and adults



Source: Data processed by the authors based on ANPPDP (2025)

The distribution of persons with disabilities by type of impairment and degree of severity reveals that the most frequent types of disabilities are somatic, physical, intellectual, and associated. The majority of registered cases fall within the moderate and severe categories, particularly in the case of somatic, physical, and mental impairments.

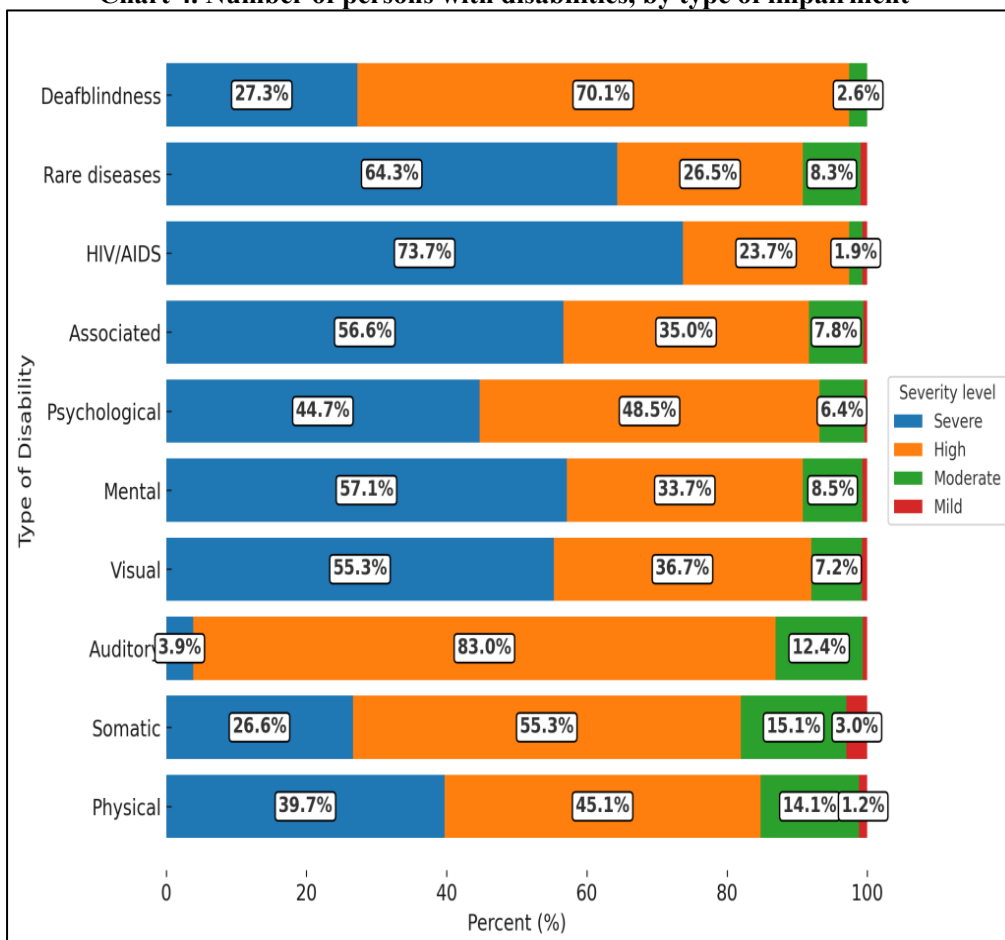
The distribution of disability types by severity level can be summarized as follows:

- ✓ Most severe: HIV/AIDS, rare diseases, and deafblindness;
- ✓ High severity: somatic, physical, and associated disabilities;
- ✓ Moderate: intellectual and psychological disabilities;
- ✓ Mild: visual and auditory disabilities.

Overall, the findings indicate a high incidence of severe and high forms of disability across all categories, while low and mild forms are significantly rare.

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Chart 4. Number of persons with disabilities, by type of impairment

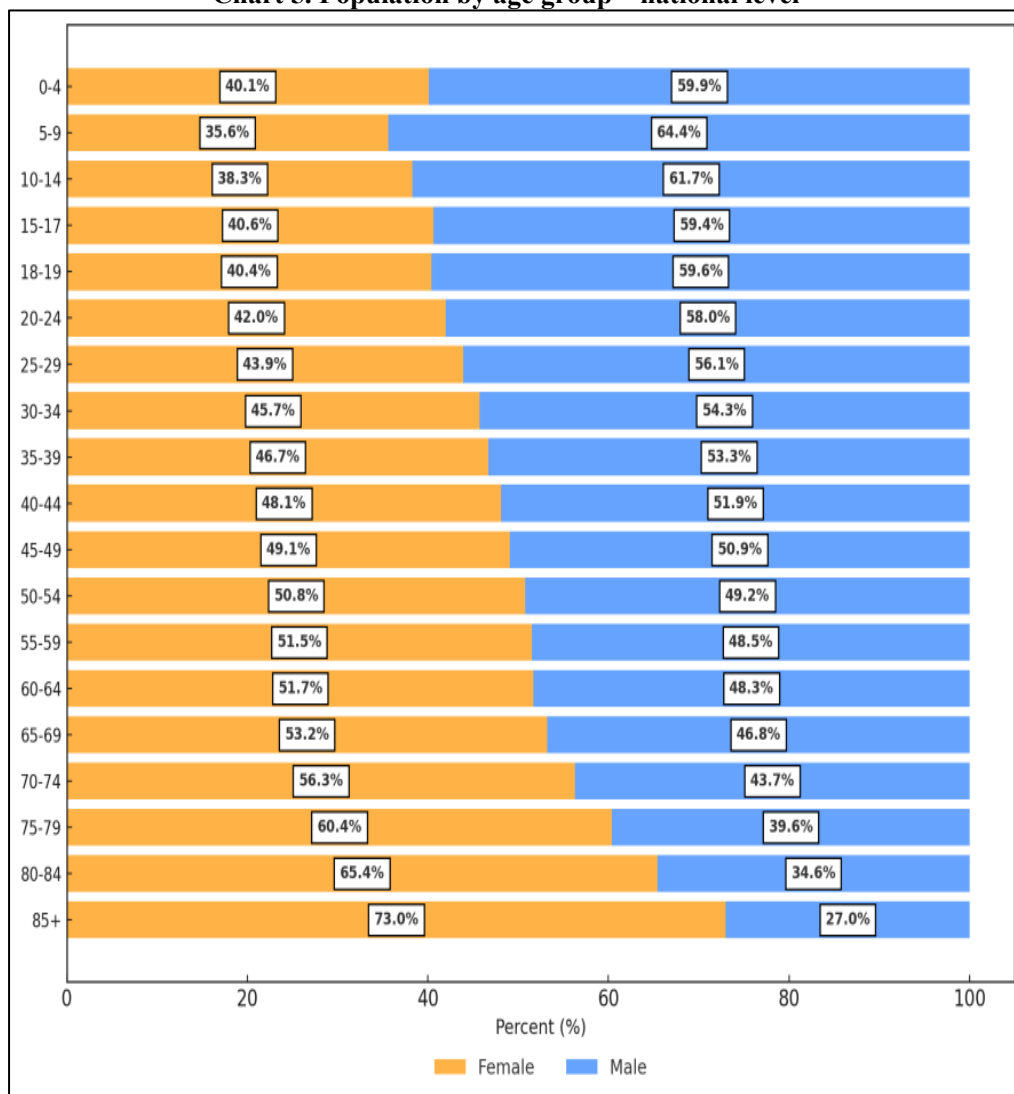


Source: Data processed by the authors based on ANPDPD (2025)

The distribution by gender indicates that, out of the total number of 973,079 persons with disabilities, approximately 54% are women (521,376) and 46% are men (451,703).

Most men with disabilities are found in the 0–19 age group, while most women are in the over 60 age group. In the 0–29 age group, the differences between the two genders decrease, reaching an approximately equal percentage for both.

Chart 5. Population by age group – national level

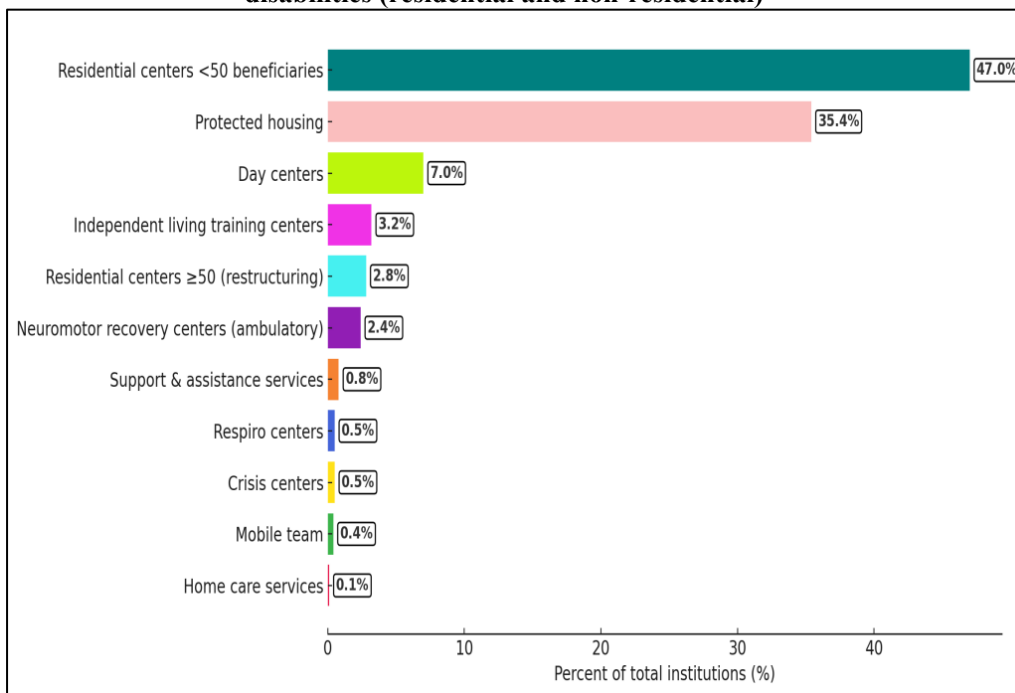


Source: Data processed by the authors based on ANPDPD (2025)

The organization of public social assistance services for adults with disabilities reflects a gradual shift toward a community-based care model, given that approximately 47.0% of institutions are small residential centers with fewer than 50 beneficiaries, while protected housing units account for 35.4% of the total. Conversely, alternative community services — such as neuromotor rehabilitation, mobile teams, crisis centers, respite care, or home care — each represent no more than 1.0% of the total.

The Social Integration of People with Disabilities in Romania: Perceptions, Challenges and Oppotunities

Chart 6. Percentage of public social assistance institutions for adults with disabilities (residential and non-residential)



Source: Data processed by the authors based on ANPDPD (2025)

Sociological research on perceptions and attitudes toward persons with disabilities

The sociological research aimed to investigate the perceptions, attitudes, and level of social acceptance toward persons with disabilities, as well as to identify the barriers that influence the process of social inclusion.

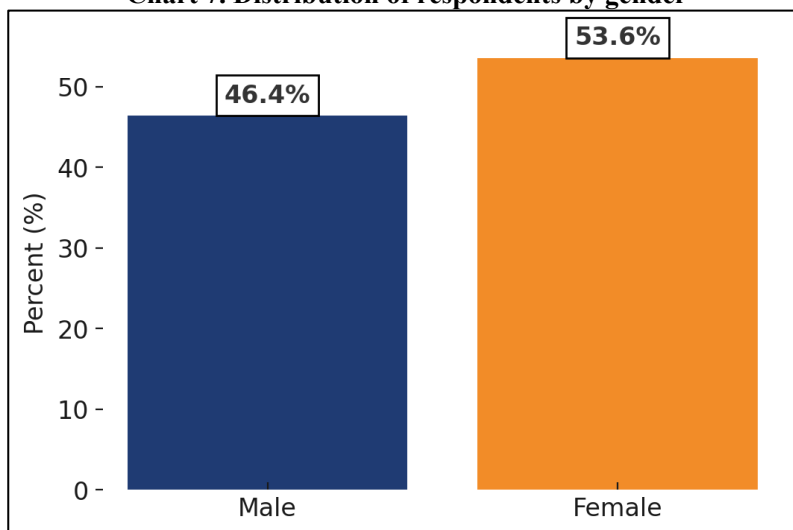
Methodological framework

The research method is quantitative, based on an opinion survey, and the research instrument was a questionnaire. The exploratory sample consisted of 360 participants, and the data collection and interpretation were carried out between February and May 2025.

Socio-demographic profile of respondents

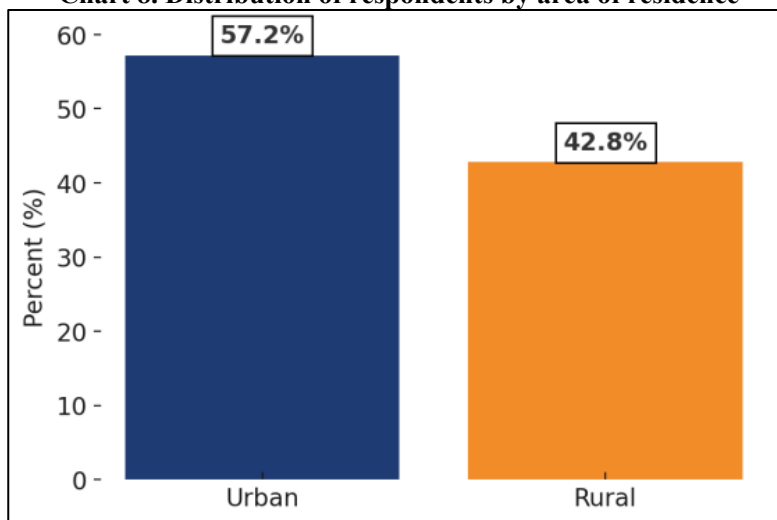
The socio-demographic profile includes gender, place of residence, age, and marital status. Based on the gender criterion, the distribution of respondents shows that 53.6% are women and 46.4% are men.

Chart 7. Distribution of respondents by gender



The distribution by place of residence indicates that the majority of respondents come from urban areas (57.2%), while 42.8% live in rural areas.

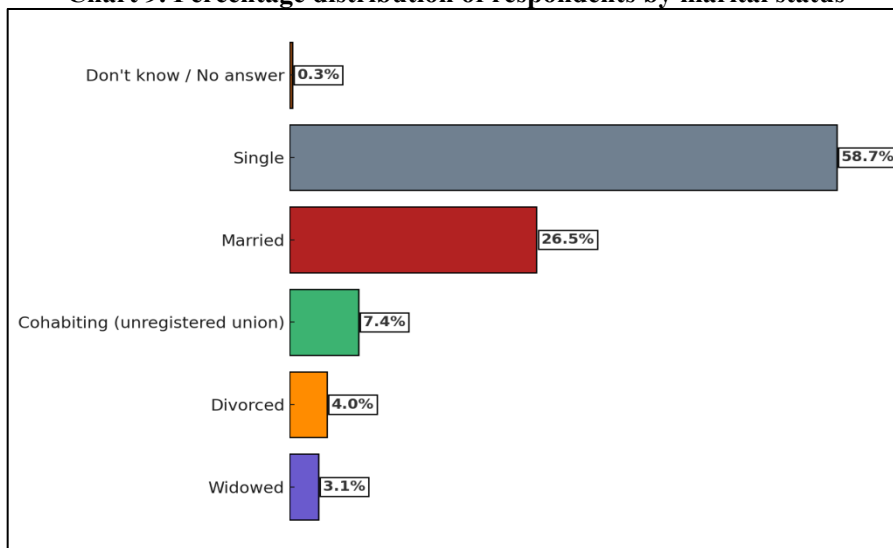
Chart 8. Distribution of respondents by area of residence



The majority of respondents are unmarried (58,7%), while 26.5% are married. They are followed by respondents in a consensual union/cohabitation (7,4%), divorced (4,0%), and widowed (3,1%).

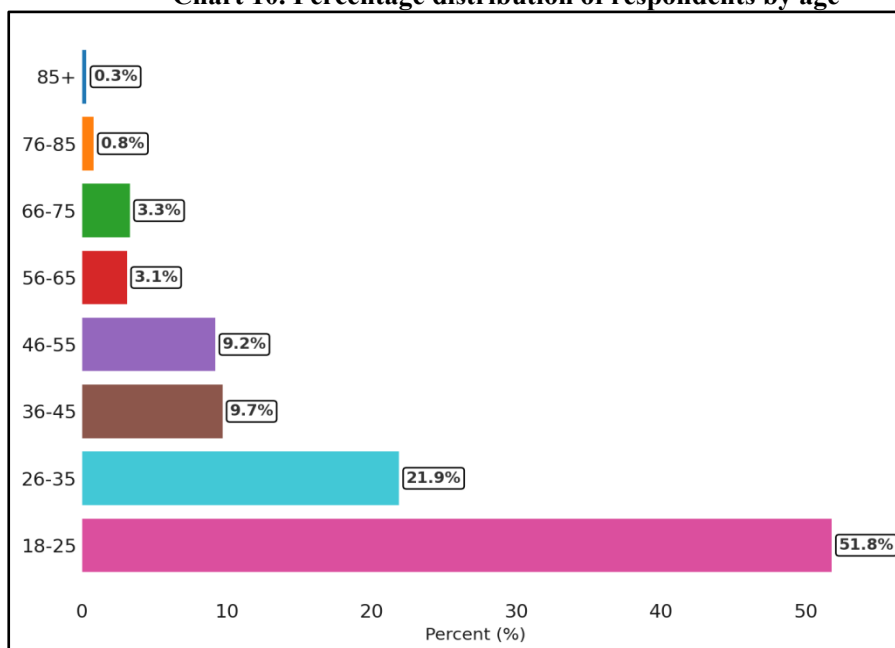
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Chart 9. Percentage distribution of respondents by marital status



More than half of the respondents are young adults aged 18–25 years (51,8%), while 21,9% fall within the 26–35 age group. The remaining 26,4% of the sample consists of persons over 35 years old, distributed across the 36–85+ age groups, which together account for much smaller percentages compared to the younger categories.

Chart 10. Percentage distribution of respondents by age

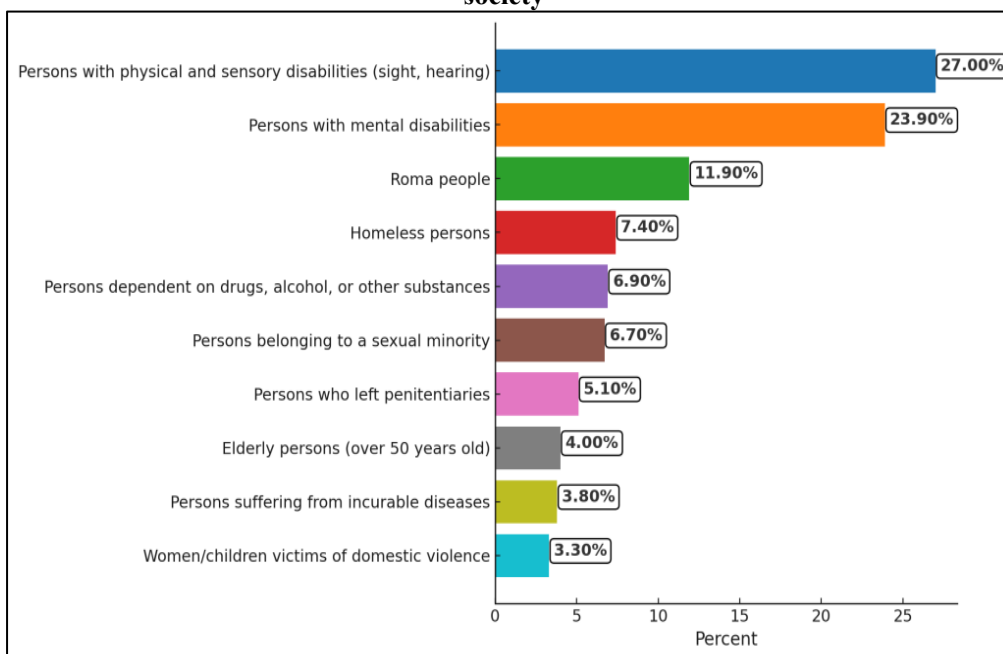


Results

Disability is most strongly associated with the risk of marginalization and social exclusion. Persons with physical and sensory disabilities (26.9%) and those with mental disabilities (23.9%) are perceived by respondents as the groups most exposed to such risks in Romanian society.

Other vulnerable categories mentioned include Roma people (11.9%), homeless persons (7.4%), individuals with alcohol or drug dependence (6.9%), and persons belonging to sexual minorities (6.7%).

Chart 11. Groups most at risk of marginalization and social exclusion in Romanian society

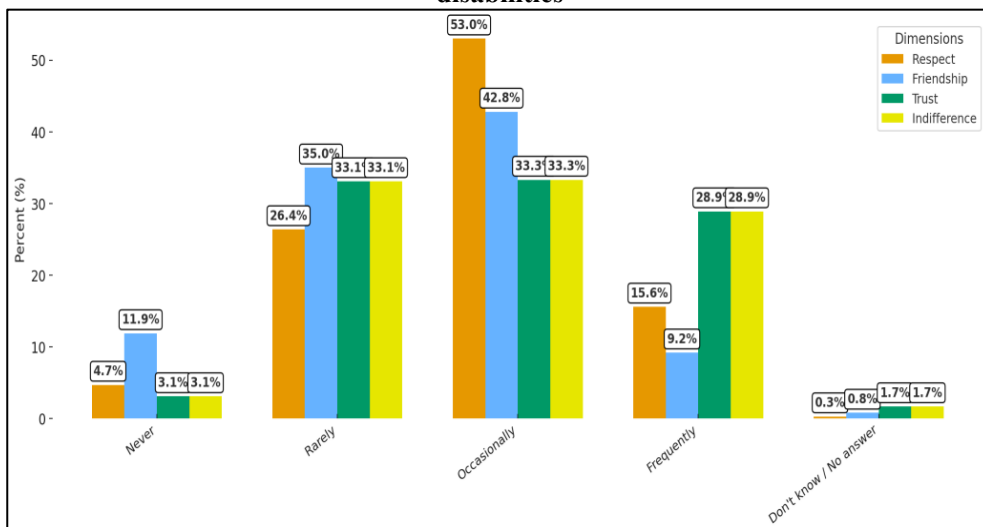


In response to the question “In general, how do you think community members relate to persons with disabilities?”, the analysis of the four indicators (respect, friendship, trust, and indifference) shows that respondents’ perceptions are generally reserved: positive attitudes are assessed as being occasional and moderate, rather than constant and favorable.

For all four positive dimensions, the majority of responses are concentrated around the options “occasionally” and “rarely”, indicating that while persons with disabilities are tolerated and not explicitly rejected, they still do not benefit from active inclusion or genuine social appreciation.

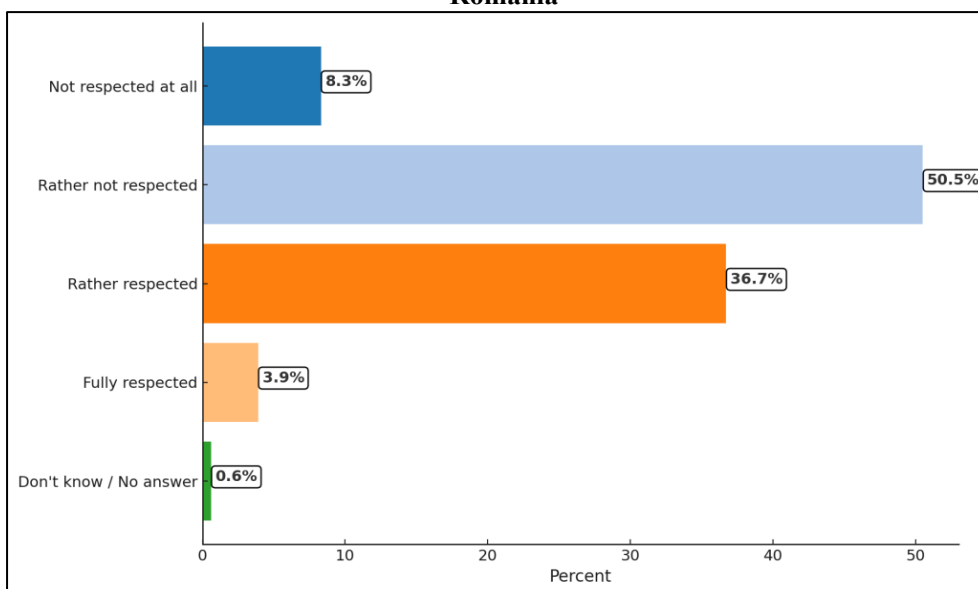
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Chart 12. Perceived frequency of community attitudes toward persons with disabilities



To the question “In your opinion, how well are the rights of persons with disabilities respected in Romania?” a predominantly negative perception was observed, with 58% of respondents choosing the options “rather not respected” (50.5%) or “not respected at all” (8.3%). At the opposite end, 41.0% of respondents stated that these rights are respected, selecting “rather respected” (36.7%) or “fully respected” (3.9%).

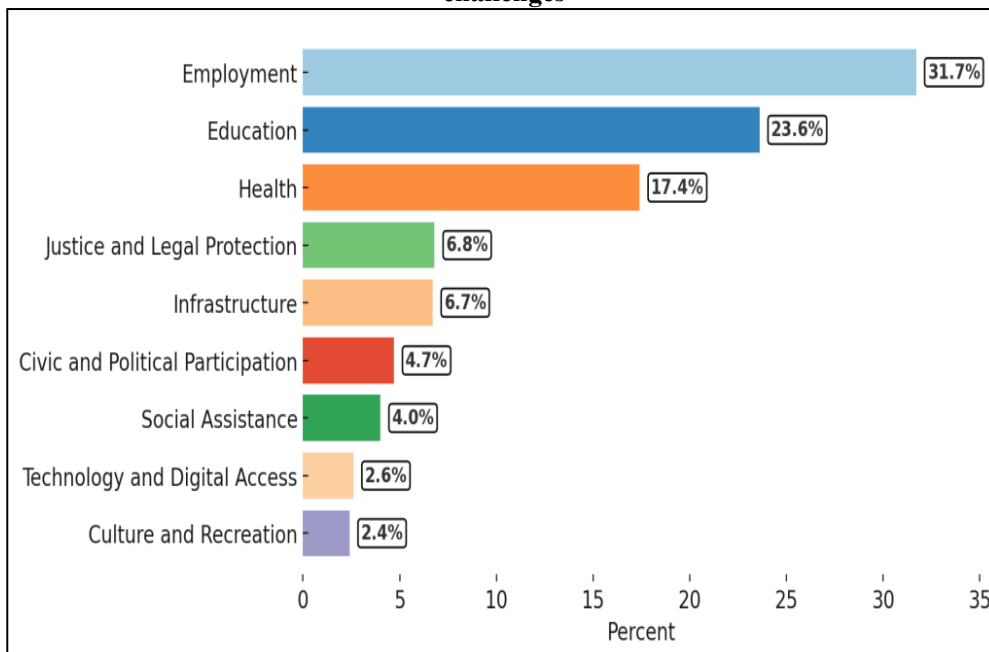
Chart 13. Perceived level of respect for the rights of persons with disabilities in Romania



Employment (31.7%), education (23.6%), and health (17.4%) are perceived as the main areas in which persons with disabilities face the greatest difficulties in achieving inclusion.

Fields such as culture, technology, social assistance, or civic and political participation are considered less problematic. This highlights a predominant orientation toward meeting the basic needs of persons with disabilities, to the detriment of those related to social participation and access to opportunities.

Chart 14. Areas where inclusion of persons with disabilities faces the greatest challenges

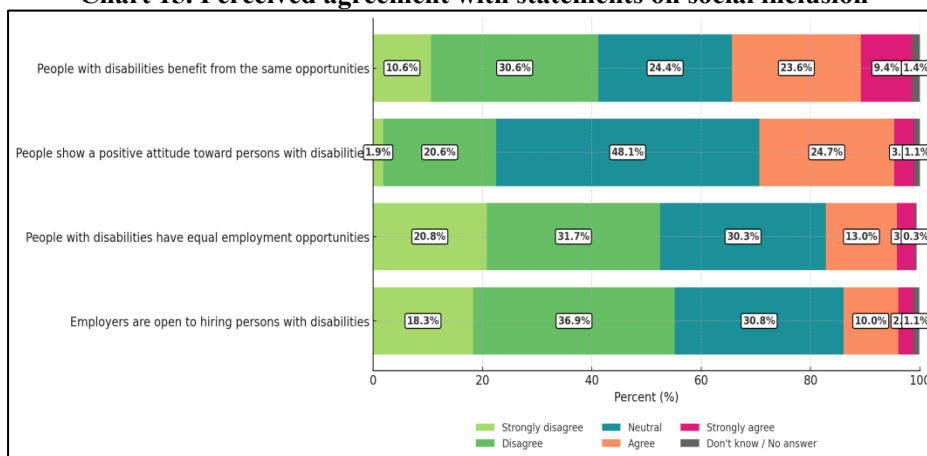


Respondents' perceptions regarding the social inclusion of persons with disabilities reveal a major gap between declared attitudes and actual access to opportunities. Although approximately 73.0% of participants believe that people generally display a positive attitude toward persons with disabilities, this openness is not reflected in key areas such as the labor market.

Thus, it is emphasized that persons with disabilities do not enjoy equal employment opportunities (52%), while employers remain reluctant to hire them (41%).

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Chart 15. Perceived agreement with statements on social inclusion

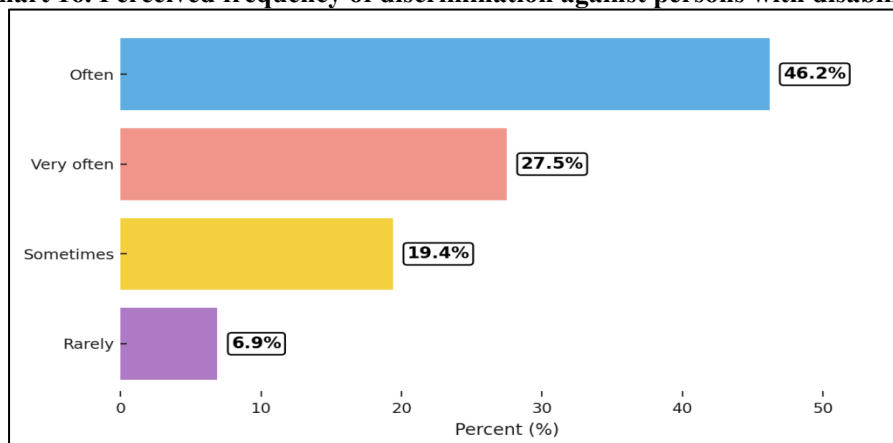


In response to the question “How often do you think persons with disabilities are discriminated against in Romania?”, the answers reveal a strongly negative perception of the phenomenon.

Approximately 74.0% of respondents believe that persons with disabilities are discriminated against “often” (46.2%) or “very often” (27.5%), suggesting that discrimination is perceived as a constant and widespread practice, deeply rooted in negative attitudes and prejudices that question the professional competence of persons with disabilities.

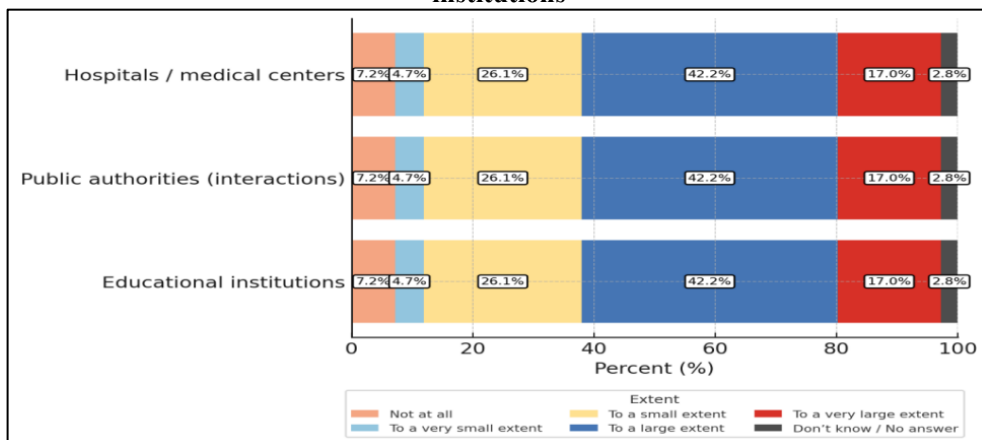
On the other hand, 19.4% of respondents believe that discrimination occurs only “occasionally”, while just 6.9% think it happens “rarely”, a percentage that indicates a low perception of improvement in the current situation.

Chart 16. Perceived frequency of discrimination against persons with disabilities



Across all the institutions analyzed — education, public authorities, and the healthcare system — respondents believe that persons with disabilities are predominantly discriminated against. Approximately 60% of participants state that discrimination occurs “to a great” or “very great extent,” while only 12% consider that it happens “to a very small extent” or “not at all.”

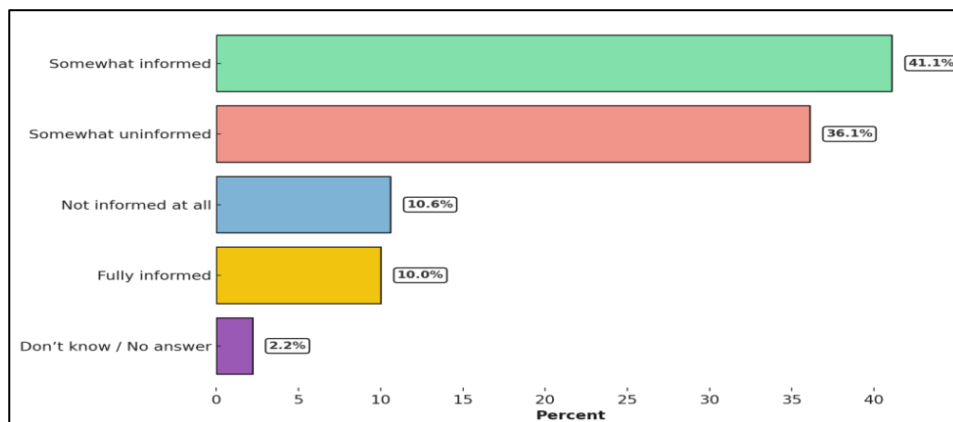
Chart 17. Perceived discrimination/marginalization of persons with disabilities by institutions



When asked how well informed they are about policies and legislation on the inclusion of persons with disabilities, 41.0% of respondents stated that they are partially informed, while approximately 36.0% said they are “partially uninformed.” In addition, 11.0% reported being not informed at all, and only 10.0% considered themselves fully informed.

These results indicate a generally low level of awareness regarding the legislative framework for the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

Chart 18. Level of awareness regarding policies and legislation on the inclusion of persons with disabilities

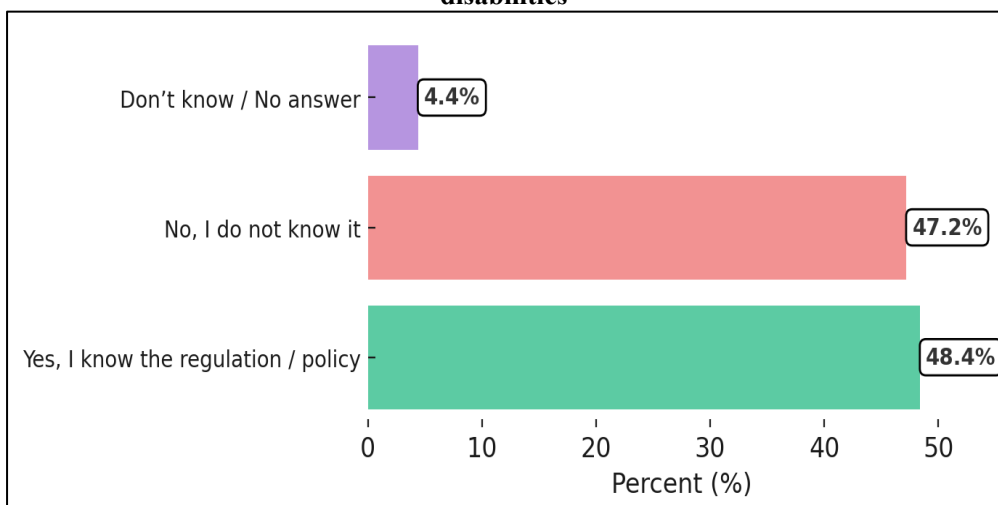


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Responses to the question “Are you familiar with the legal regulations or public policies that guarantee free access to career evaluation and guidance services for persons with disabilities, regardless of age, type, or degree of disability?” show an approximately equal number of people who report being informed and those who state they are not aware of such regulations.

Approximately 48.4% of respondents said they are familiar with these regulations, while 47.2% declared they are not familiar with them. This highlights a low level of public awareness, which represents an important barrier to the effective access of persons with disabilities to their legal rights.

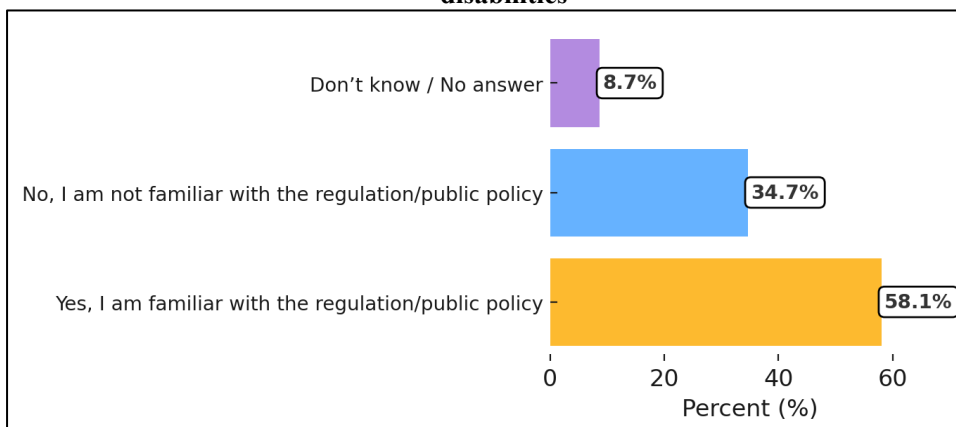
Chart 19. Awareness of legal provisions on career guidance access for persons with disabilities



Approximately 58% of respondents stated that they are aware of the existence of tax incentives and other legal benefits granted to employers who hire persons with disabilities.

Although the level of awareness is higher in this case compared to other aspects of disability legislation and the rights of persons with disabilities, the fact that 35.0% of respondents are not familiar with these provisions highlights a deficiency in public communication regarding such incentives — a factor that may negatively influence the employment opportunities of persons with disabilities.

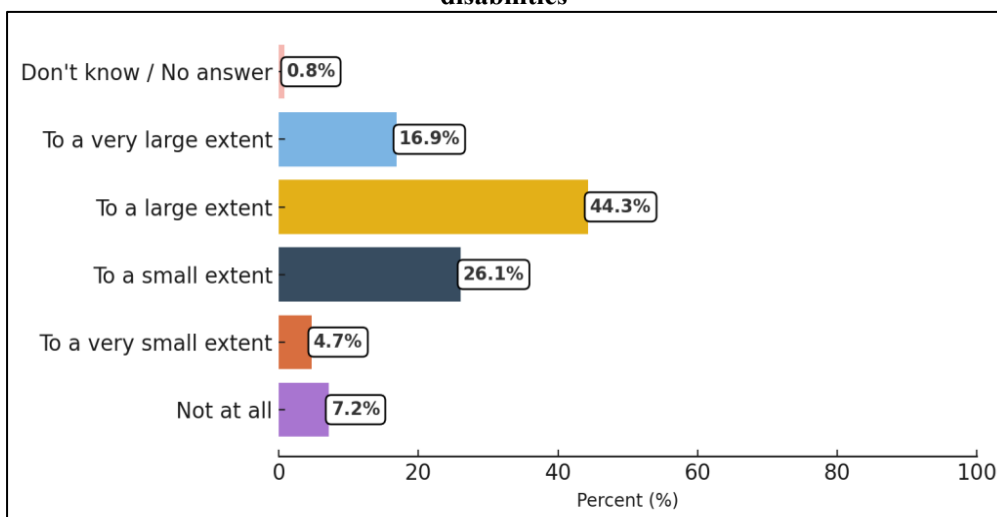
Chart 20. Awareness of fiscal facilities granted to employers of persons with disabilities



The perception of discrimination against persons with disabilities in the workplace is predominantly negative. Approximately 59.0% of respondents believe that persons with disabilities face discriminatory behavior “to a great” or “very great extent” in the workplace.

On the other hand, 38.0% of respondents consider that discrimination is not a significant issue, reporting that it occurs “to a small” or “very small extent.”

Chart 21. Perceived extent of workplace discrimination against persons with disabilities



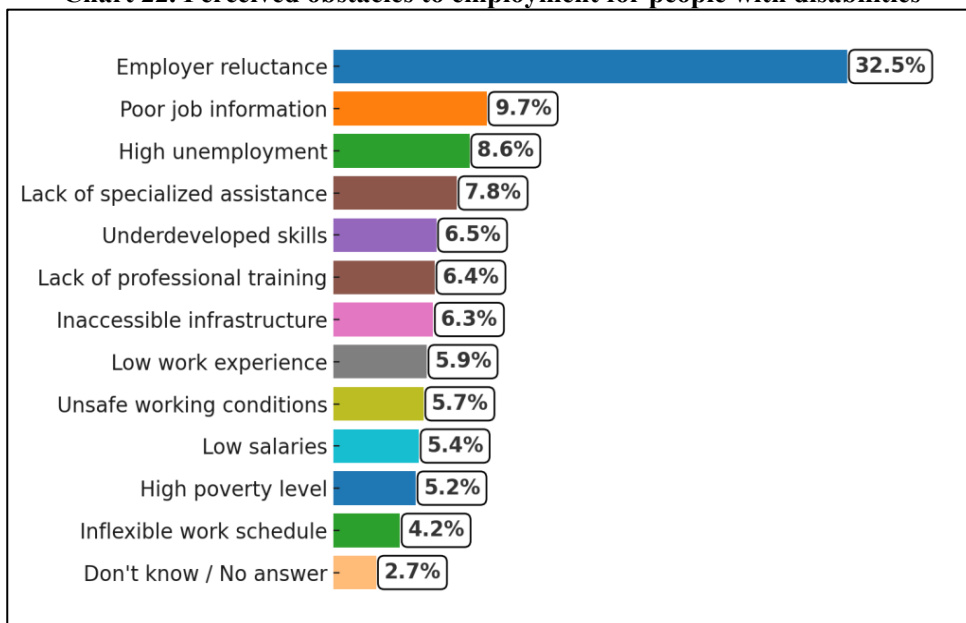
The most important obstacle perceived in the employment of persons with disabilities is employers’ reluctance, mentioned by 32.5% of respondents. The next significant barriers are the lack of information about job opportunities (9.7%), the high unemployment rate (8.6%), and the lack of specialized assistance (7.8%).

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Respondents also pointed out additional obstacles such as insufficiently developed skills, lack of professional training, and inaccessible infrastructure (percentages between 6.3% and 6.5%).

Other barriers, mentioned to a lesser extent (under 6.0%), include low professional experience, unsafe working conditions, low salaries, and high poverty levels.

Chart 22. Perceived obstacles to employment for people with disabilities



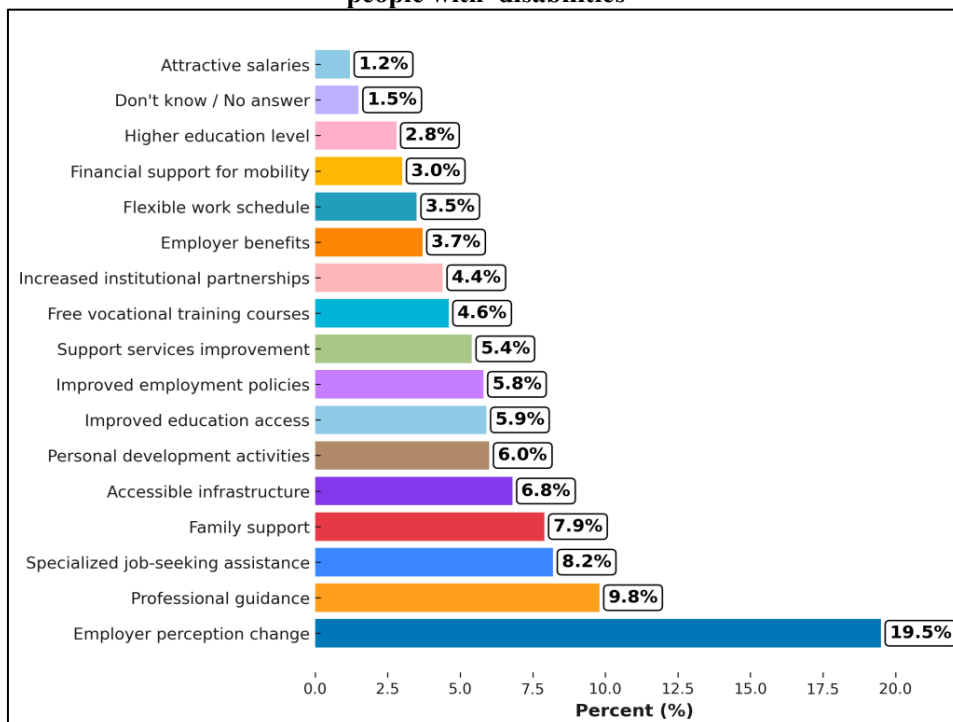
Respondents identified the need to change employers' perceptions (19.5%) as the most significant factor for improving access among persons with disabilities.

This finding suggests that the main obstacles are not administrative or physical in nature, but rather cultural and attitudinal, deeply rooted in prejudice, stereotypes, and limited confidence in the professional competencies of persons with disabilities.

Additionally, other solutions mentioned by respondents included career guidance (9.8%), specialized job mediation (8.2%), family support (7.9%), and accessible infrastructure.

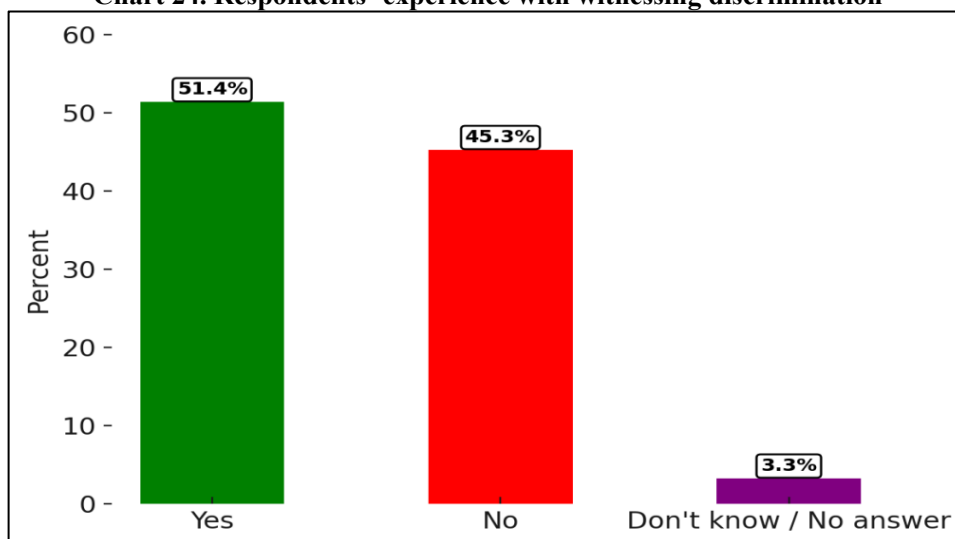
The remaining aspects referred to various issues such as personal development opportunities, improved access to education and employment-related social policies, flexible work arrangements, and targeted financial support.

Chart 23. Main perceived solutions for enhancing labor market access among people with disabilities



Nearly half of the participants reported witnessing situations of discrimination against persons with disabilities. Specifically, 51.4% confirmed having observed at least one act of discrimination, while 45.3% said they had not encountered such experiences.

Chart 24. Respondents' experience with witnessing discrimination



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Conclusion

In the specialized literature, disability is defined as the result of the interaction between the individual and the social environment—an interaction that can generate socio-economic, institutional, and cultural barriers.

The social integration of persons with disabilities in Romania is influenced by cultural, structural, and institutional barriers. Although the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities is legally regulated and reflected in public policies, there is a gap between the normative framework and its implementation.

The research results indicate the existence of negative attitudes deeply embedded in social mentalities and practices related to access to resources, education, the labor market, interaction with public institutions, and participation in social life. Regarding the labor market, the most evident obstacles described include employers' reluctance, lack of information, lack of specialized services, and insufficient accessible infrastructure.

Authors' Contributions:

The authors contributed equally to this work.

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Article Info

Received: November 10 2025

Accepted: November 18 2025

How to cite this article:

Gheorghiță, V., Stăiculescu, O. (2025). The Social Integration of People with Disabilities in Romania: Perceptions, Challenges and Oppotunities. *Revista de Științe Politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques*, no. 88, pp. 69-90.



ORIGINAL PAPER

Romanian Students' Perceptions of Artificial Intelligence Use in Higher Education: Benefits and Challenges

Radu Florin Ogarcă¹⁾

Abstract: In recent years, a large number of tools based on artificial intelligence (AI) have been developed and enhanced, which can be used by students to support their educational process. The development of these technologies has also intensified the academic discussion on the opportunities and challenges of using AI in higher education. This paper aims to investigate Romanian students' perceptions of the advantages and risks associated with the use of AI in performing specific academic assignments. Empirical data were collected through a questionnaire administered to economics students at the University of Craiova. The results obtained can provide valuable information for decision-makers in higher education, both at the national level and within the University of Craiova, thus facilitating the adaptation and remodeling of educational processes for the effective integration of AI tools, in accordance with the principles of academic ethics and integrity.

Keywords: *artificial intelligence; higher education; student perceptions; academic ethics; digital literacy.*

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1. Introduction

In recent years, the incorporation of artificial intelligence (AI) in higher education has garnered significant attention from researchers, emphasizing AI's potential to fundamentally change teaching and learning methods (Ocaña-Fernández et al., 2019; Chatterjee & Bhattacharjee, 2020; Bates et al., 2020; Ali & Abdel-Haq, 2021; Akinwalere & Ivanov, 2022; Bucea-Manea-Țoniș et al., 2022; Crompton & Burke, 2023; Bearman et al., 2023; Ivanov, 2023; Rahiman & Kodikal, 2024; Escotet, 2024; McDonald et al., 2025; Mumtaz et al., 2025). Although AI has existed since the 1960s, its integration into educational practices has been a topic of scholarly interest for many years (Bond et al., 2024). However, the launch of ChatGPT in November 2022 has accelerated these developments, both practically and theoretically, marking what can be seen as a paradigm shift in the educational landscape (Tajik & Tajik, 2024).

This profound transformation of higher education demands an organized, systematic, and urgent response from universities (Korseberg & Elken, 2025). Although such a response, incorporating a proactive component, should have been initiated several years ago, it now appears that further delay is no longer viable.

Bearman et al. (2023) conducted a literature review on how universities are addressing the challenges posed by AI technologies. Their analysis identifies two distinct discourses. The first, the imperative response discourse, asserts that universities must react to rapid technological changes, with AI as a critical element. Within this discourse, two approaches can be distinguished: resistance for survival and positive transformation. Educators are expected to enhance their teaching practices to accommodate the changes driven by AI, while students must acquire new skills to adapt effectively to these changes.

The second discourse, concerning the altering of authority, conceptualizes AI as co-present in educational processes alongside other technological factors. Power dynamics between educators and AI are central to discussions within this discourse, raising questions about the evolving role of teachers in this context. Simultaneously, without adequate AI-related skills, students risk losing control over both what and how they learn.

Current research (Kuleto et al., 2021; Pisica et al., 2023; Özer, 2024) highlights the benefits of integrating AI into education. These include personalized learning, the creation of interactive and innovative teaching materials, better student monitoring, tailored educational resources, automation of repetitive tasks, and increased access to diverse learning materials.

However, the literature (O'Dea & O'Dea, 2023; Alotaibi & Alshehri, 2023; Nagaraj et al., 2023) also identifies significant challenges and limitations. These consist of disparities in AI infrastructure at the national, institutional, and individual levels; limited funding for AI applications and infrastructure at both the institutional and personal levels; varying levels of familiarity and awareness of AI technologies among teachers and students; as well as ethical concerns, data privacy issues, and the risk of reducing students' critical thinking skills.

Although experts agree on the need to adapt university education to technological changes driven by AI, there is intense debate among specialists about how to implement these changes, and approaches remain varied. Universities' adaptations to AI developments are shaped by specific economic, social, psychological, and cultural factors at the national, institutional, and individual levels.

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In Romania, research on how local universities are addressing AI challenges is limited. Additionally, there is a lack of research on students' direct perceptions of these technologies. When considering studies on the impact and perceptions of AI-based technologies on Romanian society as a whole, only a few exist, and their findings are quite concerning.

According to an April 2025 study by the International Monetary Fund (Mish et al., 2025), Romania ranks among European countries with the lowest estimated productivity gains from AI. The study projects cumulative increases of 0.3% to 0.7% over the next five years, which is significantly lower than the European average of 1.1%. The primary reason is the economic structure, which features a smaller service sector that is more exposed to AI adoption (Pele, 2025). Currently, approximately 4-8% of companies utilize some form of AI, and this percentage is expected to reach 8-10% in the medium term, still below the European average of 18%. Regulations concerning AI may also play a role, as Romania's legal framework is not more permissive than European standards (Pele, 2025).

A 2023 IPSOS study (IPSOS, 2023) involving respondents from 31 countries found that 77% of Romanian participants understood what artificial intelligence (AI) is, compared to a global average of 67%. The same study showed that 50% of Romanians expressed concern about AI use (versus 52% globally), while 62% said they were optimistic about the opportunities it offers (compared to 54% worldwide). Romanians also appeared more optimistic and trusting toward AI. Specifically, 63% (vs. 56% globally) said they trust AI will not discriminate against any group; 62% (vs. 52% globally) said they trust companies using AI as much as other companies; and 61% (vs. 50% globally) said they trust companies using AI to protect their personal data. Regarding the future impact of AI, 73% of Romanian respondents believe AI-based products and services will significantly change their daily lives in the next five years (compared to 66% globally). Meanwhile, 32% of Romanians expect AI solutions to replace them in their current jobs (versus 36% globally).

Analyzing these results, Alina Stepan, Country Manager of IPSOS Romania, emphasized: *“Romania oscillates between ignorance, pragmatism, and perhaps naivety. We have not yet decided where we stand in a landscape where we see ourselves as more informed, more optimistic, and less threatened by the advance of artificial intelligence — a discourse that is almost parallel to that of the Western world. We still do not fully understand what AI truly represents, nor all the positive and negative implications it may have.”* (IPSOS, 2023)

The Vodafone Foundation conducted a study entitled “AI in European Schools”, published in February 2025, based on a sample of 7,000 students aged between 12 and 17 (Vodafone Romania Foundation, 2025). Overall, the results of this study show that, although the potential of AI is widely recognized in the education sector, several issues can hinder the realization of this potential: inequality in access to connectivity and AI-based tools for students from low-income families; a lack of AI skills and guidance in the education sector; and insufficient resources for using AI tools in classrooms. Focusing on Romanian students, 70% believe that AI will play a significant role in their professional lives. However, 54% feel that their schools do not adequately prepare them to use this technology, while only 40% consider their teachers competent in using AI. Additionally, 70% have learned to use AI tools from their peers.

There are still a few studies on the transformations brought about by AI-based technologies in the Romanian academic environment, and even fewer analyses of

students' perceptions regarding their use in educational processes. However, in 2024, the prestigious Romanian economic journal "Amfiteatru Economic" dedicated an issue to the challenges of skills-oriented education in the context of artificial intelligence system development. Some of the articles published in that issue (which are referenced in this paper) provided, at the time, an overview of the penetration of AI in Romanian universities, including students' perceptions of the use of these technologies in their academic training. The subject is clearly still in its early stages, while pragmatic developments are advancing very rapidly.

Our research aims to provide another snapshot of these realities, one year after the above-mentioned study, using a sample of student respondents from another university center. To address this objective, the present study analyzes the perceptions of students from the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration in Craiova regarding the use of artificial intelligence tools in the educational process. The investigation is based on a structured questionnaire comprising three main components: perceived advantages and benefits, identified limitations and challenges, and measures recommended by students for the responsible implementation of AI in the university environment.

The paper is structured as follows: after this introduction, the relevant theoretical foundations are presented, followed by the methodology applied in the study, the analysis of the results obtained, their discussion in the context of the specialized literature, and, finally, the conclusions, recommendations, and directions for future research.

2. Literature review

Recent developments in AI, particularly in generative artificial intelligence, reveal that we are facing a potentially disruptive technology with a transformative impact on higher education, raising essential questions about the future of learning and teaching with AI technologies (Hutson et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2024; Wong, 2024). AI will not replace but rather augment what teachers do in the classroom (Hutson et al., 2022). However, educators will need to adapt their approach to interacting with students, as they must prepare them—both cognitively and technologically—to succeed in an uncertain future (Hutson et al., 2022).

Although the perceived impact of AI is high (at least in the not-too-distant future), its rate of adoption in higher education remains relatively low, and there is still a lack of clear evidence regarding the pedagogical impact of AI on teaching and learning processes (O'Dea & O'Dea, 2023). One possible explanation is that the use of AI in education has focused more on digital administrative management processes or reducing the administrative workload of academic and support staff, rather than on direct teaching and learning activities (O'Dea & O'Dea, 2023).

Universities should therefore develop strategies for effectively integrating AI into teaching and learning processes. Broadly speaking, such strategies should consider (Alqahtani & Wafula, 2025): creating equitable and effective learning environments; developing more complex ethical frameworks adapted to the challenges posed by AI in education; promoting transparency and efficient use; fostering critical thinking and independent analysis skills; and ensuring the protection of student data privacy.

Bollaert (2025) believes that higher education institutions should consider the following in their AI integration strategies: ensuring that all educators are trained and competent in using the AI tools they intend to integrate into teaching and learning; seeking feedback from staff and students on how AI should be implemented and on the effectiveness of AI integration in order to identify areas for improvement; identifying the

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AI attributes that students and staff value; and defining guidelines for the use of artificial intelligence by staff and students to ensure accountability and maintain academic integrity.

To fully leverage the potential of AI in the educational process while ensuring its ethical, fair, and responsible use, universities should develop and implement a clear strategy for integrating artificial intelligence.

The development and implementation of an AI strategy for teaching and learning at the university level should consider the interests of all stakeholders, assign responsibilities and roles to each stakeholder group, and collect and process their feedback on the actions taken to implement the strategy.

Jin et al. (2025), after examining generative artificial intelligence (GAI) adoption strategies in 40 universities across six regions of the world, identified the following key “actors” and their responsibilities in developing and implementing these strategies: faculty (responsible for integrating GAI into curricula and assessment; communicating and educating on the use of GAI; establishing guidelines and policies; fostering students’ critical thinking; and addressing ethical and security concerns); student (ensuring ethical use and academic integrity; understanding the capabilities and limitations of GAI and developing a critical perspective on it; engaging in ethical and practical discussions on the use of GAI in education; and improving learning by actively adopting GAI tools); administrator (developing and implementing policies on the use of GAI; providing support and resources for teachers and students; ensuring academic integrity and ethical use; and overseeing the procurement process for GAI services).

Another essential category of higher education stakeholders is employers. In the near future, graduates will be expected to use AI tools effectively and responsibly. Uncontrolled use of GAI tools may result in a generation of graduates lacking key critical thinking and writing skills and being unprepared for professional environments that require adaptability and innovation (Lo, 2023). Thus, AI literacy could improve student employability by enhancing academic performance, skills, and competencies needed in the labor market, while also strengthening the reputation of universities and academic disciplines (Wut et al., 2025).

Currently, most universities worldwide lack the strategic planning and institutional frameworks necessary to leverage AI-based technologies fully. Many institutions have adopted AI tools on an ad hoc basis, resulting in fragmented and inconsistent implementations (Barnes & Hutson, 2024).

Next, we identified and analyzed relevant articles on the use and prospects of AI-based tools in Romanian universities. Our investigation focused on studies based on samples consisting of students, examining their perceptions, attitudes, behaviors, and expectations regarding the implementation of AI-based tools in higher education.

Sova et al. (2024) conducted a study with a sample of 748 respondents, students enrolled in economics programs at several Romanian universities. The study revealed that although a substantial number of students are familiar with specific models of artificial intelligence, approximately 10% of respondents reported not being familiar with any such tool. Awareness and familiarity with AI tools positively influence perceived usefulness and attitudes toward AI. Structured training programs on AI tools improve students’ perceptions of AI and help alleviate their concerns about this approach. At the same time, concerns about AI negatively affect perceived usefulness and positive attitudes.

The study also found that while chatbots and productivity tools are more widely recognized and used, applications such as data analysis and creative AI tools remain underutilized by students.

Based on their findings, the authors propose several measures for educational institutions: they should prioritize the integration of AI-based tools into educational programs by offering training programs for students and teachers; ensure student access to a variety of AI tools through university-provided subscriptions, partnerships with software providers, the recommendation and use of open-source AI tools; and improve the technological infrastructure.

Țală et al. (2024), in a study conducted on a sample of 364 Romanian students in the field of economics, revealed the following important aspects: a high level of awareness of AI for content generation, and a greater inclination among students with more advanced digital skills to use generative AI. However, somewhat surprisingly, 21% of respondents stated that they were not interested in learning how to use AI models. The reasons for this lack of interest were related to: the belief that knowledge in this field is unnecessary; the inaccuracy of AI-generated information; the anticipation of adverse effects on cognitive abilities; a preference for relying on their own skills; perceived ethical issues; and the perception of limited added value. From the respondents' perspective, the best way to learn about generative AI and its use is through exposure to these technologies within various university courses and disciplines.

Pisica et al. (2024) investigated Romanian students' opinions on the implementation of artificial intelligence in higher education, based on data collected from a sample of 70 social science students from three generalist universities in Romania. The advantages and opportunities of AI implementation identified by students were grouped into three major themes: the teaching–learning–evaluation process (easy, fast, inexpensive, and organized access to information; personalized learning; improved academic performance; curriculum development); administrative efficiency (automation of administrative processes such as enrolment, assessment, or course scheduling); and life improvements (in terms of quality of life and better jobs). The disadvantages and threats identified by students were: dependence on technology (which can affect critical thinking, social skills, and creativity); ethical issues (amplification of bias and discrimination, increased inequality); security risks; and high implementation costs.

Vieriu and Petrea (2025) conducted a study on a sample of 85 students from the National University of Science and Technology Politehnica Bucharest, enrolled in the Aerospace and Medical Engineering programs, which emphasize AI integration. Among the benefits of using AI-based tools, students mentioned: time savings (resulting from reduced time for research, information processing, and the automation of repetitive activities); optimization of information comprehension through the use of intelligent tutoring systems that present content in an accessible format; and better structuring of information (AI-based tools can help create outlines and visual representations that allow students to focus on key aspects when dealing with large volumes of information).

The main concerns regarding the use of artificial intelligence expressed by the students were the accuracy of AI-generated information, over-dependence on technology, and various technical issues in AI systems that may negatively impact the learning experience. When asked for suggestions on how to improve the use of AI in university education, the following themes emerged: proper integration of AI into educational activities (suggestions included personalized learning platforms, instant feedback applications, and algorithms for identifying knowledge gaps and recommending remedial

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programs); limited and controlled use of AI (students emphasized the need for clear guidelines on AI use); suggestions for validating the accuracy of information provided by AI; and the provision of AI tools to students by higher education institutions, free of charge or at low cost.

In recent years, Romanian universities have taken steps to implement AI by adopting regulations on its use by students and teaching staff, including the Polytechnic University of Bucharest, the Carol Davila University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Bucharest, the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, and the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University in Iași. However, we have not identified any Romanian universities (based on information available on their websites) that have developed a comprehensive strategy for integrating AI into educational and administrative processes.

Focusing on the regulations of the National University of Science and Technology Politehnica Bucharest, these state that “*the responsible use of AI is permitted and even recommended in activities such as generating preliminary ideas; data analysis; organizing and structuring information; identifying sources or trends; providing technical support in writing (while respecting the originality of the content); as well as synthesizing multiple sources*”. To reduce the risk of incorrect or dishonest use of AI systems, the regulation also outlines several measures, such as extending the duration of oral presentations for completed papers, conducting individual interviews to validate personal contributions, and requesting critical justifications for content generated with AI support. Furthermore, the regulation promotes awareness-raising measures at the university level regarding the responsible use of AI systems.

In contrast, the University of Brașov has introduced, starting with the 2025–2026 academic year, a regulation on the professional activity of students, which prohibits the use of AI in drafting any text subject to evaluation. This regulation states that “*the detection of such violations is the responsibility of the evaluating teaching staff, based on evidence or their own judgment in assessing the facts*”.

Romanian students perceive AI-based technologies as having great potential to transform higher education. At the same time, they are aware of many of the challenges posed by the use of these technologies in teaching and learning processes. At the institutional level, Romanian universities have taken only tentative steps toward realizing the potential of AI. While they have not yet developed coherent institutional strategies for integrating AI into educational processes, some universities have introduced regulations on the use of these technologies — a sign of growing awareness of the need for such an approach.

3. Methodology and results

The study sample consisted of students from the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration at the University of Craiova. An online invitation briefly outlining the research objectives was sent to 725 students, asking them to complete an online questionnaire via Google Forms. The process of sending invitations and collecting responses took place between July and September 2025.

A total of 302 completed questionnaires were received, of which 22 were excluded from the final analysis due to incompleteness (more than 30% of data missing). The collection of valid data was carried out between August and September 2025.

The final questionnaire consisted of 26 questions. Several studies addressing similar topics were consulted in the development of the questionnaire (Farhi et al., 2023; Blahopoulou & Ortiz-Bonnin, 2025; Slimi et al., 2025). The final form was obtained after

two stages of testing on groups of 15 students. The objective of these iterations was to ensure clarity and eliminate any potential ambiguities.

The composition of the sample by gender, age, and type of study programme is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The structure of the sample

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	187	66.8
	Male	90	32.1
	Rather not to say	3	1.1
Age	18-25 years	190	67.9
	25-30 years	29	10.4
	30-35 years	25	8.9
	35+ years	36	12.9
Type of study programme	Bachelor	225	80.4
	Master	50	17.9
	PhD	5	1.8

The fourth question in the questionnaire asked respondents to self-assess their level of digital skills. Figure 1 shows that only about 4% of them consider themselves to have a low level of digital competence. I consider there is a risk of encountering an "illusion of digital competence," a phenomenon identified by Ghiduc (2025) among Generation Z in Romania. Interested in technology from a very young age, Romanian youth (aged 18–25) display very high self-confidence in their own digital abilities, although, according to European statistics, Romania consistently ranks last in terms of basic digital skills. This discrepancy arises because intensive use of technology is (erroneously) equated with a deep understanding of it.

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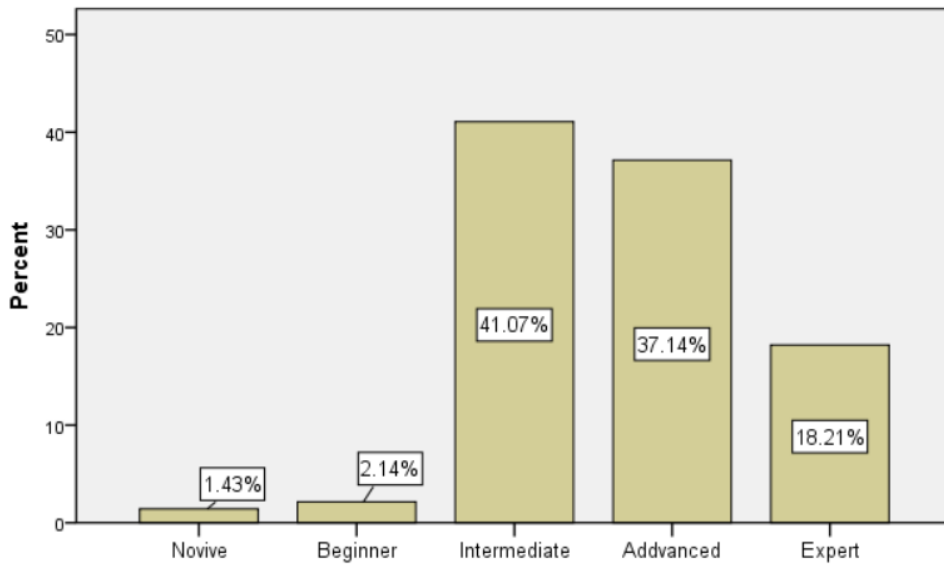


Figure 1. Digital skills level

Figure 2 shows the frequency with which respondents report using AI-based tools (ChatGPT, Claude, Syntesia, Gamma, Jasper, Writer, Midjourney, Asana, ElevenLabs, etc.) in their professional activities (at university or at work). Most respondents (45.36%) report using such technologies several times a week, while 16% state that they use AI tools very rarely or not at all.

Tables 2 and 3 present the output of the chi-square test performed using SPSS 23 to examine whether there are differences among respondents in the frequency of AI use in their professional activity based on their level of digital skills. The results of the chi-square test ($\chi^2(12) = 18.319$, $p = 0.106$) indicate that there is no statistically significant association between the variables analyzed, as the p-value is higher than the conventional significance threshold of 0.05. This suggests that there are no significant differences in the use of AI in professional activities determined by differences in respondents' digital skills.

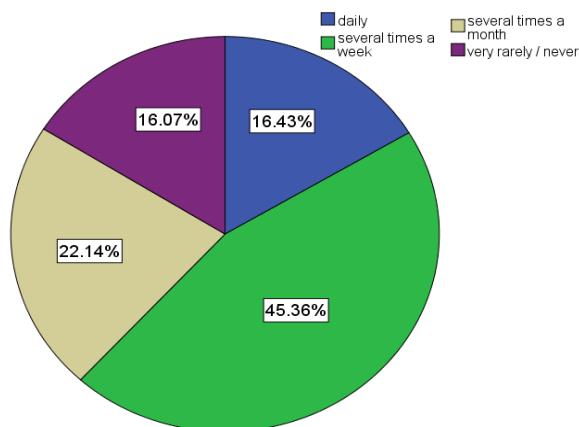


Figure 2. Frequency of AI technology use

Table 2. Digital skills level x Frequency of AI technology use Crosstabulation

			Frequency of AI technology use			
			Very rarely/ Never	Several times a month	Several times a week	Daily
Digital skills level	Expert	Count	6	9	24	12
		Expected Count	8.2	11.3	23.1	8.4
		Residual	-2.2	-2.3	.9	3.6
	Advanced	Count	15	19	53	17
		Expected Count	16.7	23.0	47.2	17.1
		Residual	-1.7	-4.0	5.8	-.1
	Intermediate	Count	21	33	47	14
		Expected Count	18.5	25.5	52.2	18.9
		Residual	2.5	7.5	-5.2	-4.9
	Beginner	Count	1	1	1	3
		Expected Count	1.0	1.3	2.7	1.0
		Residual	.0	-.3	-1.7	2.0
	Novice	Count	2	0	2	0
		Expected Count	.6	.9	1.8	.7
		Residual	1.4	-.9	.2	-.7

Table 3. Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	18.319 ^a	12	.106
Likelihood Ratio	17.584	12	.129

a. 8 cells (40.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .64.

Figure 3 provides a summary of students' responses concerning how they use AI tools in their professional activities (at work or at university).

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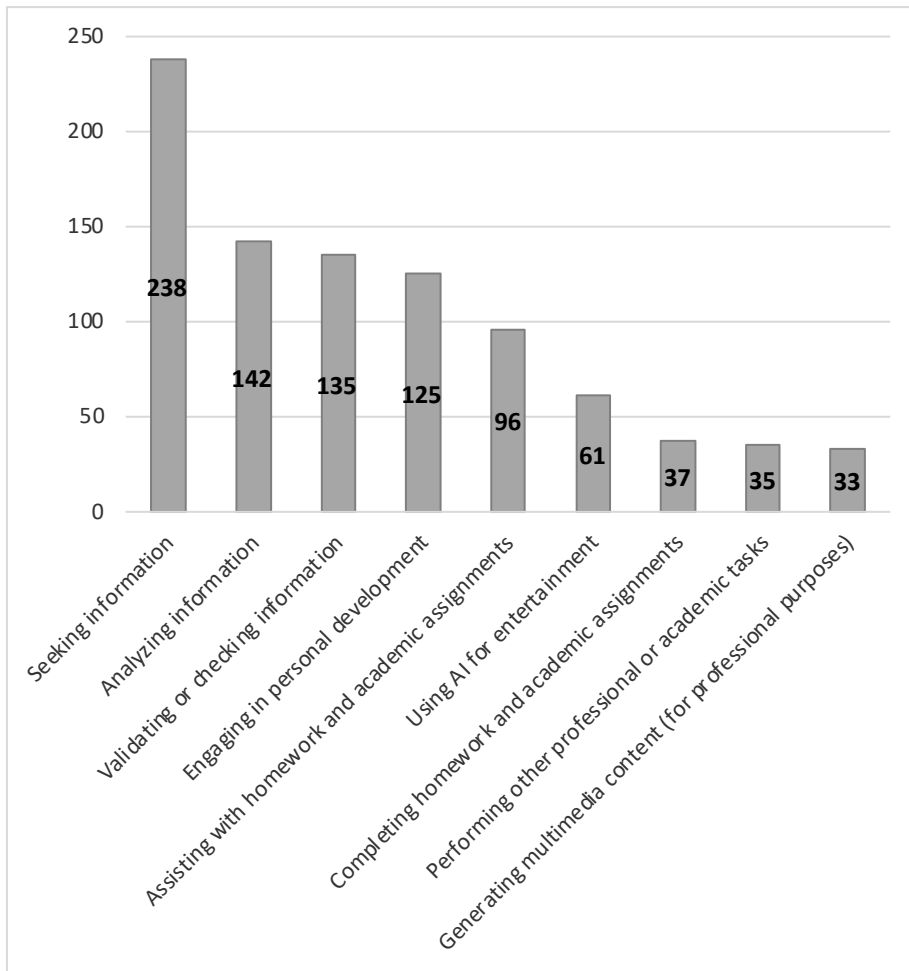


Figure 3. Ways Students Use AI Tools

The data shows that most students use artificial intelligence for seeking and analyzing information, while more creative or applied uses are minimal. I consider that we can speak of a predominantly passive orientation, and I appreciate that AI is perceived by the study sample students more as an informational support tool than as one for active learning or innovation, which may be concerning from the perspective of developing advanced digital skills and critical thinking. It may also be worrying, with the necessary nuances, that 85.6% of respondents use AI-based tools to search for information. A recent study (Sullivan, 2025), conducted by 22 public media organizations, found that four of the most widely used AI assistants (ChatGPT, Copilot, Gemini, Perplexity AI) distort news content in 45% of cases, regardless of language or territory. However, this is also encouraging, as it shows responsible and thoughtful use of AI technologies in academia, with 48.6% of students reporting that they use AI-based tools to verify the accuracy of information.

Table 4 presents a descriptive analysis of items 7–13, which relate to the potential beneficial effects of using AI-based tools. A five-point Likert scale was used for these questions, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Table 4. Benefits of Students' Use of AI Tools

	Mean	Std. Deviation
7. AI tools can improve students' digital skills.	3.821	1.0627
8. Through AI tools, students can obtain answers and explanations to questions they cannot ask their teachers (these tools ensure anonymity, are available 24/7, and eliminate the fear of making mistakes or being judged).	3.757	1.1936
9. The use of AI tools can encourage students to become more autonomous and independent in the learning process.	3.389	1.2538
10. The use of AI tools can help students become more productive in their learning and research activities.	3.589	1.1481
11. AI tools can stimulate students' creativity by offering innovative perspectives and ideas for academic projects and tasks that they might not think of on their own.	3.621	1.1730
12. Students need to learn how to use AI-based tools effectively in order to succeed in their careers (as AI is likely to be widely used in many fields in the future).	3.721	1.2215
13. The use of AI tools by students can drive the modernization of the Romanian higher education system.	3.739	1.1853

The analysis of the responses in the table reveals that students perceive the benefits of AI in education positively, with all items having mean scores above 3.7, and the highest level of agreement observed for the improvement of digital skills. Moderate standard deviations (1.06–1.25) suggest a reasonable level of consensus among respondents, with greater dispersion of responses for questions 9 and 12.

The lowest score was recorded for item 9. This result may reflect a concern that students could become dependent on AI instead of developing their autonomy, or a perception that these tools promote passivity rather than independence in learning. The higher standard deviation compared to the other items suggests differing opinions on this issue, with some students viewing AI as an empowering tool and others as a potential barrier to the development of academic autonomy. A lower score was also recorded for item 10, reflecting moderate skepticism about the effective use of AI in real educational contexts. This degree of skepticism may be attributed to limited experience in using AI-based tools.

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Table 5. Students' Concerns About Using AI Tools

	Mean	Std. Deviation
14. The use of AI for completing academic tasks diminishes the quality of students' professional education	3.118	1.1657
15. Students' use of AI will limit opportunities for socializing with peers during their university studies.	2.746	1.3239
16. AI usage affects the development of students' soft skills, such as critical thinking, creative writing, problem-solving, teamwork, and leadership abilities.	3.379	1.2267
17. Students/future professionals may become dependent on AI in their work.	3.550	1.2462
18. It is unethical for students to rely on AI tools when completing academic tasks.	3.039	1.1952
19. Allowing the use of AI tools in universities may make it more difficult to assess students.	3.057	1.2687
20. Using AI tools (especially paid versions) can exacerbate inequalities among students.	3.111	1.3028

Items 14-20 (whose descriptive analysis is synthesized in Table 5) were designed to identify the problems/challenges caused by the use of AI in teaching/learning processes from the students' perspective. The analysis of the average values for the seven items reveals a moderate level of concern about the potential adverse effects of AI use by students. The highest average is for item 17, which highlights a greater concern about the risk of technological dependence. Also, the statement regarding the negative impact of AI on the development of soft skills is supported by a majority of respondents.

On the other hand, items related to limiting socialization among students and ethical issues raised by the use of AI have lower levels of agreement, which may suggest that students do not perceive the use of AI as a significant threat in these areas. Overall, the average responses to the seven items indicate that students are somewhat cautious about the effects of AI use, anticipating moderate risks, particularly related to addiction, loss of soft skills, and assessment fairness. The higher standard deviations, exceeding 1.2 for most items, underscore the fact that students have varying perspectives on the magnitude of these risks.

In Table 6, the descriptive analysis for items 21–26 is presented, which were used to outline proposals for integrating AI tools into teaching and learning activities at universities.

Table 6. Measures Aimed at Integrating AI Tools in Higher Education Institutions

	Mean	Std. Deviation
21. Universities should develop clear guidelines and codes of conduct regarding the ethical use of AI tools in an academic setting.	3.643	1.1613
22. The use of AI tools should be banned in universities.	1.879	1.1514
23. Teachers need to review academic assignments and assessment methods (to prevent academic integrity violations through AI tools).	3.075	1.1413
24. Universities should use AI applications to detect AI-generated content (in term papers, essays, and graduation projects).	3.071	1.3945
25. Universities should integrate AI tools into educational processes and should train students to use them effectively and ethically.	4.079	1.0814
26. With institutional support or on their own, teachers should improve their skills in using AI to support teaching and assessment.	3.735	1.1911

The analysis of the mean values for these questions indicates a predominantly favorable attitude toward the use of AI, with an emphasis on regulation, training, and professional development, rather than on restriction or prohibition.

The highest mean value was recorded for item 25. This result suggests a clear position in favor of the constructive integration of AI in education. A similarly high level of agreement was recorded for item 26, indicating that students believe teachers should also improve their skills in using AI as a support for teaching and assessment, ensuring both efficiency and ethical practice. Students also show a high level of agreement regarding the development of clear guidelines or codes for the ethical use of AI tools in academia. A majority disagreement was recorded for item 22, concerning the prospect of banning the use of AI tools in universities.

4. Discussion and conclusions

A key finding of our study is that the majority of student respondents (over 80%) regularly utilize AI tools. Our results are consistent with those of other studies with similar objectives. For example, a study by the Digital Education Council, conducted on a sample of 3,839 students from 16 countries, across bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programs in various fields of study, revealed that 86% of respondents are already using AI tools in their studies (DEC, 2024). Another study, conducted by Copyleaks (2025), on a sample of approximately 1,100 students in the USA, shows that 90% of students use AI in an academic setting. All of this suggests that most students have integrated artificial

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intelligence into their academic lives faster than teachers or educational institutions can respond.

If students are already using AI on a large scale and educational institutions continue to treat it as a marginal issue, they risk becoming irrelevant, damaging their reputation, and failing to prepare students in line with labor market requirements (Legatt, 2025).

A second conclusion is that students currently use artificial intelligence more as a tool for information support than as a means for active, personalized, and creative learning; that is, their use shows a predominantly passive orientation.

The development of AI-based tools and their widespread use by students has also changed their behavior in searching for information related to study tasks. Using the library for information has become an increasingly outdated solution, used by fewer and fewer students. Increasingly, students are relying on AI tools for information retrieval (Friesen & Roy, 2025). These tools reduce the anxiety associated with information search and increase the confidence with which students seek information, as well as their curiosity (Karunaratne & Adesina, 2023). Their reliability as information search tools is contested (Friesen & Roy, 2025), which calls for their use with caution (Mannuru et al., 2024). Although studies, audits, and anecdotal observations have shown that the information generated by ChatGPT (and other Large Language Models) is not always accurate, many users tend to place unjustified trust in this new source (Jung et al., 2024). Fact-checking of content generated by AI-based applications should remain essential, given the identified risks (Mannuru et al., 2024).

A significant segment of survey respondents (48.6%) reported using AI-based tools to verify certain information. The question arises as to what extent AI-based applications can provide reliable results in this endeavor. Studies on this topic (Hoes et al., 2023) have shown that Large Language Models can be beneficial for fact-checking; however, caution should be exercised, and these tools should not replace the work of human experts or traditional solutions for verifying the accuracy of information.

Regarding the advantages and disadvantages of using AI in academic activities, it can be said that the students in the study sample have a balanced and rational perception, being aware of both the benefits and the potential risks of these technologies. More specifically, their perspective could be described as optimistic-moderate.

A somewhat concerning aspect is that students seem to minimize, or not consider significant (or not to the same extent as other risks), the impact of using AI tools on socializing with colleagues during their studies. The adverse effects of students using AI for an increasing portion of their academic tasks on social interactions, peer learning, and classroom dynamics remain unclear, even in the literature in the field (Cherfaoui, 2024; Hou et al., 2025; Saifuddin, 2025).

A last conclusion is that students' perspective is one of openness toward AI, demanding regulation, training, and integration, rather than prohibition. Under these conditions, universities must develop strategies for using AI tools responsibly, critically, and effectively in academic processes. Romanian universities should recognize these imperatives and take steps in this direction. In my view, the first step should be formal training on the use of AI tools for both students and teachers. The sources of information that students, as well as teachers, have used to learn about AI were mainly informal (Divekar et al., 2025). This situation highlights the need to develop institutional programs for systematic AI training for both categories of stakeholders, to mitigate or eliminate

skills gaps, as well as to raise awareness of the benefits, risks, and ethical challenges associated with AI.

This research highlights several important limitations that must be considered when interpreting the results. First, the exploratory nature of the study highlights the need to expand the research by including a more diverse sample, encompassing students from fields of study beyond economics, as well as from other universities in the country. It is also essential to examine the topic more deeply by developing and validating a complex, multidimensional model that is better designed to capture students' attitudes and perceptions toward AI-based tools.

Secondly, the students who responded to the questionnaire in our study included both those who had taken an Ethics and Academic Integrity course (in the master's program) and those who had not. Under these conditions, one can consider, on the one hand, the orientation of some students toward socially desirable answers, and on the other hand, respondents who may be unaware of, or not anticipate, the academic ethics issues arising from the use of AI-based tools by students.

Finally, the non-random sampling method used limits the generalizability of the conclusions to the entire student population in the Romanian university environment.

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Article Info

Received: November 03 2025

Accepted: November 18 2025

How to cite this article:

Ogarcă, R. F. (2025). Romanian Students' Perceptions of Artificial Intelligence Use in Higher Education: Benefits and Challenges. *Revista de Științe Politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques*, no. 88, pp. 91-110.



ORIGINAL PAPER

Managing difficult situations in the classroom: act or react?

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Abstract:

Teachers are increasingly faced with difficult classes. As a result, they complain about the chatter and wish they could teach in a quiet class. In short, they feel incapable of imposing a certain discipline. The teacher may be destabilized by students' difficult behavior, because it is not enough to strengthen the institutional framework, prohibitions or sanctions to see an improvement in the classroom climate. Incomprehension, irritation, even anger can arise from the part of the teacher with, over time, fatigue and weariness. Neither authoritarianism nor laxity allow the situation to change. When we are faced with a problematic situation, we naturally tend to react, that is to say, respond impulsively, make a judgment. React this way to the provocation is to let yourself be led by the student. If we choose to act without anxiety, without feeling judged, we create a productive exchange with the students. Even if the teacher must act quickly in the face of disruptions in his class, he must question the causes of the student's behavioral difficulties. An individual discussion with the disruptor student can shed light on the situation. Paying too much attention to inappropriate behaviors can result in strengthening them. Fair attention must be given to the positive behavior of the student. The compliments should be specific, informative, and objectively describe the positive behavior of the student without evaluating himself (avoid saying „you are good”), nor making comparisons between students (avoid saying „you are the best in the class”). The teacher must take care to avoid negative judgments between students. These remarks influence the construction of the identity of the student who can identify himself as being „weak” or „difficult”. Understanding the needs of the individual in the group allows teachers to anticipate or manage if necessary challenging situations. This involves developing the elements essential for an inclusive school and caring, which lead to the learning success of all students.

Keywords: *discipline, students, behavior, identity, classroom climate.*

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Introduction

The classroom is a physical and social environment characterized by a series of variables that influence its performance and which teachers must take into account. Faced with the vast and varied complexity of a changing and constantly evolving school, it is necessary to leverage some fundamental characteristics of teaching to increase levels of inclusion in the classroom and improve the learning conditions for all students. However, classroom management is not only linked to strategies tested in the classroom; it also involves the teacher's attitudes, values, and way of interpreting situations, especially critical ones. All of this falls within the crucial organizational skills needed for classroom management.

Classroom management according to the „ecological” model focuses on environmental conditions and their influence on student behavior. Teachers are committed daily to improving classroom structure, relationships and control, values, and problem-solving skills. According to Sullivan, Johnson, Owens & Conway (2014:46): „In the ecological model we use, the classroom is thought of as an ecosystem involving interactions between the physical environment, teacher characteristics, curriculum including pedagogy and resources, and a multitude of student variables in examining specific productive and unproductive behaviours and teacher responses.”

The classroom climate depends on the educational intentions of both teachers and students and is a daily commitment. It depends on the quality of communication between teachers and students and on the awareness of mutual coeducation. The classroom climate must be reiterated and renegotiated daily, explicitly or implicitly. When the climate is positive, it facilitates learning; when it is negative, it hinders it and creates conflict.

According to Bărbuceanu (2022:185): „Students who account to have warm interactions with their peers and teachers also have the inclination to show better academic self drive and engagement than students who lack this reciprocal affect. (Bărbuceanu, 2019). The first also tend to be more adaptive at problem solving - the ability to be cognizant of difficulties and to specify them in order to employ possible solutions. When students are in the vicinity of such high values of acquisition and academic expectations, they take up these orientations, because they experience a sense of a reality testing - the ability to constitute and measure the compatibility between what an experience means and what the existing verifiable are.”

In school, difficulties are addressed using pedagogical/educational methods. Students should be helped to learn the „appropriate” way to behave in the classroom, where the term „appropriate” refers to socially desirable behavior. The procedures that have proven most effective are those derived from social learning theory (Bandura, 1979), whose basic principles can be summarized as follows: most behaviors are learned, most behaviors can be modified by consequences. For consequences to affect behavior, they should be as immediate as possible. Positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior should be used more often than punishment for undesirable behavior. The fundamental goal of school action is naturally, in addition to promoting academic success, to modify behavior, a problem for some particularly „critical” students. The term „behavior modification” has a positive connotation. It means providing correct guidance, establishing appropriate limits, and, at the same time, encouraging and valuing the student. A behavior modification strategy will be more likely to be effective if the teacher adheres to these three basic rules: reward appropriate behavior frequently when it is infrequent and reward occasionally when appropriate behavior becomes more frequent, be careful

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not to accidentally reinforce undesirable behavior, use punishment for negative behavior, but use it sparingly.

Positive classroom climate – Caring teacher

Research has been conducted along various lines determining the personal characteristics of the teacher (age, gender, intelligence, motivation, attitudes, etc.); identifying contextual characteristics (school facilities, socioeconomic context, number of students per class, timetable, local resources); considering learning outcomes in students; analyzing classroom behaviors of teachers and students. Effective teachers continually seek to improve their methods, constantly reviewing their strategies, sometimes revolutionizing the structure of their lessons. They use strategic thinking: knowing how to frame difficult situations as problems, not as dramas or tragedies. They solve problems: perceiving the problem, identifying it, accepting the challenge, taking into account constraints and resources, designing an action plan, making decisions, evaluating results, and seeking alternative plans if the plan developed proves negative. For new, unfamiliar, and particularly complex problems, the desire to have new experiences, cognitive flexibility, and a propensity for change are the main factors in the professional success of an effective teacher.

According to Chirișescu and Păunescu (2024:236): „ Teachers must be agile and spontaneous because interaction with students requires *hic et nunc* action. But what could be the tool in the immediate vicinity of the teacher, which would respond to these increasing pressures? The answers are multiple, but the focus is on teaching approaches and methods. The teacher must have a multitude of methods, processes and techniques to use carefully, while adapting them to the specifics of each class and varying them when he feels it is necessary, because that variety, together with progress and challenge represents one of the basic conditions of effective teaching.”

We can mention, for example, effective teacher behaviors for managing the classroom with less tension (Wiley, 2000): being present (the degree of attention with which the teacher is able to follow the class and group dynamics, always knowing what is happening), being clear and easy to follow (organizing class activities, planning and preparing a well-structured lesson, using appropriate language), managing multiple tasks simultaneously (the ability to tackle several tasks at the same time), resolving problems (knowing how to react appropriately in critical moments and ensuring that group dynamics do not encounter obstacles), taking the initiative (trying to solve problems face-to-face, in a low voice, going near the disruptive student, talking to him before or after class), giving non-verbal signals, taking time instead of making hasty decisions.

Knowing how to manage conflicts and crisis situations, includes taking the students' perspective, seeking partial agreement. Flexibility is the ability to change and reorganize one's work when it is not effective enough. Shift from a reactive to a preventative attitude means anticipating what may happen and being prepared. Teachers should reflect on their strategies and reactions and be able to change, be spontaneous in their behavior, and use humor. In the event of non-compliance with the rules, teachers should ensure that any sanction and their reaction are appropriate and reasonable given the problematic behavior. It is important not to escalate the conflict and talk to the students at the end of the lesson and agree on what to do in the next lesson.

Teachers can learn „the trade” by adopting probably more effective behaviors in a wide range of situations, including those related to managing difficult classes, and avoiding the most probable mistakes. According to Lăpădat and Lăpădat (2025:268):

„Foreign language teachers are now expected to fulfil roles far beyond language transmission. They are cultural mediators, digital facilitators, inclusive educators, and curriculum designers. This multifaceted expectation calls for a wide array of professional competences - linguistic mastery, intercultural competence, pedagogical agility, and digital fluency among them.”

The ability to face adversity, to engage with active involvement, to effectively manage initiatives, to accept challenges, to be resilient, is not unchangeable, but evolves over time and can be strengthened or weakened based on particular life and learning contexts. (Smith-Osborne, Whitehill Bolton, 2013).

The classroom, a place of social interdependence

Social interdependence (Johnson and Johnson, 2005) is a mode of relationship established between people with a view to achieving a goal. Positive interdependence develops when an individual understands that he must coordinate his efforts with those of others to complete a task and that he is so dependent on others that he cannot succeed unless they also succeed. Social relationships are important because they provide operational and emotional support.

According to Lewin (1947: 34): „Perhaps one might expect single individuals to be more pliable than groups of like-minded individuals. However, experience in leadership training, in changing of food habits, work production, criminality, alcoholism, prejudices, all seem to indicate that it is usually easier to change individuals formed into a group than to change any one of them separately. As long as group values are unchanged the individual will resist changes more strongly the farther he is to depart from group standards. If the group standard itself is changed, the resistance which is due to the relation between individual and group standard is eliminated.”

The group is something more, or rather, something different, than the sum of its members: it has its own structure, specific goals, and particular relationships with other groups. What constitutes its essence is the interdependence among its members. The group, therefore, is a dynamic totality: a change in the state of one part affects the state of all the others.

Negative social interdependence is characterized by excessive competition and social relationships that can be sources of stress. Absent social interdependence characterizes those situations that favor autonomy and individualism. One's success is independent of the work of others. Social relationships are completely unimportant in completing the task and achieving success.

The psychological theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000) emphasizes how social environments, such as family and school, can encourage self-determination by satisfying three fundamental psychological needs: need for relationship (feeling connected to others, caring, and being recognized and accepted); need for competence (need to experience and express one's abilities; need to perceive oneself as effective); need for autonomy (perceiving oneself as the origin and source of one's behavior, being driven by one's interests and values). Social contexts, such as school, that foster the satisfaction of these three needs promote a person's well-being and functioning. (Maslow, 1943).

According to Goldstein and Freedman (2003:452): „Teachers must establish trusting, caring relationships with learners for those learners to be willing to take the risks required to enter into the ZPD (the zone of proximal development). In other words, interpersonal connection must occur so that learning and growth can occur (Goldstein, 1999). If we lose sight of our relationships with our students, their learning will suffer.”

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This involves the teacher's positive involvement in the exercise of his or her profession, having expectations of success for all students, possessing the ability to listen and provide appropriate feedback, and believing in the valorization of the individuality of the student, both as a co-protagonist of learning and as a whole person.

Improve classroom structure, relationships and control

The very heterogeneity of classes or the different types of teaching activities may require the use of multiple communication styles. Some students may be fascinated and feel reassured by a teacher who displays a dominant communication style, characterized by competitiveness and self-confidence, while others, more needy for autonomy and intolerant of authority, may demonstrate oppositional behavior.

According to Norton (1983) there are different styles: dominant style (when I speak, I tend to raise my voice), dramatic style (I often use exaggerated expressions to emphasize an aspect of the speech), argumentative style (once engaged in a discussion, I struggle to stop), animated style (when I communicate, my face is very expressive), relaxed style (generally, even under pressure, I speak in a relaxed manner).

Emotions play an important role in guiding behavior and constructing individuals' identities. Emotions also influence learning processes and performance. Empathy, the ability to recognize and interpret the emotional reactions and feelings of others, are skills that should be developed in individuals because they regulate communication and relationships. In classroom management and lesson organization, attention to the child's emotional and affective dimension is crucial. Goleman (1999)'s studies on emotional intelligence focused on this particular type of intelligence that complements logical abilities.

According to Shewark, Zinsser and Denham (2018): teachers are tasked with fostering and maintaining positive classroom climates while also meeting the health, safety, academic, and social-emotional needs of their students. A teacher who knows how to „take care” of his or her students integrates teaching aspects with emotional and relational factors.

A crucial factor for resilience is having good, realistically grounded and consistent self-esteem over time. To manage one's self-esteem, and consequently one's resilience, at least partially, one must become aware of it and convince oneself that it can be modifiable. Self-esteem (Hagen, Havnen, Hjemdal, Kennair, Ryum and Solem, 2020) depends on internal factors (temperament, character, personality, willingness to change, problem-solving strategies) and external factors, which for a teacher may include: collaboration with colleagues, the principal, parents, an overall supportive environment such as a welcoming climate, and the opportunity to learn.

Difficult students (with poor performance, unmotivated, aggressive, various forms of distress) in a welcoming classroom

The classroom is a place of tension for both teachers and students. (Lera, Jensen and Jøsang, 2009). Teachers must deal with four different behaviors that influence the group climate (Sørli and Ogden, 2015). Group behavior, which influences the teaching and learning processes. It includes distraction, chattering, disruptive behaviors towards classmates and teachers, etc. (30-60% of students behave this way sometimes or regularly). Social isolation, which includes loneliness, underestimation, depression, and lack of relationships (affects 10-30% of students). Destructive behaviors that spark conflict and manifest themselves through aggression, opposition, violations of classroom

rules and norms of behavior (12-30%). Transgressions and behaviors bordering on deviance are the most serious cases of bullying, theft, violence, truancy, etc. (1-2%).

Children with aggressive behavior have a strong social interest but don't know how to express it (desire for leadership, inability to negotiate, imposing their own thoughts, risk of exclusion from the group and therefore frustration). They have a strong need for self-affirmation (a place in class, a friend). They have a strong need to be seen (controlling the group, imitating adults, challenging adults, jealousy of a sibling, and rejection of peers).

With these students (specific educational needs), it is necessary to adapt the teaching and content of the various subjects. They can become more reasonable and responsible when they feel part of a group that cares about them, values their presence, and boosts their self-esteem. (Norwich and Lewis, 2001).

Among student problem behaviors we can mention: emotional instability, sudden temper tantrums, systematic failure to respect rules, use of bullying and threats, denial of aggressive behavior, challenging attitudes toward the teacher. It is a good idea for the teacher to: be available in relationships with the student but be firm about aggressive behavior, help manage their emotions, help manage conflicts and work on social skills, present different behavior models that allow them to break down stereotypical behavior, agree, when possible, with the family, on some goals to work on in agreement between the school and the family.

The teacher should avoid: getting angry, yelling, constantly threatening, constantly countering an oppositional attitude with the same oppositional style. (Lulla, Mascarenhas, How and Yeleswarapu, 2019).

Hanley, Iwata and McCord (2003) emphasize what are the students' motivations: attention (the behavior aims to draw attention to itself), tangible reward (the undesirable behavior aims to obtain a concrete gratification, a desired object), escape (the dysfunctional behavior allows one to escape and avoid an unpleasant activity), sensory stimulation (the behavior satisfies sensory needs, e.g., increased movement during boring activities).

If a student helps a classmate in need and is praised for this behavior, it is more likely that the student will behave in the same way in the future, under similar circumstances. According to Del Vecchio, Crosland and Fuller (2024) there are several reinforcers: social (receiving attention, encouragement, compliments), dynamic (access to rewarding activities as a consequence of appropriate behavior), symbolic (reward stamps, tokens, smileys that, once accumulated, are exchanged for tangible rewards or give the right to some dynamic reinforcer). Self-reinforcers are those that a person gives himself, such as self-praise, self-approval, a sense of satisfaction and personal success. If the goal is to weaken or eliminate undesirable behaviors and ensure that students learn to replace them with appropriate ones, then we must address the consequences of the behavior by rewarding those behaviors that are conducive to learning and constructive participation in classroom life.

Problematic behaviors that a student displays with the specific intent of drawing the teacher's or classmates' attention (e.g., acting like a „clown”, interrupting, making inappropriate comments) can be addressed simply through strategic ignore, that is, by acting as if nothing had happened. Obviously, in this case, other students should also cooperate by refraining from reacting to their classmate's behavior. When strategic ignore is implemented, a worsening of the problematic behavior is to be expected, at least for a few days, as the student will test the teacher and classmates to try to get the attention he

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or she was accustomed to. If consistent practice is maintained, after a couple of weeks, you should see a substantial decrease in the ignored behavior.

This procedure involves giving the student symbolic reinforcements (reward stickers) following the occurrence of desirable behaviors. The reward stickers can be glued to a special card given to the student, and at the end of a certain period of time, such as a week, the stickers earned will entitle the student to a specific reward, which usually consists of a pleasant activity. For this procedure to achieve the desired results, it is essential to adhere to the following criteria: include no more than three types of behavior to be targeted and clearly specify to the student what is expected of him or her; work with the student to compile a „menu” of rewards, assigning them a point value (for example, spending half an hour watching a video = 10 stickers).

Rewarding is neither too difficult, nor too easy with highly impulsive and hyperactive students, the method only works if the earned stamps can be exchanged and converted into rewards within a short period of time. No hyperactive student will strive to achieve something that is far away. So at the end of the morning, the student will count the stamps and, based on how much they have earned, will receive a voucher indicating the reward they have won.

A more sophisticated and detailed way to apply the token economy procedure involves giving the student a certain number of reward points, stamps, or tokens every morning at the start of class. The intervention involves administering a penalty (the loss of points or stamps) when certain previously specified undesirable behaviors occur: shouting, disturbing others, insulting a classmate. At the end of the morning, the remaining points or stamps will be counted and the student will be given a bonus based on the remaining points. Before applying the procedure, a menu of rewards will be developed with the student, which he or she will receive based on the points he or she manages to keep.

Time-out has proven to be an effective procedure for reducing the frequency of inappropriate behavior. It involves the suspension of any reinforcing agent and requires an agreement with the student. There are several variations: activity time-out (the student is prevented from continuing an activity they enjoy, but is allowed to observe it). For example, if they misbehave during a game, they are asked to leave and can watch the others continue; time-out from all stimuli: the student is placed alone, not in a particularly pleasant or frightening place. The time-out can generally last five to ten minutes. Activity time-out and all stimuli time-out are preferable to isolation time-out (removing the student from the classroom for an unspecified period of time). It's essential to counterbalance time-out with subsequent positive attention to the student, whether through conversation, praise, or increased interaction. The best results are achieved when both positive encouragement and time-out are used.

Behaviors for which time-out is appropriate: hyperactive behaviors related to aggressive or destructive acts. Behaviors for which time-out is contraindicated and should not be used: not doing homework, failing at something, keeping notebooks in disarray, being distracted, daydreaming, isolation, wanting to be alone, irritability, bad mood, touchiness, hyperactive behaviors (use time-out only for aggressive or destructive acts), shy behaviors due to fear, being dependent, shy, or passive.

According to Ray, Phillips and Weir (1993), teachers should ask frequent questions, highlight critical parts of the information given (e.g., „This is something you need to pay attention to...”), present information through different sensory modalities (e.g., visual, auditory, written, drawing), provide frequent reinforcement, use novel

stimuli frequently, check whether the student knows what to do, teach the student how to organize and plan the activity, explain how to self-monitor, teach the subgoals, reinforce achieved subgoals, provide recurring reminders (visual and verbal).

According to Stoian (2024:213): „Therefore, students/ learners feel the need to be independent, to try to learn on their own. This new tendency should take into account that foreign languages need special filters for the abundance of online information. To learn, for example, English grammar is a process that requires a teacher who is able to find the right sources and to guide the learner in a correct direction.”

Conclusions

Teachers can manage difficult situations in the classroom following several rules for effective discipline: set a few clear and unambiguous rules of behavior, set only necessary rules, give orders and don't ask rhetorically, state orders only once, set a time limit on the rules, avoid punishing the student for everything, ignore mildly disruptive behavior, reward the student when he or she displays positive behavior, anticipate consequences in a calm emotional tone, encourage the repetition and generalization of the system of rules.

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Article Info

Received: November 02 2025

Accepted: November 17 2025

How to cite this article:

Scorțan, D. (2025). *Managing difficult situations in the classroom: act or react?.* *Revista de Științe Politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques*, no. 88, pp. 111-120.



ORIGINAL PAPER

Understanding colors in finance - The impact of Green, Blue and Black Finances on sustainable economic growth

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Abstract:

The main aim of this paper is to provide a literature survey of Green, Blue and Black finance and their implications on sustainable development, financial markets and economic growth. This extensive conceptual analysis highlights topics of great current interest. A low-carbon economy represents a global challenge given the dramatic consequences of climate change. Green finance and implicitly blue finance are focused on achieving sustainable economic growth. The environmental sustainability is considering the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

Keywords: *Green finance, Blue finance, Black finance, blue economy, economic growth, sustainable development, climate change, renewable energy, environmental sustainability*

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Introduction

The three important pillars of sustainability are as follows: economic sustainability, social sustainability and environmental sustainability. Green finance makes a major contribution to sustainable development and economic growth considering the preservation of limited natural resources and renewable energy investments. The concept of green finance has the meaning that it represents financial structures used to protect the environment such as limited and exhaustible natural resources. The environmental performance criteria are essential in evaluating green finance instruments. Green finance policies must be integrated in an optimal manner so that ESG performance factors are also taken into account for implementing strategies based on environmental protection, social responsibility and sustainable economic growth.

On the other hand, natural resources are renewable or non-renewable. Green finance also focuses on an innovative approach based on green technologies. A series of optimized financial instruments includes the following: green investments, green credit, green bonds, green banks and many others. Sustainable Development Goals also known as SDGs constitute a very effective approach to achieving sustainable development and economic growth. For instance, green banking, green financial technology, carbon credits, carbon pricing instruments or other carbon market instruments play a crucial role in underpinning green finance policies.

On the other hand, green finance is essential in the context of a low carbon economy that aims for environmental sustainability. Moreover, climate change is a phenomenon with devastating effects that cannot be ignored, but optimal solutions can be identified to achieve sustainable development. Green finance provides financing and funds channeled towards green technologies and renewable energy projects whose main purpose is to reduce carbon dioxide emissions level, such as the greenhouse gas emissions.

The concept of blue finance represents investments of capital or financing the blue economy. Blue finance is focused on ocean and marine-friendly activities and other sustainable projects that are intended to protect aquatic ecosystems. Blue finance is actually perceived as a niche area within green finance.

Literature review - An international perspective on the concepts of Green finance

Jiang et al. (2025) have investigated the impact of blue finance on marine fisheries economy based on a case study for China. Marine fisheries includes certain key aspects such as: economic development of coastal marine areas and other specific areas, boosting growth in the maritime sector, contributions to ensuring maritime sovereignty, highlighting support in increasing the income and living standards of seafarers, fishermen and other workers in the maritime sector, diversifying and increasing the quality of the specific culinary sector based on products specific to the aquatic environment (marine, oceanic etc.). Moreover, another important aspect is represented by marine environmental quality and the multiple implications for the blue economy.

Xing et al. (2024) investigated the linkage between sustainable development, economic growth, the implications of green finance and environmental issues focused on degeneration process for a very long time frame starting from 1985 to 2021 based on panel data series. Zournatzidou (2025) examined the nexus between green finance and sustainable development from a socially and environmentally responsible perspective. Moreover, the linkage between green financing and fintech can lead to significant performance in terms of ESG criteria, such as Environmental, Social, Governance factors.

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Birau and Popescu (2025) have conducted a comprehensive review of the specialized literature on the nexus between green finance, climate finance, but also energy finance given the implications for economic growth and sustainable development. Aaliya et al. (2024) have conducted a research study on Green Human Resource Management also known as GHRM and its impact on green economics and organizational performance sustainability. Moreover, Awais-E-Yazdan et al. (2024) have analyzed green HRM customs considering green technologies and environmental sustainability.

Ramos Farroñán et al. (2025) investigated the impact of green finance on renewable energy investments in the case of emerging economies by examining certain studies from the existing literature using PRISMA 2020 statement guidelines. Green finance instruments are very useful in achieving sustainable development through the use of renewable energy. In addition, Krastev et al. (2024) also investigated the effect of green finance on sustainable development based on a bibliometric analysis while considering ESG factors influence.

Yardımcı and Oskay (2025) developed a research study focused on the emerging economy of Turkey and analyzed the relationship between green finance, environmental sustainability and low-carbon economies in the context of financial globalization. Furthermore, Liu et al. (2024) have conducted a research study and investigated the nexus between green finance, corporate ESG performance, green sustainable development and economic uncertainty strategies. The opinion was that green finance can be defined as the process of conformation and accommodating the balance between “*economic growth and environmental preservation*”, while considering that there is important to highlight “*high-quality economic advancement to balance economic progress and environmental advantages*”.

International Finance Corporation or IFC as part of the World Bank Group investigated relevant aspects on green finance highlighting the diversity of conceptual approaches and the lack of rigorous estimates regarding the growth of this segment of finance. Moreover, many project-level perspectives were revealed that do not ensure high accuracy and rigor regarding the size of the green finance sector and its implications for economic growth. It is important to measure green finance flows accurately but also considering data availability (IFC, 2025).

On the other hand, environmental, social, and governance factors also known as ESG play an essential role in the foundation of green finance approach. The integration process of green finance highlighted a new direction towards achieving a sustainable economic growth based on renewable energy and cleaner energy investments. Efficient energy based-technologies are focused on clean energy systems and renewable sources of energy.

According to the official website of the United Nations, the definition of renewable energy is the following, such as an “energy derived from natural sources that are replenished at a higher rate than they are consumed”, like for instance Sunlight, but also the wind power. Moreover, the United Nations argued that non-renewable resources such as fossil fuels are much more harmful and polluting because they cause carbon dioxide or CO₂ emissions. It is important to mention that carbon dioxide represents the main greenhouse gas generated by human activities which cause the global climate changes (United Nations, 2025).

Disseminating the concept of Blue finance

The International Finance Corporation (IFC) as a member of the World Bank Group provided the Guidelines for Blue Finance, as even version 2.0, and defined the concept of blue finance as: “*a thematic subcategory of green and sustainable finance*” considering it an essential factor to guarantee “*the regeneration, protection, and sustainable use of oceans and water resources*” (ICF, 2025). The demand for blue financing instruments registers significant increases globally.

The extreme weather events causes increasing losses and damages in recent times, continuously worsening and intensifying due to pollution, irresponsible or illegal logging and deforestation, but also irrational consumption of limited natural resources. The economic well-being of the population depends on the way of managing the blue finances regarding the resources of the seas and oceans, the marine coastal and the related beaches and areas. Moreover, water resources are also very important in the context of very serious climate changes which affects implicitly the marine conservation process.

Renewable energy is increasingly perceived as a viable solution to extreme events caused by increasingly abrupt and unpredictable climate change. Ullal et al. (2024) examined the relationship between green energy and artificial intelligence considering the importance of renewable energy systems and green technologies.

The official website of the United Nations highlighted certain main sources of renewable energy such as:

- Solar energy
- Wind energy
- Geothermal energy
- Hydropower
- Ocean energy
- Bioenergy (United Nations, 2025).

Shiiba et al. (2022) have conducted a research study focused on ocean conservation and suggested that blue finance represents „*a crucial tool to ensure ocean sustainability, aligned with economic growth*” considering the considerable risks generated by accentuated climate changes and human-generated pollution. Some researchers (Jiang et al., 2025) identify certain limitations regarding the existing literature on blue finance, namely the fact that is based only on the “*meaning of blue finance and its promotion of the marine economy*”.

On the other hand, eco-friendly or environmentally friendly sources are essential in ensuring economic, social and environmental sustainability, including a sustainable blue economy. Shiiba et al. (2022) defines blue finance as “*financial instruments or investments that ensure the conservation of the ocean environment, related resources, and boosts the blue economy*” taking into account the preservation of oceanic resources and the conversion into sustainable economic growth. Practically, we can identify certain financial instruments characteristic for the blue economy, such as the following: blue loans and blue bonds those that also focus on reducing the level of pollution and the effects on climate change.

Conceptual approach regarding Black finance

In general, the term black finance has a negative connotation, referring to illicit activity such as money laundering or other illegal financial activities. Another dimension of black finance concerns the terrorism financing which has very serious implications considering the connection with terrorist organizations and the provision of money and

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other financial assets or financial support in this regard. However, implementing sustainable strategies regarding anti-money laundering, preventing terrorism and counter-terrorism enforcement financing should be a priority in order to reduce illegal actions based on black finances.

Alami and Guermond (2022) defined money in a very original but radical manner such as “*the most supreme and abstract incarnation of wealth and class power*”. MacKenzie (2005) analyzed particular aspects regarding the concept of black box in finance which is perceived as being defined as follows “*devices, practices, or organizations that are opaque to outsiders*” considering the fact that it has much more technical and complex characteristics. In addition, Hassan et al. (2023) investigated the implications of financial distress on an emerging economy considering corporate and business financial obligations.

Masciandaro et al. (2007) investigated the concept of black finance with increased interest being given to the implications caused by money laundering activities. In other words, black finance contributes significantly to the process by which the so-called dirty money are subject to the action of transformation into clean money. The phenomenon of money laundering is a global problem with very extensive ramifications, which significantly affects financial markets, including the banking sector.

Benson (2025) have conducted a research study on black finance such as illicit finance considering its numerous negative effects on financial markets and the banking sector. A key role in the research that was carried out is played by activities violating the legal framework, namely terrorism financing and money laundering. In addition, increased attention must be paid to economic criminality generated by tax evasion and financial fraud.

Conclusions

The existing literature is in continuous development, considering the innovative concepts and profound implications in the context of the global economy. Environmental sustainability is based on green finance, implicitly on blue finance. The environmental degradation is a significant cause in new green technological developments aimed at protecting the environment in a sustainable manner. Furthermore, renewable energy sources are characterized by a tremendous potential in terms of achieving ecological, social and economic sustainability objectives.

A sustainable economy represents a significant challenge in the context of current climate change, which is continuously dynamic and worsening due to pollution. Green financing represents a significant resource in achieving economic growth and sustainable development. Moreover, green and blue finance strategies must be integrated including through the use of environmentally friendly investments. Marine and ocean sustainability is a huge challenge in the current period considering the significant risks, but it can be achieved on the basis of blue financing. On the other hand, the impact of black finance is very harmful on sustainable economic development, affecting economic sectors due to money laundering, economic crimes, terrorism financing.

Authors' Contributions:

The authors contributed equally to this work.

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Article Info

Received: November 01 2025

Accepted: November 18 2025

How to cite this article:

Birau, R., Popescu, V. (2025). *Understanding colors in finance - The impact of Green, Blue and Black Finances on sustainable economic growth*. Revista de Științe Politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques, no. 88, pp. 121-127.



ORIGINAL PAPER

Analysis of the general regulations on cases in which the carrier may limit, exclude or exonerate liability in the contract for the carriage of goods

Cristina Stanciu¹⁾

Abstract:

The Romanian Civil Code expressly stipulates that the carrier cannot exclude or limit its liability except in the cases provided by special laws or its own provisions.

Regarding the cases of limitation of the carrier's liability, Article 1989 of the Civil Code establishes a general rule: compensation cannot exceed the amount set by special law. Concerning the exclusion of liability, Article 1991 of the Civil Code enumerates several situations in which the liability of the goods carrier for loss, alteration, or damage is excluded: acts related to the loading or unloading of the goods, if carried out by the sender or the recipient; lack or defectiveness of packaging, if it was not observable from the exterior by the carrier; shipment under an inappropriate, inaccurate, or incomplete designation of goods that are excluded from transport or permitted only under certain conditions; natural events inherent in transport in open vehicles; the nature of the transported goods, if it exposes them to loss or deterioration through breakage, cracking, spontaneous internal alteration, and others.

The current Civil Code, through Article 1990, provides for cases where the carrier's liability is aggravated: if the carrier acted with intent or gross negligence, they will be liable for damages without benefiting from the limitations or exemption from liability.

The carrier's civil liability is engaged when the general conditions of liability are cumulatively met. The causes that exclude the carrier's liability may refer to: the unlawful nature of the act, the causal link, or the fault of the author, or equally, both causality and fault. The causes that remove the unlawful nature of the harmful act in the transport contract include: necessity, the fulfilment of a legal duty, or a lawful order given by a competent authority, and the victim's consent. The causes that exclude the existence of a causal link include: force majeure, fortuitous events, the act of a third party, and the act of the victim.

Keywords: *exoneration from liability, aggravation of liability, carrier.*

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General analysis of the provisions of the Romanian Civil Code on the contract for the carriage of goods concerning the exonerating circumstances applicable to the carrier. Such an analysis, intended to provide an overview of the grounds for exemption from liability available to the carrier, must proceed on two levels: first, *the exonerating circumstances laid down by statute* which establish situations of exemption for the carrier; and second, *the situations in which the carrier may contractually exclude or limit liability* in the contract for the carriage of goods, namely the non-liability clauses that are permitted for the carrier under the current legislative framework.

Exonerating circumstances regulated by statute in the field of the contract for the carriage of goods. In transport law, the grounds for exemption from liability are not addressed exhaustively, in the sense that the Civil Code provisions governing the contract for the carriage of goods deal with the “exclusion of liability” of the carrier (Romanian Civil Code: Article 1991), but do not encompass all situations that release the carrier from liability. The Code itself, through its own clarifications, acknowledges this by referring, for the purpose of supplementing its rules in this area, to special legislation and to exonerating circumstances also provided for in other Civil Code provisions concerning the contract for the carriage of goods. In support of the foregoing, Article 1991(1)(i) of the Civil Code stipulates that the carrier is not liable where the loss or deterioration occurred due to any other circumstance provided for by special legislation than those expressly mentioned in the Code, and Articles 1959 and 1988 of the Civil Code likewise lay down situations in which the carrier is exempt from liability.

If we take stock of the legal norms governing the carrier’s exemption from liability as provided in the Romanian Civil Code, we observe that the articles expressly regulating it are: Article 1991 of the Civil Code, Article 1959 (2) of the Civil Code and Article 1988 (2) of the Civil Code. To these are added, by way of exclusion, the situations in which liability lies with the consignor or the consignee, where the latter has adhered to (acceded to) the contract of carriage. Some of these situations are also listed among the cases enumerated in Article 1991 of the Civil Code (loss or deterioration resulting from lack of, or defective, packaging – Article 1966 of the Civil Code; inaccurate or incomplete declarations, omissions in the transport documents, the inherent vice of the goods which led to their deterioration – Article 1961 (3) of the Civil Code), while others are not enumerated in the provisions of that article: the rules on countermand, such as the provisions of Article 1973 (2) of the Civil Code, which state that a consignor who has issued a countermand is obliged to pay the carrier, as the case may be, the price for the part of the carriage performed, the fees due and the expenses caused by complying with the subsequent instruction, and to compensate the carrier for any loss suffered; the provisions of Article 1996 of the Civil Code concerning the carriage of dangerous goods, establishing that a consignor who fails to inform the carrier in advance of the dangerous nature of the goods is liable to compensate the carrier for any damage caused by them and to cover the related costs and risks; the provisions of Article 1997 of the Civil Code regulating the consignor’s liability in the carriage of goods, stipulating that the consignor must compensate the carrier for damage caused by the nature or inherent vice of the goods.

Accordingly, the article devoted to the exclusion of the carrier’s liability, namely Article 1991 of the Civil Code, provides that the carrier is not liable if the total or partial loss or the deterioration/damage occurred due to:

- a) acts related to the loading or unloading of the goods, where such operation was carried out by the consignor or the consignee;
- b) the absence of, or defective, packaging, where such defect could not be observed upon receipt of the goods for carriage from their outward appearance;
- c) consignments under an inappropriate, inaccurate or incomplete description of goods excluded from carriage or admitted to carriage only under certain conditions, as well as the consignor's failure to comply with the safety measures prescribed for the latter;
- d) natural events inherent in carriage in open vehicles, where, under special legislation or the contract, the goods must be carried in that manner;
- e) the nature of the goods carried, where this exposes them to loss or damage by crumbling, breaking, rusting, spontaneous internal alteration and the like;
- f) loss of weight, regardless of the distance travelled, where, and to the extent that, the goods carried are of a kind which by their nature normally suffer such loss solely by reason of carriage;
- g) the inherent risks of carrying live animals;
- h) the fact that the consignor's servant or agent accompanying the goods during carriage failed to take the measures necessary to ensure their preservation;
- i) any other circumstance provided for by special legislation.

If it is established that the loss, damage or deterioration could have arisen from one of these causes, it is presumed that the damage was caused by that cause. Accordingly, for the exonerating cause to operate, the occurrence of that cause and the existence of damage must be proven. It is not necessary to prove the specific causal link—namely, that the concrete damage was the result of the invoked exonerating cause—because there operates a rebuttable presumption that the damage was produced by that cause.

The same article, at paragraph (3) of the Civil Code, provides that the carrier is exonerated from liability if it proves that the total or partial loss or the deterioration or damage occurred due to: an act committed intentionally or negligently by the consignor or the consignee, or to the instructions given by either of them; force majeure; or the act of a third party for whom the carrier is not liable. Furthermore, Article 1959(2) of the Civil Code, concerning delay, provides that the carrier's liability is excluded if the damage resulted from a fortuitous event or from force majeure.

The Civil Code regulation in this area has been criticised in the legal literature not only because it does not cover the full spectrum of facts leading to exoneration from liability, but also because it is a scattered regulation across different sections on the contract of carriage and because the references it contains in Article 1991 of the Civil Code concern only loss and damage, not delay in carriage. Thus, it has been argued in the literature (Baiaş, Chelaru, Constantinovici, Macovei, 2012: 1999–2000) that, in fact, the regulation in this article is illustrative in nature and merely groups together exonerating causes that may arise in the event of loss or damage to the goods carried; the statutory text does not constitute a comprehensive enumeration of such causes. Accordingly, there are, in the view of the literature (Cotuțiu, 2015: 145–155), two types of causes that lead to exoneration from liability: causes intrinsic to the contract of carriage, i.e., connected to its performance, and causes extrinsic to the contract, i.e., unconnected with the manner in which the carrier performs the obligations assumed under that contract.

Within the logic of the regulation, the causes intrinsic to the contract of carriage may themselves be distinguished by reference to the author (acts related to loading or unloading the goods, where such operation was carried out by the consignor or the consignee; lack of, or defective, packaging; inaccurate or incomplete declaration of goods

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that are excluded from carriage; the consignor's failure to comply with the safety measures prescribed for such goods; instructions given by the consignor or the consignee; other acts committed intentionally by the consignor or the consignee) and by reference to the nature of the goods, which entails risks in carriage (goods carried in open vehicles where, under special legislation or the contract, the goods must be carried in that manner; goods which, by their nature, are exposed to loss or damage by crumbling, breakage, rusting, spontaneous internal alteration and the like; goods which, by their nature, normally suffer such loss solely by reason of carriage; the inherent risk of transporting live animals).

The causes extrinsic to the contract of carriage, mentioned in the Code, are force majeure and the act of a third party for whom the carrier is not liable.

Accordingly, in order to achieve a comprehensive approach, the regulations of civil law—being the common law for transport law—must be taken into account, and it must be analysed whether those exonerating causes “operate” with respect to the contract of carriage of goods. The carrier's liability regime is dual in nature, consisting of a mix of contractual liability and non-contractual (tort/delict) civil liability, given that the carrier has both the status of a professional and that of a party to the contract of carriage of goods. Thus, in civil law, the identification of exonerating causes is made by reference to the conditions required for liability to arise and the manner in which those conditions are affected: the existence of damage, a wrongful (unlawful) act, a causal link between the wrongful act and the damage, and the fault of the author of the wrongful act. From this analytical perspective, exonerating causes may affect: the unlawfulness of the act, the causal link, or the fault of the author—or, equally, both the causal link and fault.

Under the common law of civil liability, the causes that remove the unlawful character of the harmful act are: self-defence, necessity, performance of a legal duty or a lawful order issued by a competent authority, the victim's consent, and the exercise of a subjective right (Stătescu, Bîrsan, 1994: 183).

As regards the contract of carriage, the relevant causes may concern: necessity, performance of a legal duty or a lawful order issued by a competent authority, and the victim's consent.

Under the common law of civil liability, the causes that exclude the existence of the causal link—also referred to in the legal literature as “exonerating causes of civil liability”—are: force majeure, fortuitous event, the act of a third party, and the act of the victim. These likewise apply to the exoneration of the carrier, a party to the contract of carriage of goods.

Force majeure and fortuitous event. Under the previous regulation—prior to the entry into force of the current Civil Code—the notions of *force majeure* and *fortuitous event* were not defined by statutory texts. The current Civil Code determines their content through the provisions of Article 1351. According to these legal provisions, unless the law provides otherwise or the parties agree to the contrary, liability is excluded where the damage is caused by force majeure or by a fortuitous event. Thus, the rationale for regulating and treating the two notions together lies in the fact that their intervention produces the same effect, while what distinguishes them is the mechanism by which the two events occur.

The current Civil Code regulates force majeure and the fortuitous event in the context of civil liability, stipulating—as noted—that, in the absence of other legal or contractual provisions, these events exclude liability if the damage was caused by them. The definition of force majeure establishes that it refers to any event that is external,

unforeseeable, absolutely irresistible and unavoidable, whereas the fortuitous event is an event that is unforeseeable and could not be prevented by the person who would otherwise be liable. A fortuitous event is one that cannot be foreseen or prevented by the person who would have been called upon to answer if the event had not occurred.

The Code also establishes a relationship between these two events, which share the common effect of excluding liability: if the debtor is exonerated from contractual liability for a fortuitous event, the debtor is likewise exonerated in the case of force majeure, pursuant to Article 1351(4).

The structure of the definitions of these two notions sets out the elements that define them, as well as their common coordinates and distinguishing features.

Accordingly, the conditions that must be met in order to invoke force majeure as a ground for excluding liability are:

1. *Externality of the event* in relation to the activity of the person who would be liable—i.e., an event unconnected with that activity (and, for liability for things or animals, unconnected with the thing or animal in question). Examples include large-scale natural disasters (major earthquakes, tornadoes, large-scale floods), extraordinary social events (wars, revolutions, riots) or epidemics such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. *Unforeseeability of the event*, which, according to the literature (Pop, Popa, Vidu, 2012: 440–445), has a dual valence: unforeseeability of the occurrence of the event and unforeseeability of its consequences. In Romanian usage, synonyms of “imprevizibil” include sudden, unexpected, unanticipated, unforeseen, abrupt; assessment must be made by reference to what is foreseeable and normal. Thus, the event must fall outside normality or regular frequency; it must be extraordinary from this perspective. Hence, summer cloudbursts, landslides characteristic of certain areas, or floods that recur in particular regions are treated as fortuitous events—they could not be foreseen by a person exercising ordinary, customary diligence—but not as force majeure, because in the general state of human knowledge they have a repetitive character in the relevant area.

In connection with unforeseeability and normality, the legal literature has proposed, by analogy, resort to Article 1480 of the Civil Code to determine the extent of the diligence incumbent on the debtor at the time of the event—the reference criterion being that of the diligent owner. Article 1480 of the Civil Code sets the diligence required in the performance of obligations. It provides that a debtor must act with care as if a good owner in managing his or her own property. This standard may be modified only by law or by contract. The provisions of this article apply to all of the debtor’s obligations, and where obligations are performed by a professional, diligence is assessed having regard to the nature of the professional activity. The distinct assessment of a professional’s liability is explained by the fact that the activity must be carried out under the specific legal regime applicable to each type of professional, with maximum diligence and as the effect of rigorous training in the relevant field; accordingly, a professional is expected to have the capacity to prevent potential harm or loss to those who benefit from his or her services. The expertise brought to the activity differentiates the professional from a private individual and requires a standard of conduct assessed more strictly than for a private individual. In most cases, the legal regime governing each profession imposes obligations towards the beneficiary of the professional’s services through ethical rules, and these obligations are incorporated into the professional’s contracts as contractual undertakings towards the client.

Another clarification concerns the relevant moment for assessing unforeseeability: if the event was foreseeable at the time the contract was concluded, there

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is no exoneration from liability; rather, the debtor is deemed to have assumed the contractual risk for that obligation (Terzea, 2024: 499).

3. *Absolute irresistibility and inevitability of the event.* If we ground the analysis in the semantics used by the Code, the adjectives “invincible” and “inevitable” do not admit degrees of comparison, as they already express the highest intensity of the quality—i.e., absolute superlatives. In Romanian grammar, certain adjectives that describe an absolute quality (e.g., “invincibil”) are not gradable. Thus, the formulations “absolutely invincible and unavoidable” used in the Code may be considered pleonastic. The only pleonasms accepted in Romanian are those by which the author/speaker intends to reinforce or emphasise an idea. This reflects the spirit of the Code, namely to underline the importance of this condition and the parameters within which it operates. The absence of the term “absolute” with respect to unforeseeability is, as scholars have noted (Pop, Popa, Vidu, 2012: 441–442), not accidental.

In the literature (Terzea, 2024: 495–496), it has been argued that to these requirements one more should be added—considered unmentioned in the regulation due to its implicit nature—namely that the event must stand in an indubitable causal connection with the debtor’s non-performance of the contractual obligation(s).

Accordingly, force majeure will not exclude the carrier’s liability in certain situations: where it intervened after the debtor obliged to perform had been put in default to perform the assumed obligations—that is, after the expiry of the time limit within which, in a contract for the carriage of goods, the carrier was required to deliver the goods to the consignee. The debtor will be exonerated if it is proven that the goods would have perished even if they had been in the creditor’s possession, and also where the very delay is due to force majeure, or where, by contractual clause or agreement, the debtor has assumed liability even for certain cases of force majeure—so-called excepted perils (Scurtu, 2003: 96).

There are, in the assessment of force majeure, intermediate situations: the damage may result from the concurrence of force majeure and a fortuitous event, or from the concurrence of force majeure and other circumstances. The solutions will be dictated by the facts and by the applicable regulation. Thus, where the damage results from both force majeure and a fortuitous event, the outcome depends on the legislative solution regarding the fortuitous event: if, in that field, the fortuitous event is exonerating, liability is entirely excluded; if it is not exonerating, then only force majeure exonerates and liability is excluded partially. In the second scenario, the assessment will turn on whether force majeure was determinative, particularly in liability for things or animals: if the thing or animal was merely an instrument that contributed to the damage, exoneration is total; if it concurred alongside a force-majeure event, exoneration is partial (Pop, Popa, Vidu, 2012: 444).

As to procedural aspects, force majeure is invoked by the contractual debtor when damages are sought for non-performance of a contractual obligation; it may be invoked at any time during the proceedings and regardless of the type of obligation—obligation of result or of means. Being a matter of fact, force majeure may be proven by any means of evidence (Terzea, 2024: 502).

In transport law, force majeure exonerates from liability for loss or damage to the goods and for delay in carriage. It is invoked as a ground for excluding liability under Article 1991 (3) of the Civil Code, for loss of or damage to the goods, and under Article 1959 (2) of the Civil Code for delay in carriage.

Fortuitous event. Thus, by reference to the definitions proposed by the Civil Code and to the conditions that must be met in order to invoke force majeure as a ground for excluding liability, the *fortuitous event* differs from force majeure in its mechanism of occurrence, as follows:

1. *Externality of the event* in relation to the activity of the person called to answer is only one possible scenario in which a fortuitous event may intervene. In such a case, the event could not have been foreseen by the person called to answer and could not have been avoided, but the benchmark is that of an ordinarily diligent and prudent person—normal, average—not, as in the case of force majeure, the entirety of human knowledge at that moment. Examples include sudden natural events (low-intensity earthquakes in areas prone to seismic activity; floods during seasons with heavier rainfall; summer cloudbursts, etc.). Unlike force majeure, a fortuitous event may also be *intrinsic*—i.e., connected to the activity of the person called to answer. In cases of liability for things or animals, it may be connected to them. Examples include manufacturing defects, latent defects of a thing, the fright of an animal—thus linked to the nature of the goods or arising in the course of the debtor’s activity or that of the debtor’s agents—and the like (Pop, Popa, Vidu, 2012: 444–445).

2. *Unforeseeability of the event* is the second condition. This must be assessed in context (considering the entire context and circumstances—time, place, social, economic and political conditions) and by reference to the debtor, as regulated by the Civil Code: *the person who would have been called to answer had the event not occurred*. The literature has stated that, in the case of force majeure, we are dealing with a risk affecting people in general, whereas for the fortuitous event it is the risk of the person called to answer (Scurtu, 2003: 93).

In the fortuitous event, one cannot rely on the *absolute irresistibility and inevitability of the event*, because here, in some situations, extraordinary diligence on the part of the debtor—not merely ordinary diligence (which is presumed and therefore does not exonerate)—may avert the event.

Over time, some authors (Cristoforeanu, 1925: 231; Căpățină, Stancu, 2000: 232) have argued that the theoretical distinction regarding the mechanism of occurrence of the two events is not significant, that they may be treated as synonyms, because from a practical perspective they have the same effect and are proven similarly.

In transport law, a fortuitous event in the contract for the carriage of persons does not exonerate from liability; for this reason the Civil Code expressly lists two situations that exonerate the carrier and which have the legal nature of a fortuitous event: the passenger’s state of health and the act of a third party for whom the carrier is not liable. Thus, the rule in the carriage of persons is that the fortuitous event does not exonerate, and the exceptions are the two situations expressly provided by the Code as derogations from the rule.

As regards the carriage of goods, an analysis of the Code’s legal provisions shows that with respect to liability for loss of or damage to goods—where the carrier bears an obligation to preserve the goods—the article devoted to excluding the carrier’s liability does not provide for the fortuitous event as an exonerating cause. In our view, the legislator’s omission of the fortuitous event is not accidental, but rather a way to enhance the carrier’s accountability as a professional who has the technical management of the vehicle, performs a service, and fulfils the obligations assumed under the contract of carriage at its own risk. This legislative intent, noted in the literature (Luntru, 2017) in several respects concerning the legal regime of the professional’s contractual liability, is

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to distinguish the professional's liability from that of a private individual, departing from the classical rules of civil and commercial law, and to create an autonomous law of the professional's liability, with original features and special evaluation criteria on the basis of which its legal nature, specific conditions and foundations may be established.

For delay in the carriage of goods, the Civil Code—under Article 1959 (2)—establishes the fortuitous event as a ground for excluding the carrier's liability. Accordingly, only for delay may the fortuitous event be invoked, not for loss of or damage to the goods. Article 1959 forms part of the General Provisions, and thus applies to both the contract for the carriage of goods and the contract for the carriage of persons.

The act of a third party and the act of the victim. Under Article 1352 of the Civil Code, the act of the victim and the act of a third party exclude liability even if they do not exhibit the characteristics of force majeure but only those of a fortuitous event, however only in cases where, under the law or the parties' agreement, the fortuitous event is an exonerating cause.

In transport law, pursuant to Article 1991 (3) of the Civil Code, the carrier is likewise exonerated from liability if it proves that the total or partial loss or the deterioration or damage occurred due to the act of a third party for whom the carrier is not liable. Thus, the solution follows from the rules governing force majeure and the fortuitous event.

In transport law, the act of a third party excludes the carrier's liability for loss of or damage to the goods only where it meets the characteristics of force majeure, the third party's act being assimilated to force majeure. The act of the creditor—the consignor or the consignee—may exclude the carrier's civil liability in whole or in part. Among the causes intrinsic to the contract of carriage, under the author-related category, the Civil Code lists, in Article 1991 (3), the following situation as a cause for excluding liability: the carrier is not liable if it proves that the total or partial loss or the deterioration or damage occurred due to an act committed intentionally or negligently by the consignor or the consignee, or due to the instructions given by either of them.

For delay in carriage, both force majeure and the fortuitous event exclude liability. In line with Article 1352 of the Civil Code, the act of the victim and the act of a third party exclude liability even if they do not exhibit the characteristics of force majeure but only those of a fortuitous event. Accordingly, for delay, we add—alongside the act of a third party—the act of the consignor.

As regards non-performance of the carriage (Cotuțiu, 2015: 158–159), Article 1992 of the Civil Code regulates liability for the non-performance of carriage and, implicitly, for the damage caused by such non-performance. At a general theoretical level, the Code states only the principle—that the carrier is liable—without addressing either the method for calculating the damage or the causes that exclude the carrier's liability. Consequently, the rules of common law will apply to both aspects, and the resulting solution as to exonerating causes is as follows: for non-performance of the carriage (as for delay), liability is excluded by force majeure, fortuitous event, the act of the consignor, and the act of a third party for whom the carrier is not liable.

State of necessity. The notion of state of necessity is regulated by Article 20 of the Romanian Criminal Code as a justifying ground that excludes the criminal nature of an act committed in order to save from imminent danger the life, health, bodily integrity, or an important asset of a person, provided that the consequences of the act are not more

serious than those of the initial danger.

Paragraph (2) of Article 20 of the Criminal Code sets out the conditions for a state of necessity:

- a) there is an immediate (imminent) danger;
- b) the danger cannot be averted otherwise;
- c) the danger concerns the life, bodily integrity or health of the author of the act or of another person, or an important asset of the author or another person, or a public interest;
- d) the consequences of the act are not manifestly more serious than those that would have occurred had the danger not been averted.

As regards private law, where a harmful act is committed by a person in a state of necessity, that act lacks the unlawful character required to trigger liability. Article 1361 of the Civil Code regulates the state of necessity, providing that a person who destroys or damages another's property in order to protect himself/herself or his/her property from an imminent danger is obliged to repair the damage caused. Reparation is to be made in accordance with the rules applicable to unjust enrichment. Thus, in this context, there is no total exclusion of liability, but rather liability conditioned by the rules on unjust enrichment. In the same vein, Article 1362 of the Civil Code stipulates that, if the harmful act was committed in the interest of a third party, the injured party may pursue that third party to recover damages, invoking unjust enrichment. The article allows the victim, under certain conditions, to bring an action directly against the third party, in addition to or instead of the author of the act. Accordingly, the action may be brought on the basis of the principle of unjust enrichment, which applies when one person obtains a patrimonial advantage at the expense of another without a legal ground. This principle applies where the harmful act was committed not in the author's direct interest, but in the interest of a third party.

Article 1345 of the Civil Code lays down the principle of unjust enrichment, providing that a person who has been non-culpably enriched to the detriment of another is bound to make restitution up to the limit of his or her enrichment. The conditions that must be met in order to invoke unjust enrichment are: an increase in one person's patrimony; a decrease in another's patrimony; absence of a legal ground for the enrichment; the enrichment must not be the result of a wrongful act by the enriched party; and the action is unavailable where another remedy is open to the injured party (subsidiarity).

Compliance with a legal duty or a lawful order issued by a competent authority. For the purpose of defining the notion of a "lawful order", the Civil Code offers a definition and regulatory approach that has given rise to a series of discussions in the literature. Thus, according to its provisions, namely Article 1364 of the Civil Code, a person is not exonerated from liability for having performed an activity required or permitted by law if he or she could have realised the unlawful character of his or her act. In fact, Article 1364 of the Civil Code establishes that neither a hierarchical superior nor a statute may be relied upon as justification for an unlawful act if the person could have realised the unlawful character of his or her conduct. In other words, one cannot invoke a superior's order to justify an unlawful action.

From a contextual perspective, Article 1364 of the Civil Code forms part of a chapter devoted to civil liability and is defined alongside other provisions such as self-defence and state of necessity.

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On the other hand, the same notion is also defined in the Criminal Code, in Article 21(2) on justifying grounds, as an act provided for by criminal law that is considered justified where it results from the exercise of a right recognised by law or from the fulfilment of a duty imposed by law, subject to compliance with the conditions and limits thereof. Likewise, the fulfilment of a duty imposed by a competent authority is justified, provided that it is not manifestly unlawful.

The study carried out on the structure and content of the Civil Code's definition of the notion of "performance of an activity required or permitted by law", as the regulation is titled, and the comparative analysis of the two definitions have led scholars to conclude that the civil provision can only be applied in harmony with the criminal provision, which is much clearer as to the legal consequences produced in such situations. The civil regulation is considered too vague and, first and foremost, requires a distinction to be drawn between two situations that may lead to different solutions:

1. the situation in which the harmful act is committed in fulfilment of a legal obligation or with the express permission of the law, in which case it will have an unlawful character only where fault can be proven on the part of the person who committed it; and
2. the situation in which the harmful act is committed in the execution of an order given by a superior, in which case the act is unlawful only where that order had a manifestly unlawful character or was executed in a manifestly unlawful manner (Pop, Popa, Vidu, 2012: 430–431).

A further criticism levelled at the civil-law definition is that it refers only to the superior's order and not to the competent public authority in a given field (Baiaş, Chelaru, Constantinovici, Macovei, 2012: 1425). This omission is all the more significant in the field of transport law, where, in most cases, a lawful order issued by a competent authority creates legal consequences for the exclusion of the carrier's liability. One example in this respect is the lawful order concerning "forced wintering" on the Danube, which temporarily halts navigation due to freezing waters, or an embargo, both of which generate consequences for the conduct of transport operations.

Victim's consent. *Clauses excluding liability.* In the literature (Buciuman, 2021) it has been argued that clauses excluding or limiting liability may be placed "in the zone of conflict" between the two major principles governing civil contracts: the principle of freedom of contract and the principle of the binding force of contracts. To harmonise and reconcile these principles, the legislature intervenes to filter the freedom to stipulate clauses that diminish liability, taking as benchmarks public order, the preservation of contractual balance, moral considerations, and concerns regarding substantial economic imbalances between the contracting parties.

In the same vein, Article 1995 of the Romanian Civil Code provides that any stipulation excluding or restricting the liability imposed by law on the carrier shall be deemed unwritten.

Clauses deemed unwritten are null *ipso jure*. The literature (Nicolae, 2012: 27–29) has emphasised that such clauses were recognised in our domestic law under the influence and impetus of EU-level regulations, and are found in the domestic laws of several EU Member States, such as France and Belgium. They are clauses inserted in a juridical act which the legislature treats as non-existent because they run counter to the nature and normal legal effects of that act, and they are automatically replaced by mandatory statutory provisions.

The consignor may nevertheless assume the risk of carriage in the case of damage

caused by packaging or in the case of special consignments that increase the risk of loss of or damage to the goods.

Clauses limiting the carrier's liability. In the sphere of contractual liability, as regards modifications that may be brought to the debtor's liability, two categories of clauses may be stipulated in the contract: clauses that limit liability and clauses that exclude liability.

Clauses limiting liability concern the obligation to make reparation from a quantitative perspective, in that they set an upper threshold on the amount of damages owed by the debtor in case of non-performance. Conventional limitation of the debtor's liability may, however, also operate from a qualitative perspective; in such a case, the clause excludes the very obligation to make reparation for certain categories of damage.

According to the literature (Buciuman, 2021), and in line with the aspects they target—quantitative limitation or qualitative limitation—these clauses ought to bear distinct names. Thus, those aimed at the quantitative criterion, since they affect the amount of compensation owed by the person civilly liable and not the obligation to repair the damage, should be termed *clauses of reduction, mitigation or limitation of reparation*; whereas those aimed at the very obligation should be termed partial exoneration clauses, their effect bearing on the existence of the obligation to make reparation, i.e., on liability itself.

Exemption clauses are those that exclude the existence of the obligation to repair the loss caused by the debtor's non-performance, even where that non-performance is otherwise imputable to the debtor. Such a clause affects one of the conditions for the engagement of civil liability: the damage, the fault, the debtor's act, or the causal link.

Under the former regulation, that of the Commercial Code, two limits were expressly provided and any clause contrary to them was regarded as unlawful. Thus, Article 441 provided for the nullity of stipulations that excluded or limited, in railway transport, the obligations and liabilities of the parties established by the provisions of the Commercial Code, even if permitted by general or special regulations; and Article 430(2) of the Commercial Code provided that, in the event of *dolus* or gross negligence on the part of the carrier, the amount of compensation would be determined under Articles 1084 and 1086 of the former Civil Code, i.e., it would include both *damnum emergens* and *lucrum cessans*. Consequently, a clause exonerating or limiting the carrier's liability for its own fraud (*dolus*) or gross negligence was null, as such a clause would be contrary to good morals and public order. Nevertheless, the creditor could waive compensation—even for loss caused by gross negligence—if the waiver occurred after the date on which the damage arose, since the holder of a right may always renounce its exercise. Such a waiver could be treated as a liberal act (Scurtu, 2003: 105–107).

Under the current regulation of the contract of carriage, the Civil Code, by Article 1959, expressly provides that the carrier may exclude or limit its liability only in the situations provided by law—situations set out in special legislation as well as in the Code itself, through the establishment of general rules governing the limitation, exclusion or aggravation of the carrier's liability. This regulation is regarded as more restrictive than that found in civil law generally, namely Article 1355 of the Civil Code on clauses concerning liability, which prohibits exoneration or limitation for material damage caused intentionally or by gross negligence, but permits clauses that exclude liability for damage caused by mere imprudence or negligence. A declaration of assumption of risk does not equate to a waiver of compensation.

Limiting the amount of compensation. Furthermore, Article 1989 of the Civil

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Code lays down a rule for cases of limitation of the carrier's liability: *compensation may not exceed the amount established by the special law*. The article is therefore an application, in the field of reparation of damage, of the rule of the priority application of special laws; and each mode of transport has, in its specific legislation, its own mechanism for calculating compensation and the limits thereof.

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Article Info

Received: November 01 2025

Accepted: November 17 2025

How to cite this article:

Stanciu, C. (2025). Analysis of the general regulations on cases in which the carrier may limit, exclude or exonerate liability in the contract for the carriage of goods. *Revista de Științe Politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques*, no. 88, pp. 128-140.



ORIGINAL PAPER

The Superiority of Asymmetric Volatility Models: An Empirical Comparison of GARCH-Family Specifications for the Volatility of MSCI Mexico Index

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Abstract:

Financial market volatility is a central component of asset pricing, hedging effectiveness, and systematic risk management. Accurate volatility forecasting is therefore a prerequisite for sound financial decision-making and regulatory compliance. This study addresses the common stylized facts observed in high-frequency financial time series, specifically volatility clustering, leptokurtosis, and the asymmetric impact of news by conducting a rigorous comparative analysis of Generalized Autoregressive Conditional Heteroskedasticity (GARCH) models. The research evaluates the fitting performance of six distinct GARCH specifications, the standard GARCH(1,1), Integrated GARCH (IGARCH), Threshold GARCH (TARCH), Exponential GARCH (EGARCH), Power ARCH (PARCH), and Asymmetric Power ARCH (APARCH) models. These models were applied to a daily log return series of utilizing data spanning over a decade. Crucially, estimation was performed under both the standard Gaussian and the Student's *t* distributional assumptions to account for non-normality.

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Keywords: *MSCI Mexico Index, Asymmetric Volatility, GARCH Models, Time Series Analysis, Leverage Effect*

JEL Classification: C58, G17, G32, C22, G10

Introduction

The modeling and forecasting of financial market volatility is an important concern of modern financial economics, critical for effective risk management, derivatives pricing, and optimal portfolio allocation (Engle, 1982). Asset returns, which are often unpredictable, market volatility, the measure of price uncertainty, exhibit predictable characteristics known as volatility clustering, where periods of high fluctuation are succeeded by further high fluctuation, and periods of followed by periods of calm (Mandelbrot, 1963).

While much research has focused on developed economies, the unique characteristics of emerging markets, such as the Mexican equity market represented by the MSCI Mexico Index, present unique challenges and opportunities. Emerging markets are characterized by weaker market efficiency, higher average returns, and elevated susceptibility to external economic shocks and domestic political volatility (Gokcan, 2000). The volatility dynamics observed in the Mexican market may exhibit higher persistence and more pronounced non-normality than their developed counterparts, necessitating deeper econometric investigation.

This study contributes to the literature by undertaking a comparative analysis of 30 different GARCH-class models applied to the daily logarithmic returns of the MSCI Mexico Index over a comprehensive period from November 2012 to October 2025.

The core objective is not just to select the best-fitting model, but to accurately quantify three critical volatility parameters, the degree of volatility persistence, the magnitude of the leverage effect, and the precise degree of leptokurtosis, or fat tails, in the return distribution. Our analysis ultimately identifies the EGARCH(1,1) model, estimated with a Student's t-Distribution, as the better framework for this specific time series. The Student's t-Distribution is relevant as it accounts for the heavy-tailed nature (leptokurtosis) frequently observed in financial returns, leading to more accurate estimates of conditional Value-at-Risk (VaR) and Expected Shortfall (ES) compared to models based on the assumption of normality (Ardia, 2010).

The empirical findings derived from the model have meaningful implications for financial practitioners. Accurate measures of asymmetric volatility are essential for the appropriate pricing, while a precise estimate of volatility persistence is crucial for long-term risk horizon management and capital requirement calculations. By measuring these effects within the context of the Mexican market, this research provides vital, context-specific insights necessary for making informed investment and hedging decisions in emerging market assets.

Literature review

In the existing literature, the behavior of stock markets has been analyzed based on numerous empirical studies, such as: Khalid et al. (2025), Meher et al. (2024a), Birau et al. (2023), Kumar et al. (2023a), Trivedi et al. (2022), Kumar et al. (2023b), Spulbar et al. (2023a), Siminica and Birau (2014), Meher et al. (2024b), Badarla et al. (2022), Spulbar et al. (2023b) and many others.

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Morales-Bañuelos and Fernández-Anaya (2023) have conducted a research study and investigated certain aspects on the stock market in Mexico considering the characteristics of listed companies based on several econometric models. González-Núñez et al. (2024) investigated the behavior of IPC Mexico stock market index using innovative machine learning algorithm in order to provide a high-accuracy financial forecasting.

Kumar et al. (2023c) have provided an empirical study focused on the IPC Mexico stock market index and the applied econometric models have included the GJR-GARCH model, while the period selected for the empirical analysis is very long, namely from January 1993 to July 2023. Ortiz et al. (2007) examined the nexus between economic growth and emerging stock market performance in Mexico, based on a very long selected interval, namely from the beginning of 1968 to the end of 2002 using various tools of financial econometrics. Lorenzo-Valdés (2024) also investigated the behavior of the stock market in Mexico for the selected time period from 2018 to 2023 using GARCH models.

Financial markets often demonstrate asymmetry, or the "leverage effect," where negative shocks (bad news) lead to a greater increase in future volatility than positive shocks (good news) of the same magnitude, a stylized fact that linear models fail to capture (Nelson, 1991). To address these, the family of Generalized Autoregressive Conditional Heteroskedasticity (GARCH) models has evolved to become the industry standard for time-varying volatility estimation. Since the work of (Engle, 1982) and (Bollerslev, 1986) various extensions, including the Exponential GARCH (EGARCH), Threshold GARCH (TARCH), and Integrated GARCH (IGARCH) models, have been developed to capture specific market features, particularly the leverage effect.

Model selection relied on information criteria, including the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) and the Schwarz Information Criterion (SIC), alongside standard diagnostic tests for model adequacy. The analysis confirmed the time series stationarity and the strong presence of ARCH effects, justifying the use of GARCH-family specifications. The empirical results consistently demonstrated that models estimated under the Student's *t* distribution provided a fit across all tested specifications compared to the Gaussian approach, validating the presence of thick tails in the return data. Furthermore, the asymmetric specifications uniformly outperformed their symmetric counterparts, confirming the existence of a significant leverage effect. The Exponential GARCH (EGARCH) model with Student's *t* innovations emerged as the overall suitable model, exhibiting the lowest AIC and SIC values. The findings underscore the necessity of employing sophisticated, asymmetric GARCH model specifications coupled with heavy-tailed distributional assumptions to accurately capture the dynamic behavior of modern financial market volatility. The robust EGARCH-*t* framework provides important insights for improving forecasting accuracy, which has direct and valuable implications for calculating accurate risk metrics and formulating more effective portfolio hedging and asset allocation strategies.

Research Gap

Scope of the Study

The primary scope of this study is the econometric modeling and analysis of conditional volatility for the daily logarithmic returns of the MSCI Mexico Index over a sample period spanning November 2012 to October 2025. This research moves beyond

static, simplified risk frameworks to precisely capture the complex dynamics inherent in emerging market equities.

The core objective is a comparative evaluation of 30 distinct GARCH-class models (including GARCH, IGARCH, TARCH, and EGARCH) estimated across three conditional error distributions (Normal, Student's t , and GED). The study selects the optimal model based on minimizing information criteria (AIC/SIC) and maximizing Log Likelihood. The analysis focuses the degree of volatility persistence, the magnitude of the leverage effect (asymmetry), and the precise Degrees of Freedom of the return distribution's fat tails. The findings thereby contribute to the literature on time-varying market risk in non-developed economies.

Limitations of the Study

Despite the robustness of the various GARCH frameworks, this analysis is subject to several methodological limitations. The study employs a univariate GARCH approach, focusing solely on the volatility of the MSCI Mexico Index in isolation. This structure omits potential contagion effects and interdependencies with other global markets or major commodity prices, which may bias the risk estimates by excluding significant exogenous drivers.

While the near-unit persistence coefficient suggests extremely slow volatility decay, the use of a standard GARCH-class model may not fully distinguish between high short-term persistence and true long memory. This limitation suggests the need for future exploration using Fractional Integrated GARCH (FIGARCH) models for more accurate long-horizon forecasting. Lastly, the model is based on historical daily closing price data and does not account for intra-day price fluctuations, high-frequency microstructure effects, or the impact of unscheduled news announcements, all of which represent unmodeled sources of instantaneous volatility.

Research Methodology

This study employs a rigorous, multi-stage methodology to model and forecast the volatility of the financial time series (LOG_RETURN) using the Generalized Autoregressive Conditional Heteroskedasticity (GARCH) class of models. The primary goal is to identify the optimal model structure both in the conditional mean/variance specification and the conditional error distribution based on stringent information criteria and comprehensive diagnostic checks.

1. Data and Pre-Analysis

Data Description and Software

The analysis utilizes a LOG_RETURN time series spanning from November 13, 2012, to October 15, 2025, comprising 3,364 observations. All estimations, model selection, and diagnostic tests were conducted using EViews 12.

Unit Root and Stationarity Testing

Prior to modeling, the time series was tested for stationarity using the Augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) test with a constant as an exogenous variable. The null hypothesis of a unit root was overwhelmingly rejected, as the ADF t -statistic of 53.07496 is significantly more negative than the critical value at the 1% level, 3.432106. This confirms the LOG_RETURN series is stationary, making it suitable for direct GARCH modeling.

ARCH Effect Testing

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The presence of Autoregressive Conditional Heteroskedasticity (ARCH) effects was formally tested on the residuals from the mean equation. The ARCH test (Lag 1) yielded an F-statistic of 52.30663 (Prob. 0.0000) and an Obs*R-squared 51.53571 (Prob. 0.0000). The highly significant test statistics compel the rejection of the null hypothesis of no ARCH effects, thus justifying the use of a GARCH-class model to capture the time-varying volatility clustering.

2. Model Estimation and Specification

Conditional Mean and Variance Equations

The general form of the GARCH-class model utilized is:

Equation 1 Conditional and Mean variance Equations

$$\begin{aligned}r_t &= \mu_t + \epsilon_t \\ \mu_t &= c + \phi r_{\{t-1\}} \\ \epsilon_t &= \sigma_t z_t\end{aligned}$$

Where r_t is the LOG_RETURN, μ_t is the conditional mean, ϵ_t is the error term, and σ_t^2 is the conditional variance.

The conditional mean equation for the optimal model was specified as an AR(1) process based on the estimation table for the selected model:

Equation 2 Estimation Equation

$$\mu_t = C + LOG_{RETURN(-1)}$$

GARCH Models and Distributions

To comprehensively capture the complex dynamics of financial volatility, six different GARCH-class models were estimated under three standard conditional error distributions (resulting in 18 model variations). The models included both symmetric and asymmetric specifications:

- Symmetric: GARCH and IGARCH (Integrated GARCH) models.
- Asymmetric (Leverage Effect): TARCH (Threshold GARCH), EGARCH (Exponential GARCH), PARCH (Power ARCH), and APARCH (Asymmetric Power ARCH) models.

The distributions considered to account for the typical leptokurtosis (fat tails) in financial returns were:

- Normal (Gaussian) Distribution
- Student's t-Distribution
- Generalized Error Distribution (GED)

3. Optimal Model Selection

The optimal model was determined by evaluating three goodness-of-fit statistics across all 18 specifications: the Log Likelihood (LL) value, the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC), and the Schwarz Criterion (SIC). The selection rule is to identify the model that maximizes the LL value and minimizes both the AIC and SIC.

Selection Results

The comparative analysis of the model results led to the selection of the EGARCH model with a Student's t-Distribution error structure. This model demonstrated the superior fit:

- Highest Log Likelihood: 9933.173.
- Lowest Akaike Information Criterion (AIC): -5.90141.
- Lowest Schwarz Criterion (SIC): -5.88867.

Optimal Model Specification

The specific volatility equation for the selected EGARCH(1,1) under Student's t-Distribution is the exponential form, which models the log of the conditional variance $\log(\sigma_t^2)$ to inherently ensure non-negativity:

Equation 3 Conditional Variance of EGARCH(1,1) models

$$\log(\sigma_t^2) = C(3) + C(4)\left|\frac{\epsilon_{t-1}}{\sigma_{t-1}}\right| + C(5)\frac{\epsilon_{t-1}}{\sigma_{t-1}} + C(6)\log(\sigma_{t-1}^2)$$

The C(5) coefficient, which captures the leverage effect (asymmetry), was found to be statistically significant with a value of 0.080238 (Prob. 0.0000), confirming that negative shocks have a larger impact on volatility than positive shocks of equal magnitude.

4. Post-Estimation Diagnostic Checks

All estimated models, including the selected optimal model, satisfied the critical diagnostic requirements:

1. GARCH and ARCH Coefficient Significance: All models showed significant ARCH and GARCH coefficients.
2. Residual Autocorrelation: The Ljung-Box Q-statistic (implied by the "Autocorrelation" row) was not significant (i.e., "No" autocorrelation) in the standardized residuals, indicating the mean equation is adequate.
3. No Remaining ARCH Effects: The ARCH LM-Test on the squared standardized residuals was not significant (i.e., "No" ARCH LM-Test), confirming that the conditional variance equation effectively captured the time-varying volatility.

The T-Dist. DOF parameter for the optimal model was 8.180595 (Prob. 0.0000), confirming that the standardized residuals exhibit fat tails and that the Student's t-distribution is a statistically justified choice over the Normal distribution.

Econometric analysis, empirical results, and discussions

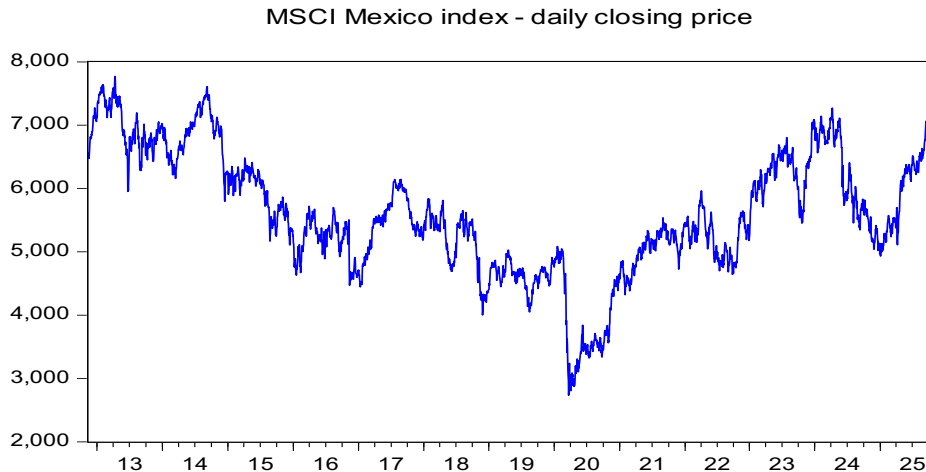


Figure 1 Price Movement of the time Series

Source: Authors contribution using Eviews 12

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The chart illustrates the daily closing prices of the MSCI Mexico index spanning the period from 2012 to 2025. This timeframe reveals significant volatility and distinct cycles, reflecting a challenging decade for the Mexican equity market. We can clearly identify three major phases:

1. Following an initial peak near 7,500 in the 2013-2014 period, the index entered a multi-year decline, falling toward the 4,500 level by 2017. This was followed by a period of relative consolidation between 4,500 and 6,000 until 2018.
2. A severe, sharp drop occurred around the 2019-2020 period, which is visually the non-conventional event on the chart. The index crashed from roughly 5,000 to a low point approaching 2,800, a major shock likely coinciding with global economic upheaval.
3. The index mounted a robust and rapid "V-shaped" recovery from the lows. It quickly climbed back past the 6,000 mark by 2023. The final two years show high recent volatility, with the index attempting to break past the previous long-term high of 7,500 before pulling back to end the period around the 6,500 - 7,000 range.

The persistent spikes and dips, particularly the sharp crash and recovery around 2020, confirm that the MSCI Mexico index exhibits considerable volatility and tail risk typical of emerging markets. The inability of the index to sustain levels above the early 2014 peak until the very end of the period suggests long-term challenges in capital appreciation over this decade. For an investor, this chart highlights that the Mexican market, while offering potential high-return recovery, demands a high-risk appetite and careful management of extreme downside volatility.

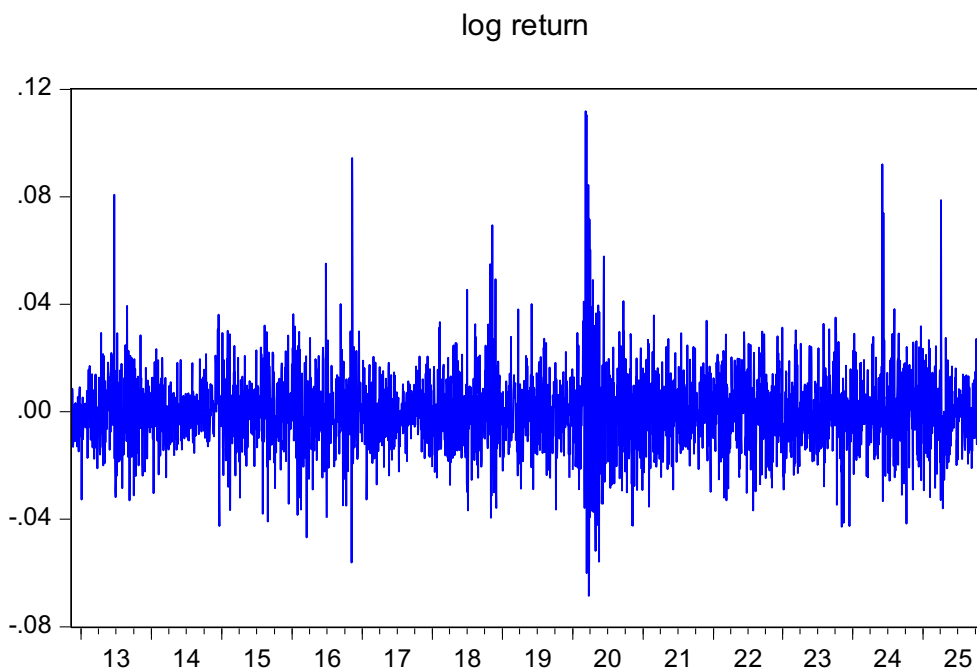


Figure 2 Log Return Plot

Source: Authors contribution using Eviews 12

After having the description of the stock movement, from the Logarithmic Returns chart of the time series, we could make the following observations:

1. The whole return series is moving around 0 mean, typically describing the stationarity. However, we can observe the constant movement of the return series from positive to negative over time, signifying the case of volatility clustering.
2. From 2012 to 2018, the return was around the band of positive and negative 0.04, marking relative stability. From 2019 to 2020, we have observed both the highest i.e., positive 0.12 and negative 0.08, confirming a highly volatile phase with shocks, as also evident from the Price Plot. However, from 2020 to 2025, the volatility was stabilized, but it did not return to the levels around early 2019.

Now after understanding the log returns plot along with actual price plot, to proceed further checking stationarity statistically using Augmented-Dickey Fuller Test (ADF) is mandatory for any econometric analysis.

Table 1 ADF Test using Eviews 12

Null Hypothesis: LOG_RETURN has a unit root				
Exogenous: Constant				
Lag Length: 0 (Automatic - based on SIC, <u>maxlag=28</u>)				
			t-Statistic	Prob.*
Augmented Dickey-Fuller test statistic				
Test critical values:				
	1% level		-3.432106	
	5% level		-2.862201	
	10% level		-2.567166	
*MacKinnon (1996) one-sided p-values.				

Source: Authors contribution using Eviews 12

This test was run with a constant term included in the test equation, and based on the Schwartz Criterion, the lag was automatically chosen as 0. The t-statistic value was significantly lower than the critical value at 5% level, and the probability was also significantly lower than 0.05; hence we reject the null hypothesis and confirm that the LOG_RETURN has a non-unit root and it is stationary in nature.

After confirming that the Log Returns data is stationary in nature, along with observation of the original series, understanding the nature of the distribution along with the descriptive statistics, becomes important.

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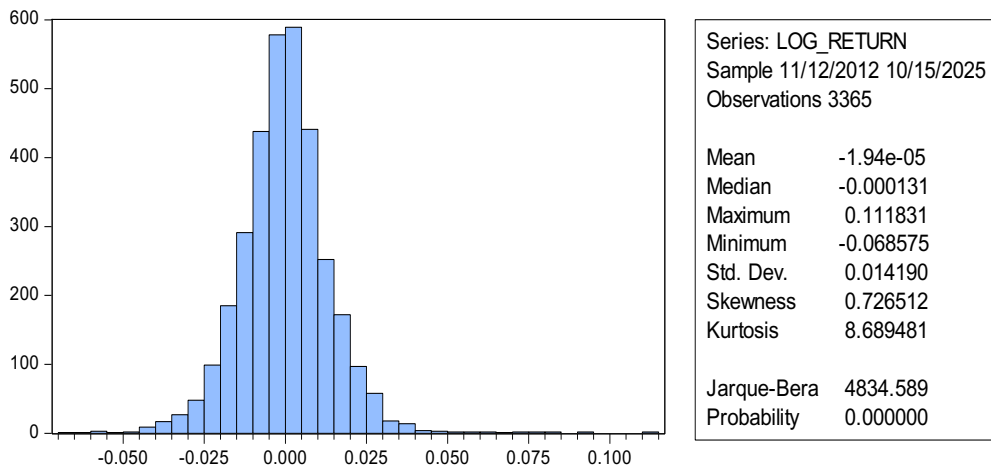


Figure 3 Descriptive Statistics using Eviews12

Source: Authors contribution using Eviews 12

The log returns have a mean of nearly 0, and similarly median is also very close to 0. From the Standard deviation, we can figure out that the average daily volatility is approximately 1.42% and there is also a huge gap in the extreme values, i.e., 0.111831 and -0.068575. The series has a right skewness with a longer right tail, with a value of 0.726512. The data also seems to be leptokurtic, having fat tails and a high peak with value 8.689481. From the Jarque-Bera Probability it is confirmed that the data is non-normal. After the confirmation of Stationarity and description of the distribution, let's look at the ARCH test for the confirmation of Heteroskedasticity.

Table 2 ARCH LM Test Using Eviews 12

<u>Heteroskedasticity Test: ARCH</u>			
<u>F-statistic</u>	52.30663	Prob. F(1,3361)	0.0000
<u>Obs*R-squared</u>	51.53571	Prob. Chi-Square(1)	0.0000

Source: Authors contribution using Eviews 12

From the statistics above test results, we strongly reject the null hypothesis of no ARCH effects, confirming that the conditional variance of the residuals is time-varying. It is confirmed that there is a significant presence of ARCH effects (volatility clustering). This result is crucial as it justifies the use of GARCH-class models to accurately capture the time-varying, predictable patterns in volatility. Let's now check various GARCH models across various distributions to find the most suitable model for the analysis.

The model was chosen based on a comprehensive GARCH Model Selection process, which evaluates model performance based on goodness-of-fit criteria and essential diagnostic checks. The results validate the strong presence of asymmetry (leverage effects) in volatility and the necessity of using heavy-tailed distributions to accurately model risk. The EGARCH (Exponential GARCH) model under the Student's

T-Distribution is definitely the optimal specification, chosen based on Log Likelihood (Highest) 9933.173, Akaike Info Criterion (Lowest)-5.90141, Schwarz Criterion (Lowest)-5.88867, and it minimizes both information criteria and maximizes the likelihood function across all tested combinations. The superior performance of the EGARCH model implies that asymmetry is a significant feature of the time series' volatility. The data confirms that the assumption of normally distributed errors is inadequate for this financial series as for every single GARCH-class model (GARCH, TARCH, etc.), the Student's T and Generalized Error distributions yield a higher Log Likelihood and lower AIC/SIC than the Normal Distribution. The best normal model (EGARCH, LL: 9863.834) is outperformed by the best T-model (EGARCH, LL: 9933.173) by a large margin.

This empirical evidence supports the need to use heavy-tailed distributions to accurately capture the leptokurtosis (fat tails) and the higher probability of extreme events observed in the returns. The diagnostic check for autocorrelation in the standardized residuals is "No" for all models. This confirms that the conditional mean equation is sufficient and that the residuals are white noise. The ARCH LM-Test is "No" for all models. This is the most crucial test, confirming that no conditional heteroskedasticity remains in the squared standardized residuals.

Table 3 Results of EGARCH(1,1) model

Dependent Variable: LOG_RETURN				
Method: ML ARCH - Student's t distribution (Marquardt / EViews legacy)				
Date: 10/21/25 Time: 22:22				
Sample (adjusted): 11/13/2012 10/15/2025				
Included observations: 3364 after adjustments				
Convergence achieved after 12 iterations				
Presample variance: backcast (parameter = 0.7)				
LOG(GARCH) = C(3) + C(4)*ABS(RESID(-1)/@SQRT(GARCH(-1))) + C(5)*RESID(-1)/@SQRT(GARCH(-1)) + C(6)*LOG(GARCH(-1))				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	z-Statistic	Prob.
C	1.61E-05	0.000198	0.081387	0.9351
LOG_RETURN(-1)	0.082853	0.017110	4.842262	0.0000
Variance Equation				
C(3)	-0.228722	0.038168	-5.992511	0.0000
C(4)	0.095096	0.014456	6.578166	0.0000
C(5)	0.080238	0.010278	7.807087	0.0000
C(6)	0.982124	0.003867	253.9909	0.0000
T-DIST. DOF	8.180595	0.831398	9.839561	0.0000
R-squared	0.007728	Mean dependent var		-1.83E-05
Adjusted R-squared	0.007433	S.D. dependent var		0.014192
S.E. of regression	0.014139	Akaike info criterion		-5.901411
Sum squared resid	0.672081	Schwarz criterion		-5.888674
Log likelihood	9933.173	Hannan-Quinn criter		-5.896856
Durbin-Watson stat	1.984424			

Source: Authors contribution using Eviews 12

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The results confirm the statistical significance of both the mean and variance equations, providing the numerical values necessary for interpreting volatility dynamics. The conditional mean of the LOG_RETURN is modeled as an AR(1) process (LOG_RETURN(-1)). The constant C is not statistically significant (Prob. > 0.05). The average return is effectively zero. The LOG_RETURN(-1) has a coefficient of 0.082853 is highly significant. The positive coefficient indicates a small degree of momentum or autocorrelation in the returns. The variance equation captures the time-varying volatility dynamics. All variance coefficients are highly significant (Prob. 0.0000), confirming the existence of strong GARCH effects.

The variance equation could be interpreted as follows:

Table 4 Variance Equation Estimation

Variable	Coefficient Value	Interpretation
C(3) (Constant/Omega, ω)	-0.228722	Highly Significant. This term represents the long-run average level of the log-conditional variance. Its significance confirms that a base volatility level exists.
C(4) (ARCH Effect, α)	0.095096	Highly Significant. Measures the reaction of current volatility to the magnitude of past squared shocks (bad news or good news).
C(5) (Leverage/Asymmetry, γ)	0.080238	Highly Significant and Positive. This confirms a strong leverage effect. Negative return shocks (bad news) increase future volatility by more than positive shocks (good news) of the same magnitude.
C(6) (GARCH/Persistence, β)	0.982124	Highly Significant. This value, being very close to 1 (unity), indicates high volatility persistence. Shocks to the market's risk level will take an extremely long time to decay, suggesting the volatility is nearly integrated.

Source: Authors contribution using Eviews 12

Since the estimated DOF (approx 8.18) is far below 30, it statistically confirms the presence of fat tails (leptokurtosis) in the residuals, justifying the superiority of the Student's t-Distribution. Durbin-Watson Stat 1.984424 value is very close to 2, suggesting there is no remaining serial correlation in the standardized residuals of the mean equation.

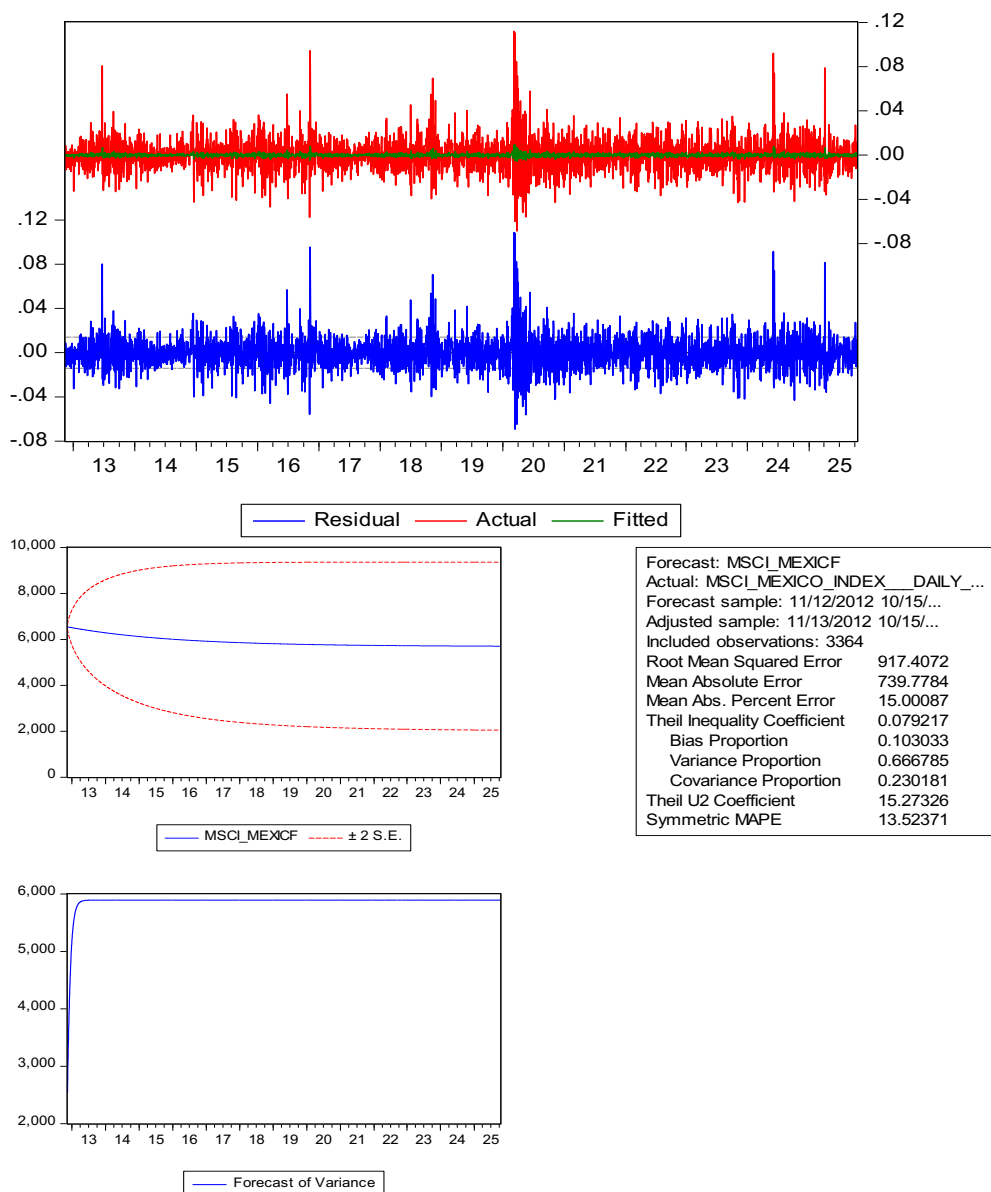


Figure 4 Forecast Evaluation using Eviews 12

Source: Authors contribution using Eviews 12

The chart titled "Residual, Actual, Fitted" visualizes how well the estimated AR(1) mean equation captures the LOG_RETURN series. Actual (Red Line) represents the highly volatile daily log returns, including the large spikes around the 2020 shock. Fitted (Green Line) represents the returns predicted by the AR(1) mean equation. This line is extremely flat, staying close to the zero mean. Residual (Blue Line) represents the error or the difference between the Actual and Fitted returns. The blue line essentially mirrors the red line, demonstrating that the mean equation only captures a small, significant portion of the returns $R\text{-squared} = 0.007728$, leaving the vast majority of the

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dynamics, particularly the volatility clustering, in the residuals. This validates the decision to use a GARCH model on the residuals.

The other chart shows the forecast for the MSCI_MEXICO index price MSCI_MEXICF over the sample period, including the error bands.

- **Forecast Line (Blue Solid Line):** The index forecast remains remarkably flat and stable, settling slightly above the 6,000 level for the entire period. This is expected because the mean return of the underlying LOG_RETURN series is statistically zero (-1.83×10^{-5}). In the long run, a zero mean return implies the index price reverts to a steady, constant level.
- **Confidence Bands (Red Dashed Lines):** The S.E. bands (representing approximately the 95% confidence interval) diverge significantly over time. They begin close together but widen drastically, with the upper band reaching well over 8,000 and the lower band dropping toward 2,000 by the end of the sample. This widening gap is a direct visual representation of the high, persistent volatility ($C(6)=0.982124$) captured by the EGARCH model, indicating high forecast uncertainty.

This bottom chart shows the predicted conditional variance over the sample.

- **Variance Line:** The variance forecast shows a sharp, initial spike and then stabilizes almost immediately to a near-constant, low level. This stability confirms that while the daily returns are volatile (due to the $C(4)$ and $C(5)$ short-term shocks), the model predicts that the long-term conditional variance (risk level) quickly reverts to its base level determined by $C(3)$ and $C(6)$.

The metrics quantify the model's forecasting accuracy for the price index:

- **Root Mean Squared Error (RMSE) (917.4072):** Measures the standard deviation of the forecast errors. A high value is expected due to the extreme volatility and large crash/recovery observed in the actual price series.
- **Mean Absolute Error (MAE) (739.7784):** Measures the average magnitude of the errors.
- **Mean Abs. Percent Error (MAPE) (15.00087):** Indicates that the average forecast error is approximately 15% of the actual price, suggesting that while the long-run trend is captured, short-term daily price forecasts are challenging, which is standard for high-volatility financial time series.
- **Theil Inequality Coefficient (0.079217):** This metric ranges from 0 (perfect fit) to 1. A value closer to zero indicates a good forecast fit. The value of 0.079217 suggests the model has good forecasting power despite the high volatility.

Conclusions, Suggestions, and Recommendations

The comprehensive econometric analysis of the daily logarithmic returns for the MSCI Mexico Index, utilizing 3,364 observations and the EViews 12 platform, established a robust and non-standard profile of market risk. Preliminary checks confirmed the series' suitability for modeling, starting with an overwhelmingly significant Augmented Dickey-Fuller t-statistic of -53.07, which conclusively verified stationarity and the absence of a unit root. Furthermore, the mandatory ARCH test yielded a highly significant F-statistic of 52.30, validating the presence of pronounced volatility clustering, which justified the application of GARCH models.

The returns distribution was empirically determined to be severely leptokurtic, with a Kurtosis of 8.68, demonstrating the necessity of modeling fat tails. A comprehensive model selection procedure across six distinct GARCH specifications and five error distributions, judged primarily by the Log Likelihood and information criteria,

decisively selected the EGARCH(1,1) model under the Student's t-Distribution as the optimal specification, achieving the highest Log Likelihood of 9933.173 and the lowest Akaike Information Criterion of 5.90141. The final EGARCH estimation provided crucial risk insights: a significant ARCH effect ($C(4)=0.0950$) and a GARCH persistence term ($C(6)=0.9821$) dangerously close to unity, signaling very slow volatility decay. Crucially, a positive and highly significant asymmetry coefficient ($C(5)=0.0802$) confirmed the robust presence of a leverage effect, where negative news elevates market risk more severely and persistently than positive news of equivalent magnitude. This inherent instability is best captured by a Student's t-distribution with a statistically validated Degrees of Freedom of 8.18, confirming the high probability of extreme, high-impact events.

The econometric modeling of the logarithmic returns for this index reveals that its volatility dynamics are fundamentally different from the assumptions underpinning classical financial theory. The rigorous process, which culminated in the selection of the EGARCH model with a Student's t-Distribution, moves beyond simplistic Gaussian frameworks to define a risk profile that is three-dimensionally complex: it is highly persistent, markedly asymmetric, and characterized by excessive leptokurtosis.

The core conclusion rests on the estimated coefficients of the EGARCH variance equation. Firstly, the volatility persistence term ($C(6)$) is estimated at 0.9821, a value so close to unity that it signifies an almost integrated volatility process. This finding is perhaps the single most critical result, establishing that shocks to the market's risk level—whether initiated by domestic political events or global macroeconomic turmoil—do not decay rapidly. Instead, a period of heightened uncertainty tends to become a semi-permanent feature of the market landscape, requiring a shift in mindset from risk management to sustained risk containment. The mean-reverting properties of volatility are weak, meaning that expecting risk to simply fade away is an untenable strategy.

Secondly, the existence of a statistically significant leverage effect is confirmed by the positive asymmetry coefficient ($C(5)$) of 0.0802. This phenomenon, where the market penalizes bad news more harshly than it rewards good news, is not merely anecdotal; it is a mathematical property of the volatility process. The practical implication is profound: any defensive portfolio action taken must account for the fact that a market decline does not just increase risk, it increases the rate at which risk increases. This non-linear relationship dictates that hedging must be biased towards protecting against downside movements.

Finally, the statistical necessity of the Student's t-Distribution with a Degrees of Freedom parameter estimated at 8.18 constitutes a formal repudiation of the Normal distribution assumption. This low figure confirms that the financial returns possess exceptionally thick tails, translating to a much higher-than-theoretically-predicted frequency of extreme positive and negative returns. Any conventional risk metric, such as Value-at-Risk (VaR) calculated under a Gaussian assumption, would systematically and materially underestimate the true potential for large losses. The selected model, therefore, provides the statistically correct distribution required to accurately capture the probability of these high-impact tail events.

The successful removal of all remaining autocorrelation and ARCH effects in the final model validates its structure, ensuring that the parameters reliably reflect the market's true underlying volatility dynamics. Based on the quantitative findings, the immediate, actionable suggestions are the complete and mandatory overhaul of the standard risk measurement framework. All institutions relying on Value-at-Risk (VaR)

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or Conditional Value-at-Risk (CVaR) calculations derived from the Normal distribution must transition immediately to utilizing the Student's t-Distribution with the estimated Degrees of Freedom parameter. Continuing to use a Gaussian framework is mathematically indefensible and introduces unnecessary, systematic exposure to underestimation of market crashes. For instance, a one percent VaR calculated using the Normal assumption might only correspond to a two percent VaR in the reality of the fat-tailed Student's t-Distribution, creating a dangerous false sense of security during tranquil periods. This transition is not optional; it is a statistical imperative for accurate risk assessment.

Given the confirmed and significant leverage effect (asymmetry), passive or neutral hedging strategies are inefficient. Portfolio managers should strategically overweight downside protection relative to upside exposure. Since a one percent negative return adds more to future volatility than a one percent positive return subtracts, the marginal value of protective instruments, such as long put options or short futures positions, is inherently higher. A tactical shift towards dynamically adjusting the portfolio's delta and gamma exposure, constantly biasing the hedge book toward the short side, will provide superior risk-adjusted returns during inevitable market corrections.

The high volatility persistence implies that volatility is not temporary. Therefore, the long-term capital asset pricing model (CAPM) beta, which assumes mean-reverting volatility, may be misleading. Investment committees should instead use the conditional beta derived from the GARCH model as an input for capital allocation decisions. When volatility is high, the conditional beta will be inflated, appropriately signaling a higher required rate of return for holding the asset. This approach ensures that capital is only allocated to the asset when the expected return truly compensates for the currently elevated and persistent risk level.

The primary technical recommendation is to address the remaining volatility persistence by moving beyond the standard EGARCH(1,1) model to a Fractionally Integrated GARCH (FIGARCH) or FIAPARCH models specification. The estimated $C(6)$ coefficient of 0.9821 is exceptionally close to unity, which strongly suggests the volatility process might exhibit long memory. This means that current volatility levels could be influenced by shocks that occurred many periods in the distant past. Standard GARCH models cannot adequately distinguish between high short-term persistence and true long-term memory; implementing a fractional integration model would more accurately calibrate the rate of volatility decay. This is crucial for generating superior long-horizon forecasts necessary for calculating regulatory capital requirements or determining the true long-term cost of hedging. While the current EGARCH model accurately captures internal, or endogenous, market dynamics, the base level of variance (represented by the constant term, $C(3)$) remains unexplained. This base level could be made more predictive by linking it to relevant, observable macroeconomic variables. Variables such as the policy rate, global crude oil prices, or country-specific sovereign credit default swap (CDS) spreads could be introduced as exogenous drivers in the variance equation. This modification would transform the model from a purely statistical forecasting tool into an economically interpretable risk management instrument, providing leading indicators for changes in the market's fundamental risk environment. Finally, the third recommendation concerns the application of these highly significant estimated parameters to derivative pricing. The Black-Scholes model and its variations rely on the assumption of constant, log-normally distributed volatility, which this analysis has statistically rejected. The robust, highly significant parameters, specifically the

leverage term $C(5)$ and the high persistence $C(6)$, are critical inputs for more advanced pricing methodologies, such as Monte Carlo simulations driven directly by the EGARCH process. Utilizing these parameters would allow for more accurate valuation of options and structured products, particularly those with long maturities or those sensitive to large, rapid volatility spikes. This rigorous approach would ensure the organization's derivative book is priced based not on convenient, outdated theory, but on the empirically proven realities of the market's asymmetric and persistent volatility behavior.

Authors' Contributions:

The authors contributed equally to this work.

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Appendix Table 5 GARCH decision Table

Models		GARCH	IGARCH	TARCH	EGARCH	PARCH	APARCH
Normal Distribution	<i>Akaike info criterion</i>	-5.842761	-5.81657	-5.85230	-5.86078	-5.85873	-5.84297
	<i>Schwarz criterion</i>	-5.833663	-5.811107	-5.84139	-5.84986	-5.84599	-5.83205
	<i>Log Likelihood</i>	9832.524	9786.463	9849.573	9863.83400	9861.38300	9833.873
	<i>ARCH significant</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	<i>Autocorrelation</i>	No	No	No	No	No	No
	<i>ARCH LM-Test</i>	No	No	No	No	No	No
	<i>GARCH significant</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Student's T	<i>Akaike info criterion</i>	-5.884583	-5.873405	-5.89513	-5.90141	-5.90013	-5.88497
	<i>Schwarz criterion</i>	-5.873666	-5.866127	-5.88240	-5.88867	-5.88557	-5.87223
	<i>Log Likelihood</i>	9903.869	9883.068	9922.61	9933.173	9932.012	9905.52100
	<i>ARCH significant</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	<i>Autocorrelation</i>	No	No	No	No	No	No
	<i>ARCH LM-Test</i>	No	No	No	No	No	No
	<i>GARCH significant</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Generalized Error	<i>significant coefficient</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	<i>Akaike info criterion</i>	-5.878402	-5.86478	-5.88682	-5.89336	-5.89180	-5.87857
	<i>Schwarz criterion</i>	-5.867485	-5.857504	-5.87408	-5.88062	-5.87724	-5.86584
	<i>Log Likelihood</i>	9893.473	9868.564	9908.632	9919.626	9917.999	9894.762
	<i>ARCH significant</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	<i>Autocorrelation</i>	No	No	No	No	No	No
	<i>ARCH LM-Test</i>	No	No	No	No	No	No
T-distribution (Parameter)	<i>GARCH significant</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	<i>significant coefficient</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	<i>Akaike info criterion</i>	-5.884018	-5.872566	-5.89461	-5.90130	-5.89990	-5.88438
	<i>Schwarz criterion</i>	-5.87492	-5.86711	-5.88369	-5.89038	-5.88716	-5.87346
	<i>Log likelihood</i>	9901.918	9880.656	9920.734	9931.983	9930.63	9903.52600
	<i>ARCH significant</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	<i>Autocorrelation</i>	No	No	No	No	No	No

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	<i>ARCH LM-Test</i>	No	No	No	No	No	No
	<i>GARCH significant</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	<i>significant coefficient</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Generalised Error (Parameter)	<i>Akaike info criterion</i>	-5.877955	-5.863369	-5.88657	-5.89342	-5.89178	-5.87814
	<i>Schwarz criterion</i>	-5.868857	-5.85791	-5.87565	-5.88250	-5.87905	-5.86722
	<i>Log Likelihood</i>	9891.72	9865.186	9907.211	9918.734	9916.977	9893.025
	<i>ARCH significant</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	<i>Autocorrelation</i>	No	No	No	No	No	No
	<i>ARCH LM-Test</i>	No	No	No	No	No	No
	<i>GARCH significant</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	<i>significant coefficient</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Article Info

Received: October 30 2025

Accepted: November 18 2025

How to cite this article:

Shreevastava, A., Raza, S., Meher, B. K., Birau, R., Popescu, V., Mărgăritescu, Ș., Zama, Md. W. (2025). The Superiority of Asymmetric Volatility Models: An Empirical Comparison of GARCH-Family Specifications for the Volatility of MSCI Mexico Index. *Revista de Științe Politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques*, no. 88, pp. 141-159.



ORIGINAL PAPER

Digital governance in education: between the promise of inclusion and the risk of exclusion

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Abstract:

This article examines the dynamics of digital governance in education as a profound shift that is reshaping the relationships between educational institutions, state authority, and individual educational actors. The core research question examines whether digital governance facilitates inclusion or, conversely, reinforces structural exclusion within education systems. Beginning with the transition from traditional administration to modernized governance models, the study explores how digital technologies transform decision-making processes, mechanisms of accountability, and resource allocation in educational systems. More specifically, the analysis draws on policy documents, case studies of European educational reforms, and international digital policy frameworks to examine how digital governance is operationalized and its consequences for equity and knowledge distribution. By adopting this dual conceptual approach, the study highlights how digital governance can support inclusion, yet also contribute to the emergence of structural inequalities. Ultimately, this article argues that digital governance in education is a contested terrain, where the promise of inclusion overlaps with the structural threats of exclusion, calling for a more critical and reflexive understanding of digital policy and its implications for educational equity.

Keywords: *EdTech governance, digital equity, marginalized learners, educational policy, digital transformation*

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Digital governance in education: between the promise of inclusion and the risk of exclusion

1. Introduction

"Governance" refers to the coordination of activities through diverse mechanisms to achieve intended outcomes. This word can be used in both the public and private sectors, and is also included in international institutions. Educational restructuring could be defined as a transition from government to governance, i.e., a new, modern way of managing the education system. This transformation involves changes in several aspects of the management of an educational institution: from the use of private sector management practices, measurable performance standards, and evaluation, to consumer choice, such as parents and students (Lindblad, Johannesson & Simola, 2002: 238–239).

Johannesson and Simola identify two fundamental issues in educational system research. First, the issue of equity refers to who has access to education and can actively participate (particularly groups that are generally excluded). Secondly, the second issue is that of knowledge, which analyses how categories of people and their identities are constructed. For example, the words "minority" and "at-risk" student justify why some students are included and others excluded (Lindblad, Johannesson & Simola, 2002: 239–240). In the current context, these two issues take on new dimensions with the emergence of digital governance, where algorithms, platforms, and educational data can amplify or diminish existing inequalities.

1.1. Methodological framework

This research adopts a qualitative and interpretative approach, based on a critical analysis of educational policy documents, specialist literature, and available empirical data. The methodological goal is to understand how digital governance influences processes of inclusion and exclusion in contemporary education systems, both nationally and internationally. The comparative dimension enhances the validity of the findings by juxtaposing diverse policy contexts and governance models.

The article integrates three complementary case studies, selected based on their relevance to the analysis of the relationship between digital governance and educational equity:

1. Romania – represents a very important national case for analyzing the digital divide in a post-transition context, defined by major disparities between urban and rural areas, as well as between different regions. Data extracted from official reports and national studies (ANCOM, 2018; Nicolau et al., 2020) is used, highlighting structural inequalities in digital infrastructure and the digital skills of the school population.
2. The Roma community in Europe – was selected to illustrate the social dimension of digital exclusion. This brief analysis draws on European Commission documents, sociological studies, and reports on digital inclusion (Ferkovics, 2018; Garmendia & Karrera, 2019), indicating how the lack of access to technology intensifies traditional forms of educational marginalization.
3. International comparative overview – includes a diverse set of education systems (Indonesia, China, the United States, Spain, South Korea, Sweden, Finland, and Vietnam) to identify patterns of convergence and divergence in national digital education strategies and their implications for equity.

The analysis follows a thematic approach, structured around three main dimensions:

1. governance of digital infrastructures and educational data;
2. the relationship between digital transformation and equity in education;
3. the role of digital literacy in supporting inclusive governance.

This methodology aims at conceptual rather than statistical generalization, focusing on identifying recurring tensions and common mechanisms that generate both the promise of inclusion and the risk of exclusion in the context of digital governance. Therefore, the analysis suggests a critical and contextualized reading of education digitization policies and practices, offering an integrated perspective on the interaction between technology, equity, and educational justice.

2. From traditional administration to digital governance in education

2.1. The rise of digital data and platforms

The digitization of education is profoundly changing the way data is collected and used throughout the education system. Stakeholders such as private actors and international organizations have helped develop digital platforms that give them access to various data, used for evidence-informed policymaking and to adapt the learning process to the needs of each individual student (Williamson, 2016: 5-6).

There is also a digital infrastructure, which includes assessment systems, administrative databases, and educational platforms. This infrastructure contributes to the transformation of education into a continuously monitored and performance-driven process (Rose, 1999: 152–153). Therefore, educational control is shifting from traditional institutions to technological systems that collect and interpret data on students and teachers involved in the educational process.

The digital governance model in education combines digital technologies with educational policies and places an increasing emphasis on accountability, performance, and the comparison of educational standards (Lynch, 2015: 191–197; Lawn, 2013: 49–53). The "invisible managers" of contemporary education consist of software packages, platforms, and algorithms, which influence not only administrative decision-making but also everyday teaching practice. These "invisible managers" influence educational processes in a subtle but significant way (Lynch, 2015: 191–192).

Moreover, education is evolving into a "data ecosystem" (Mayer-Schönberger & Cukier, 2014: 29), with educational research being redefined through the use of artificial intelligence, which generates equity and control over data (Mayer-Schönberger & Cukier, 2014: 173–174). This ecosystem redefines the notion of governance, as educational decisions are increasingly mediated by data and algorithms, not just human actors.

2.2. Implications for Decision-Making and Accountability

The digital governance model in education integrates digital technologies into educational policies, placing an increasing emphasis on accountability, performance, and the comparison of educational standards (Lynch, 2015: 191–197; Lawn, 2013: 49–53). Researchers are thus called upon to analyze how algorithms work and the role of commercial actors in generating educational knowledge and formulating educational policies (Piety et al., 2014: 5-11).

3. Inclusion and exclusion in digital governance

Table 1 summarizes the dimensions of digital equity and inclusion in education, highlighting how digital technologies can support equitable access and participation for all students in this process. Two different perspectives are addressed: (1) the direct application of technology in education and (2) their use to promote equity and inclusion. Table 1 highlights the importance of access to resources, the adaptation of digital tools to the diverse needs of students, and the need for inclusive digital education focused on participation and well-being.

Digital governance in education: between the promise of inclusion and the risk of exclusion

Table 1. Digital equity and inclusion in education

	In education	For equity/inclusion in education
Equity	Ensuring equitable access to digital technologies for all students, including high-quality equipment, software, and connections, in addition to developing digital skills and positive attitudes toward their use.	Using digital technologies as a tool to promote educational equity by providing additional learning resources for students in need, facilitating fair participation and equal outcomes for all.
Inclusion	Creating an open educational environment for all participants by reducing barriers that restrict access to digital education and taking into account the particularities of each student. This involves adapting digital tools and environments to enable active and inclusive participation by all learners.	Adapting and personalizing technologies and learning experiences through digital media to support inclusion, respecting and valuing the diversity and particularities of each student.

Source: OECD, 2023

Although digitization promises more equitable education, it also raises risks related to digital exclusion, excessive surveillance, and dependence on technological infrastructures controlled by private actors. These tense dimensions of digital governance will be subject to ongoing analysis.

3.1. The case of Romania: digital divide and access inequalities

According to Brolpito, the technological gap consists of the difference between people who have access to technology and those who are deprived of this access, as technology is not guaranteed to everyone (Brolpito, 2018: 5–6). A study conducted by the National Authority for Administration and Regulation in Communications (ANCOM, 2018: 12) shows that 72.4% of households in Romania had internet access. This is encouraging news for the Romanian population, given this considerable percentage. At the same time, sources show that 47% of them use high-speed internet (downloads over 100 Mbps). Fixed internet access in urban areas is approximately 75%, while in rural areas it drops to only 49%. In Bucharest, 8 out of 9 households have an internet connection. After the capital, the West and North-East regions follow, with the lowest percentages identified in the North-East regions – Iași, Bacău, Suceava, Piatra Neamț (65.1%) and South-East – Constanța, Galați, Brăila (65.2%) (ANCOM, 2018: 13). In Romania, internet use is strongly influenced by the level of education, with the best access found in households where higher education is present. The education system has faced challenges such as insufficient infrastructure, equity issues, and a lack of stable connectivity or adequate cyber protection (Nicolau et al., 2020: 45–47).

This reality highlights the existence of a new form of educational inequality – digital inequality – which is determined not only by economic factors, but also by the availability of technological infrastructure and the digital skills of the Romanian population.

While in Romania the challenges are largely infrastructural and socio-economic in nature, another important example is the situation of Roma communities in Europe, where digitization interacts strongly with phenomena of structural discrimination.

3.2. Marginalized Roma communities in Europe

Beyond national disparities such as those observed in Romania, broader European inequalities continue to affect vulnerable groups.

At the European level, the Roma ethnic minority remains one of the most marginalized communities, due to structural factors such as poverty (low living standards) and limited educational and professional opportunities (Rutigliano, 2020: 45-46). Roma students experience significantly higher dropout rates compared to their non-Roma peers (Ferkovics, 2018: 122–123) and are often placed in segregated schools or classes (European Commission et al., 2021: 17–18). Regarding digital inclusion, important disparities persist, as many Roma households have limited or no access to the internet or digital devices (Garmendia & Karrera, 2019: 56–57).

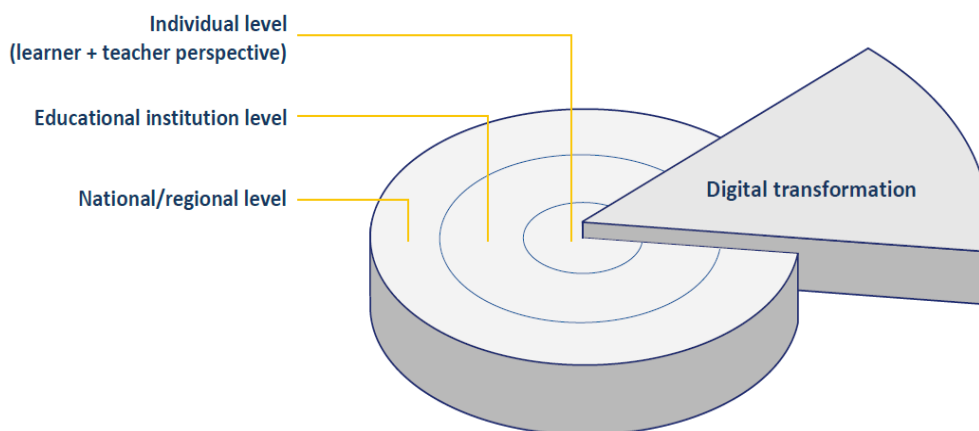
This situation clearly reflects the risk of structural exclusion generated by digital governance, in which European digital inclusion policies do not always reach the most vulnerable communities. Therefore, the social dimension of digital governance must be viewed not only as a technological issue, but also as a matter of social and educational justice.

4. The ecosystemic model of inclusive digital governance

Figure 1 represents the ecosystem model of inclusive digital governance in education, divided into three interconnected levels, with a cross-cutting component of digital transformation. These levels are classified as: individual level, educational institution level, and national/regional level. The individual level refers to the direct users of educational technology, namely students and teachers. More specifically, an analysis is carried out on how each stakeholder interacts with information and communication technology for the teaching-learning process.

Through this model, digital governance in education is understood as a multilevel process in which local and national decisions are interconnected, and the effects on inclusion or exclusion manifest themselves simultaneously at all three levels of the education system.

Figure 1. Simplified ecosystem model



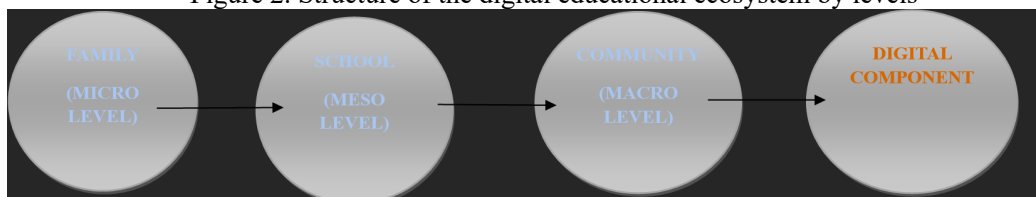
Source: European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2022

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4.1. Digital transformation as a cross-cutting process

With regard to the level of the educational institution, there is a clear link between individual users and national structures, including good communication between the family, school, and community, as shown in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 2. Structure of the digital educational ecosystem by levels



Source: Authors' own work

The regional level refers to public policies, especially educational ones, funding, or legislation, all of which are related to the area of inclusive digital education. Digital transformation is the component that affects the three levels outlined above, as its role is to influence them through a cross-cutting process, while also suggesting that it is not a separate level from the others. Inclusive digital education operates at three interdependent layers: the micro level (teachers and learners), the meso level (educational institutions and management structures), and the macro level (regional and national policy frameworks).

Therefore, the ecosystemic model provides an integrated perspective on digital governance, indicating that equity and inclusion can only be achieved through coherent interaction between all these levels.

Table 2 provides an overview of how several countries are implementing digital policies in primary schools, highlighting major differences in terms of strategic vision, challenges encountered, and technological infrastructure.

Table 2. Comparison of Digital Policies in Elementary Schools

Country	Key Policies	Technology Approach	Challenge
Indonesia	Merdeka Belajar, distribution of digital devices	E-learning platform, teacher training	Deficiencies in connectivity infrastructure in rural areas
China	Smart Education China	AI, big data, cloud-based learning	Excessive dependence on technology and strict government control
United States	Future Ready Schools, curriculum STEM	Google Classroom, iPads, project-based learning	Disparities in access in certain school districts
Spanish	Digital Education Plan	Interactive boards, learning apps	Gaps in technological infrastructure in some communities
South Korea	Smart Education, digital textbooks	AR, VR, High-speed internet network	Risk of overdependence on technological solutions

Sweden	Digital literacy as a compulsory curriculum	Coding, personalization of learning, universal access to devices	Substantial costs for large-scale implementation of the technology
Finland	Project-based learning and collaboration	Creative software, integration of technology in various subjects	Difficulties in training teachers for innovative technologies
Vietnam	EduNet, online teaching	National e-learning platform	Unequal access to technology in remote and disadvantaged areas

Source: Nisa, Hadi & Pristiani, 2024

Firstly, many of the countries analyzed have adopted national policies dedicated to digital education, but they differ from one another in terms of socio-economic context, government priorities, and technological development. Countries such as Indonesia and Vietnam rely on the creation of national e-learning platforms and the distribution of devices, but there are also minor obstacles, as they face major challenges in terms of equitable access in rural or isolated areas where internet infrastructure is poorly developed. On the other hand, countries with advanced digital infrastructure, such as South Korea, Sweden, and Finland, are no longer limited to equipping schools with technology, but are promoting policies aimed at integrating emerging technologies into pedagogy (e.g., AR/VR, programming, or personalized learning). Even in these contexts, challenges arise in terms of the costs of nationwide implementation (as in Sweden) or training teachers to use digital resources effectively (as in Finland).

The United States stands out for its use of commercial educational technology (e.g., Google Classroom, iPads), but even here there are problems related to unequal access between school districts, which also highlights internal socio-economic disparities. China and South Korea are constantly promoting artificial intelligence, big data, and other high-level technologies, but they face difficulties in terms of excessive dependence on technology and centralized control.

Spain has a balanced approach through its National Plan for Digital Education, but faces difficulties related to the lack of technological infrastructure in certain regions, which highlights the challenge of territorial cohesion.

The analysis therefore highlights that there is global convergence towards the digitisation of primary education, but its implementation is deeply contextualised. Challenging situations related to digital equity, teacher training, systemic costs, and dependence on commercial technological solutions are recurring topics that require a critical approach adapted to local realities. Digital governance in education must be based not only on technological innovation, but also on principles of inclusion, sustainability, and educational justice. In this context, it is important to highlight the importance of educational policies that go beyond simply providing technology and promote an inclusive digital culture, in which all students and teachers have the necessary skills.

The findings confirm the multilevel nature of digital governance in education, where micro, meso, and macro dynamics intersect to shape either inclusion or exclusion. Therefore, the ecosystem model proposes an integrated framework for analyzing digital governance, demonstrating that equity and inclusion can only be achieved through coherent interaction between all these levels. At the same time, this coordinated ecosystem-level approach depends not only on infrastructure and skills, but also on

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transparency, ethical decision-making, and integrity in resource distribution, elements that highlight the relationship between digital governance and corruption prevention.

5. Digital governance, integrity and educational equity

Digital governance in education also intersects with public integrity and transparency, as educational digitalization can both prevent and reproduce corruption mechanisms in public administration. Well-implemented digital governance can reduce corruption by increasing transparency and strengthening the accountability of public institutions, an effect that is reinforced when society has a high level of digital skills (OECD, 2021). Effective digital leadership supports the fight against corruption by improving administrative transparency; at the same time, the effect is directly proportional to the level of digital literacy of the population (Alaa & Misko, 2022: 185).

The development of digital governance in Ukraine, through actions such as the implementation of electronic platforms and online services, has discouraged corruption and increased administrative transparency, leading to an example of the successful application of digital innovations in the fight against corruption (Kalienichenko & Slynko, 2022: 47–48). In Finland and Estonia, the integration of digital education into governance strategies is helping to promote digital literacy and civic engagement, which in turn is helping to reduce corruption by increasing public control (Tavolzhanskyi et al., 2023: 28–30).

This example shows how digital education has not only a pedagogical dimension, but also an ethical and civic one, contributing to the achievement of democracy and institutional transparency.

Figure 3. Digital Governance, Digital Education and Corruption



Source: Authors' own work

At the same time, Figure 3 emphasizes the importance of collaboration between the public and private sectors in developing secure digital ecosystems, as well as the need for ethical use of technologies to reduce opportunities for corruption. This graphic

representation provides a systemic perspective on how the digital education component mediates the relationship between e-governance and corruption prevention.

In this case, Figure 3 represents a visual synthesis of the triple relationship between technology, education, and transparency, showing that digital education is the bridge that can transform e-governance from a simple technical mechanism into an effective tool for inclusion and integrity.

5.1. The importance of digital literacy for citizens

Digital literacy among students and parents enables access to school budgets, procurement notices, and exam procedures, supports whistleblowing through reporting portals, and strengthens community oversight of school governance. Digital literacy is important in preventing corruption because citizens with digital skills can access government information, monitor administrative processes, and quickly report irregularities (World Bank, 2020: 62–63). Digital literacy supports citizens' active participation in monitoring governance by providing them with the opportunity to use reporting platforms and public feedback systems (Kassen, 2018: 550–551). Digital literacy programs enhance citizens' ability to track government activity, reducing opportunities for corruption by strengthening public oversight (Norris & Reddick, 2013: 172–173). The adoption of digital education in national e-government programs reduces citizens' dependence on direct contact with public officials, thereby mitigating the risk of bribery (UNDP, 2019: 20–21).

The lack of adequate digital training among the population reduces the effectiveness of e-governance in preventing corruption, maintaining power imbalances between citizens and institutions (Nam, 2012: 18). Countries that allocate limited funds to digital education face the phenomenon of "digital exclusion," which weakens the impact of e-platforms in combating corruption (Bertot et al., 2010: 268–269). The diminished level of digital literacy in states with fragile governance perpetuates corruption at a significant level, as the population is unable to use online public services effectively (Transparency International, 2022). The lack of digital skills among citizens and the administration negatively affects the objectives of digital governance, maintaining vulnerabilities to corruption and excluding groups with limited access to digital education from the benefits of digitization (Cazacu et al., 2023: 66–68).

5.2. Digital skills of public servants

Targeted digital training for school leaders and education officials reduces misuse of student data, improves the integrity of admissions and examinations, and increases trust in official education portals. The digital skills of public servants are important for the compliant and transparent use of digital technologies, avoiding their misuse for corrupt purposes (Motuzna & Reznik, 2022: 53–54). Digital training for public officials is essential for preventing technological abuse and increasing public trust in official government portals (Piña et al., 2007: 460–462). Corruption in the public sector can be eliminated more effectively if digital governance is accompanied by training civil servants in the justified use of technologies (Andersen et al., 2010: 411–413). Digital training programs for civil servants help strengthen the integrity of institutions by reducing the opportunity for technological exploitation through dishonest means (European Commission, 2020).

5.3. Infrastructure and partnerships

Investments in education-sector digital infrastructure—student information systems, e-procurement for schools, and interoperable registries—must be paired with capacity-building to avoid exclusion and ensure transparent resource allocation. Countries

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that contribute resources to both digital infrastructure and digital education strengthen resilient governance mechanisms that are less susceptible to corruption (Bertot et al., 2012: 87–88). Partnerships between the state and the private sector in the field of digital education are very important for the development of transparent digital ecosystems (United Nations, 2018: 93–95). At the same time, Figure 3 emphasizes the importance of collaboration between the public and private sectors in developing secure digital ecosystems, as well as the need for ethical use of technologies to reduce opportunities for corruption.

Conclusion

This article has analyzed digital governance in education as a rather tense field, situated between the promise of inclusion and the risk of exclusion. Starting from the shift from government to governance, we have illustrated how digital infrastructures, data, and algorithms are transforming decision-making processes, accountability, and the distribution of educational resources. The results indicate that digitization can enhance access and participation—when it is supported by coherent policies, professional development, and sustained infrastructural investment—yet it can also reproduce or deepen structural inequalities.

Empirical analysis (Romania, Roma students, international comparison) shows that digital equity is conditioned by structural factors (broadband coverage, equipment), human factors (digital skills of students, teachers, and civil servants), and institutional factors (transparency, data governance). In this case, digital education becomes an essential mediator: it facilitates the ethical and efficient use of technologies, increases the capacity for civic participation, and strengthens public integrity mechanisms.

The public policy implications are well established: (1) integrated investments in digital infrastructure and skills; (2) data governance frameworks centered on rights, transparency, and accountability; (3) targeted support for vulnerable groups to prevent digital exclusion; (4) public-private partnerships geared towards good governance, not just technological adoption. Finally, future research should examine more closely the algorithmic effects on student classification and performance assessment to understand how systemic biases can be avoided.

Therefore, digital governance in education must be thought of as a multi-level ecosystem in which technology is a means, not an end: only through the coherent articulation of infrastructure, skills, and data ethics can the promise of inclusion prevail over the risk of exclusion.

Authors' Contributions:

The authors contributed equally to this work.

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Article Info

Received: October 30 2025

Accepted: November 16 2025

How to cite this article:

Grosu, D. M., Buduroi, I.-S., Stoica, V. (2025). Digital governance in education: between the promise of inclusion and the risk of exclusion. *Revista de Științe Politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques*, no. 88, pp. 160-171.



ORIGINAL PAPER

Integrated Approach to Teaching and Learning Romanian as a Foreign Language

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Abstract:

Integrated teaching-learning of Romanian as a foreign language constitutes a novel approach to the teaching process, based on interactive strategies, collaboration and cooperation, with the emphasis on the foreign student. This type of innovative approach involves involvement, creativity, flexibility, the creation of an environment conducive to learning Romanian as a foreign language and Romanian culture and civilization as an integral part of the process of training and integrating foreign students into a social environment different from the one they come from. Therefore, the formation of verbal-communicative skills in the process of integrated learning of Romanian as a foreign language constitutes the starting point, then moving on to establishing a theme based on the motivational factors and communication needs of foreign students, to developing the skills of receiving the oral message, receiving the written message, oral expression, written expression, pronunciation, use of vocabulary and grammar. In this process of integrated teaching-learning of Romanian as a foreign language, a series of strategies will be used to facilitate the assimilation of the Romanian language by foreign students both at the linguistic and cultural levels.

Keywords: *cultural, integrated, linguistic, teaching-learning, Romanian language*

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Introduction

The efficiency of learning a foreign language also depends a lot on the level of difficulty of a newly learned language, which depends on several factors. For example, how close the new language is to the native one or to other known ones, how complex it is, how many hours are allocated each week to studying it, as well as motivation. Thus, for those who study Romanian as a foreign language, a series of difficulties may arise related to the specific grammatical structure, the phonetic system in particular, because here we have several sounds (and letters) specific to our language. Learning Romanian as a foreign language offers new content and emphasizes: developing the student's autonomy; introducing a greater number of variables from different fields of sociocultural knowledge; improving receptor capacities; restructuring the scope of content and resizing them on the values of national and universal culture; integrating the spheres of personality development: cognitive (intellectual), technological (psychometric), attitudinal (motivational-affective).

Therefore, the great advantage of integrated teaching-learning of Romanian as a foreign language is the fact that it directly relates to several of the key competences stipulated in the European Framework of Reference for Lifelong Learning. (Gîncu, 2014: 16): communication in Romanian as a foreign language (the ability to use a foreign language to communicate, understand and be understood), interpersonal skills (the ability to communicate and interact effectively with different people, including empathy and mutual understanding), intercultural skills (the ability to navigate and interact appropriately in multicultural environments, respecting and understanding cultural differences) and civic skills (knowledge and responsible participation in the life of society, understanding the civic rights and responsibilities of a student in a foreign country), cultural awareness and artistic expression (awareness, appreciation and respect for various cultural expressions, whether traditional or contemporary), assimilation of cultural knowledge (the ability to express yourself through art and to accumulate knowledge about various forms of art and cultures, contributing to a deeper understanding of the cultural heritage of the foreign country in which you are a student).

These competences represent an integrated set of essential skills in the educational and professional context, encompassing effective communication (in Romanian as a foreign language), the ability to interact (interpersonal, intercultural), civic understanding and participation, as well as a dual dimension of culture: on the one hand, an awareness and understanding of cultural values, and on the other hand, an artistic expression and knowledge of the cultural diversity of the country where you are studying. This set of competences is vital for adaptation in the globalized society, fostering mutual understanding, collaboration and active participation in the life of the community where you are. They contribute to personal development, allowing foreign students to broaden their perspectives and interact more effectively in a complex and dynamic world, perhaps different from their native environment.

One of the objectives of the integrated study process of the Romanian language as a foreign language and the respective culture is the formation and development of a person - the foreign student - capable of demonstrating attitude, empathy and respect for both his own culture and the one studied. The degree of formality of this ability may be different, but the final goal is the stage of adaptation of the foreign student, when the linguistic picture of the personality expands to such an extent that he can include in his own behavioral model models from the foreign culture and the cultural values that underlie it.

Integrated teaching-learning Romanian as a foreign language

The way in which a teaching-learning activity is carried out is directly interdependent with the context. This plays a decisive role, whether we are talking about an informal (family, colleagues, friends), formal (school) or non-formal (educational games and other activities) context. From our point of view, all three are equally important and each one has its essential role. Since, in the present case, learning the Romanian language takes place in Romania, within the Romanian community, culture and spirituality. In attempts to identify difficulties in the process of teaching-learning the Romanian language as a foreign language, several aspects must be taken into account: the status of a language is perceived differently by the people who learn it, by those who teach it and by the context.

Foreign students who learn Romanian as a foreign language in our country will perceive it differently than those who learn it in their countries of origin or in another foreign country, even if they learn it from a Romanian lecturer or within a Romanian language lecturership, in a country where Romanian is one of the official languages and/or is accepted. Establishing the context, it should be specified that the groups of foreign students who follow the preparatory year courses of the Romanian language: both from the point of view of age, and from the social, ethnic, racial, sexual, intellectual, spiritual, religious, but also anxious and motivational point of view are heterogeneous. The goal, however, is the same: learning the Romanian language.

Communication in a foreign language has the same dimensions as communication in the mother tongue: it is based on the ability to understand, express and interpret thoughts, feelings and facts both orally and in writing (listening, speaking, reading and writing) in an appropriate range of social contexts – at work, at home, in education and training – according to the individual's wishes or needs. Communication in a foreign language also calls on the skills of mediation and cultural understanding. The level of performance will vary across the four dimensions, between different languages and according to the individual's linguistic heritage and background. So, "For an effective communication between groups or individuals belonging to different cultures, it is necessary to be aware of one's own stereotypes and to overcome them, thus creating a meeting space based on common values that ensure the functioning of a real dialogue" (Lăpădat, L., Lăpădat M.-M., 2020: 141).

Language barriers further intensify the learning process, characterized by the complexities of Romanian vocabulary and phonetics, which can pose obstacles for non-native speakers. Thus, according to what Chirițescu and Păunescu said:

"A core characteristic of language is its connectivity to its speakers, as the speakers grow and evolve or even possibly devolve, so does the language. Complex and specialised language is the concrete manifestation of a powerful and diverse society. The living, transformational nature of language should be approached systemically based on merging social evolution with geographic and cultural proliferations. One can even wonder if language is the product of society or maybe, to some extent, language itself can influence the way a society functions or behaves. Linking language to nationality can sometimes even outsource the economic status of the speaker. A wealthy individual may speak a different form of language compared to an extremely pauper citizen though they share the same nationality and exist within the same immediate geography. These additional variations have also come to link language with power; therefore, it is not only important to play the part but also to act the part, climbing the social

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ladder often brings forth expectations of linguistic evolution and adaptation" (Chirișescu, Păunescu, 2021: 94).

In addition, cultural disparities between international students and Romanian society generate some challenges, requiring increased cultural sensitivity and pedagogical adaptation to facilitate effective communication and social integration. primary obstacles encountered in learning Romanian as a foreign language, emphasizing linguistic barriers and cultural disparities.

Pragmatic acquisition of a foreign language involves the assimilation of knowledge related to the content of verbal and nonverbal signs of culture. We believe that the proposed system of integrated acquisition of a foreign language and its culture involves the acquisition of a set of knowledge and experiences (activities and relationships) that allow students to be active participants in intercultural communication. These include: understanding the styles of verbal expression and their meanings, behavioral patterns, appropriate coding and decoding of the cultural, historical and everyday elements of the country, the culture of the target language in situations where newspapers, magazines, artistic literature are read, films and television programs are watched, communication with speakers of the foreign language and culture, understanding their behavior.

The lack of necessary knowledge and experience are impediments, blockages in the process of familiarizing oneself with the language and culture of a foreign country, causing, in the process of studying, various reactions, from rejection to "dissolution" in it.

This type of reaction presupposes both the ability to see current events from the position of one's own culture and from that of the foreign culture, correlating with the concept of acculturation: "Acculturation includes those phenomena that result when groups of people with different cultures come into direct contact, constantly, which have as an effect subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of one or both groups" (Fons J. R. Van de Vijver, 2015: 26).

Acculturation is defined as the borrowing of behaviors, values by a group from another group with which it comes into contact. Contemporary societies are directly confronted with these contacts, direct or indirect, between different groups. Thus: "Traditionally, the forms of cultural contact are acculturation (...). Acculturation is the process of change in material culture, in traditional practices and in beliefs, a process that occurs when a people interferes with the cultural system of another people, causing the latter, directly or indirectly, to adapt to the former" (*Enciclopedia Universală Britannica*, 2010: 202).

Even though the acculturation process is seen as positive, there are situations in which it can have negative connotations, especially in situations in which the person who acquires a second language, implicitly culture, feels rejected either by the new culture in which he or she tends to integrate, or by his or her own culture. In these cases, situations of cultural identity crisis may arise, moreover, one can speak of acculturation stress (anxiety, depression, feeling of marginalization, exclusion, psychosomatic illnesses, etc.). Researchers in the field believe that in the acculturation process, several stages of development of the process can be identified: tolerance, acceptance, adaptation, assimilation and integration (Fons J. R. Van de Vijver, 2015: 25-31).

Integrated teaching-learning of Romanian as a foreign language (RFL) involves combining various strategies, such as gamification, narrative pedagogy, cultural and civilizational understanding, and digital tools, to enhance motivation and acquisition of Romanian as a foreign language for non-native speakers. This integrated approach focuses

on developing basic skills, such as understanding, speaking, and writing through authentic contexts, cultural immersion, and the use of frameworks such as the CEFR. Modern RFL pedagogy also emphasizes creating an engaging learning environment that encourages self-expression and helps foreign students develop both linguistic and intercultural identities.

- **Cultural Immersion:**

Incorporates workshops, excursions, visits to museums, and cultural evenings to immerse students in Romanian customs and traditions: "Teaching Romanian as a foreign language to foreign students cannot be done only linguistically, but also requires a cultural approach, so that in the end, the students who will stay in Romania integrate and assimilate much more easily from a social point of view" (Burtea-Cioroianu, C.-E., 2024: 75).

- **Practical Focus:**

Emphasizes the functional-communicative dimension of language learning, teaching foreign students how to use Romanian effectively in everyday situations. To effectively use Romanian as a foreign language in everyday life, foreign students need to practice their skills through constant practice, engaging in everyday activities that use the language, and seeking opportunities to converse with native speakers. These activities include listening to podcasts or music, watching movies and series in Romanian, reading the news or books in Romanian, as well as conversing with native speakers and using online apps and resources. It is also helpful for foreign students to build a basic vocabulary, practice grammar, and immerse themselves in Romanian culture.

- **Narrative Pedagogy:**

Encouraging foreign students to use storytelling and blogs creates relevance, personal connection, and authenticity in their learning, boosting motivation and confidence. The educational achievements achieved through narrative storytelling approaches allow teachers of Romanian as a foreign language to create relevant learning environments in which foreign students improve their educational outcomes through narratives and improvisational strategies. Such instruction in Romanian as a foreign language allows students to create their own stories, allowing them to express unique opinions and emotionally charged content, while highlighting cultural elements.

This narrative pedagogy can allow foreign students to collaborate on stories, improving their speaking skills and transforming educational Romanian into a tool for personal communication. The rich cultural content of storytelling provides educational opportunities that encourage the development of inclusive classrooms, while enhancing the intercultural language skills of native Romanian speakers. This demonstrates that foreign students can learn about their ancestral beliefs and traditional culture through an ELT platform in which storytelling is integrated into teaching techniques.

- **Cultural integration:**

The current process of teaching and learning Romanian as a foreign language focuses both on the marked culturalization of the contents and on the orientation towards the practical field. The transmission of knowledge of Romanian as a foreign language can no longer be separated from the transmission of knowledge of culture and civilization. That is why, in this field, the concepts of interculturality and intercultural communication are increasingly used, which argue for differences from a cultural perspective, and understanding these differences and their cultural contexts becomes the central objective of the process of teaching and learning Romanian as a foreign language. Learning Romanian as a foreign language is thus seen as a process of self-transcendence, which leads to an increased intercultural identity, as learners negotiate a new cultural reality

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alongside their original identity. So, teaching history and cultural heritage to students from different backgrounds fosters a shared understanding and sense of common heritage. Mutual understanding and connection is important in this case, because it requires an ability to understand and respect the cultural perspectives of others, leading to a deeper connection than just observing differences.

"The cultural diversity of the participants in the courses of teaching the Romanian language as a foreign language to foreign students does nothing but deepen certain problems related to their adaptation to new cultures and traditions, to new ways of communication and understanding. Foreign students who come to our country and are in permanent contact with a new culture and language but also with other colleagues belonging to other countries and other customs, have a tendency to lose their cultural specificity, to move away from their traditional background, generator of the feeling of national identity, precisely from the desire to integrate more quickly in a new sociocultural context. Many of the foreign students come with the idea of settling in our country after finishing their studies, and then they somehow feel obliged to understand our culture and traditions, to adhere to them, even if for them the differences are major" (Burtea-Cioroianu, 2022: 137).

- **Interactive and Modern Methods:**

It uses interactive activities, technology (including online platforms and whiteboards) and a variety of materials, such as dialogues from everyday life and Romanian music, to create learning of Romanian as a foreign language by foreign students.

Modern methods of teaching Romanian as a foreign language prioritize interactivity, student-centered approaches and the integration of technology, while traditional methods often rely on lectures and teacher-led instruction. This shift encourages active involvement and collaboration between teacher and student, making learning more dynamic and adaptable to diverse needs. Modern teaching methods are transforming education, fostering innovation and preparing foreign students for a rapidly evolving world. By adopting these methods, educators can create vibrant, inclusive and effective learning environments that meet the diverse needs of today's students. Whether through technology, personalized learning or active engagement, the future of teaching lies in embracing change and innovation. The attractiveness of modern methods, where interactivity is the basis of learning, is undoubted, if we compare it with traditional approaches. For example: "A system for learning multiple languages is Duolingo, designed as a platform with 120 million users; everything takes place in the form of complex exercises in reading, listening, translation, multiple-choice questions and assessment during the lesson. Grammar concepts are taught in close connection with vocabulary. The Duolingo system has the advantage of informing you after each assessment about the level at which you are" (Borș, 2016: 54).

- **Content Diversity:**

Uses diverse materials and activities, including press articles, Internet resources, and fragments of literary works, tailored to students' interests and fields of study:

"Like languages, teaching methods change as technology develops. For the new generations, the teaching-learning process must be dynamic and inevitably include digital teaching aids and materials. Surprisingly, however, while teaching, we have found that students, although digitally adept at sending short messages, creating interesting video clips, have problems in writing their

work in Word, Power Point or similar programs. Thus, we considered that on top of the traditional ways of forming writing skills, introducing storytelling and blogging in our course is an answer to their need for digitalization and creativity, but also a means to enhance their digital skills beyond the ones developed during the interactions on social media platforms" (Barbu, 2024: 31-32).

- **Gamification:**

Incorporating game-based elements and digital platforms (like Kahoot!, Plickers, and Storyjumper) makes the learning process more interactive and enjoyable, promoting intrinsic motivation and participation of foreign students in learning the Romanian language.

"Regarding motivation, the very essence of learning, the concept of gamification can bring fun and pleasure to learning. Nowadays, extrinsic triggers, such as high grades, certain advantages or even praise, are no longer enough to motivate students, but the fundamental elements that define gamification can represent the perfect catalysts to favor the transition to a new approach in education. Even if extrinsic motivation cannot substitute for intrinsic motivation, it can accompany, generate and cultivate it in a gamification-based path. (...) the concept of gamification: people, driven by curiosity, choose to play a game because they believe they can have certain benefits, because the elements and strategies present in the game can bring them happiness or pleasure. In the case of self-determination, people are encouraged to be creative, but without generating chaos, since even if there are rules, they leave room for freedom of choice, and since they are not alone, players can share the pleasure with others, thus creating an ideal situation, where people undertake an activity solely because of the pleasure it generates for them" (Nechifor, et alii, 2023: 35).

- **Digital and blended learning:**

The use of technology in education improves accessibility, personalizes learning experiences, and enables the delivery of interactive and engaging content. These advances ensure that international students from different countries and cultures can interact and participate effectively and succeed in their Romanian language learning journey. Digital tools and blended learning approaches (combining online and face-to-face interactions) offer flexibility and create engaging learning environments for foreign students that can connect virtual and real-world contexts. As technology and art intertwine in increasingly complex and creative ways, innovative educational platforms and applications play a crucial role as educational tools. These digital tools not only facilitate wider access to knowledge, but also redefine the way knowledge is created, shared, and experienced.

Teachers can incorporate modern methods by integrating technology, making use of well-designed LMS platforms and virtual classrooms. They can foster collaboration and engagement among students through group projects and discussions. They can also design lesson plans emphasizing project-based and experiential learning to make concepts more engaging and practical.

Technology transforms modern teaching by enhancing accessibility, personalizing learning experiences and fostering interactive environments. Tools like LMS platforms and virtual classrooms allow teachers to deliver content efficiently, engage foreign students actively and adapt teaching methods to meet individual learning needs.

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"E-learning, known as "e-learning" or, more recently, as "e-education", is represented by the interaction between the teaching-learning process and information technologies. Elearning is now more than a concept, it is part of current education, tending to become increasingly sought after through the time savings involved. E-learning means, in an unconsecrated definition, the chance for a person to get information easily, quickly, in any field, not being conditioned by a physical support (paper books) or an intermediary (teacher). This concept allows the educational process to be flexible to offer the widest range of e-books, tips, images and text. Internet learning can be defined as a form of education in which students are presented with training content via the Internet. Therefore, the basic condition imposed on participants in the learning process is the possession of a computer and an Internet connection. When it comes to supporting the program that is used in internet education, most often the so-called course tools are used, which allow the storage of educational content on a Web server, the creation of communication networks between the participants in the process. education, learning and management, allowing the independent testing of their knowledge through various tests. (...) Online learning is often a kind of blended learning, a learning in which teaching methods, materials and means vary, in which study materials are predominantly visual and auditory requiring the spirit of observation and the development of perceptual skills specific to phonemic hearing. Of course, for the Romanian language, the development of phonemic hearing involves performing exercises for listening and rendering the correct pronunciation of words with the possibility of listening and self-correction" (Burtea-Cioroianu, 2022: 134-135).

- **Focus on communication:**

Modern approaches to learning Romanian by foreign students move from a simple focus on grammar and vocabulary to developing effective communication strategies relevant to real-world situations. Current methods of learning Romanian as a foreign language prioritize the application of the language in concrete contexts, such as discussions, interviews or problem-solving, as opposed to the isolated study of grammatical rules. Thus, an important objective is for foreign students to be able to communicate fluently and correctly in Romanian in real-life situations, adapted to their specific needs, whether it is professional or social life. Thus, the emphasis shifts to developing strategies that help foreign students manage conversations, understand the speaker's intention and express their ideas clearly, even if they do not know a specific word.

There are certain benefits but also challenges in the integrated teaching-learning of Romanian as a foreign language. Thus, we have as benefits a high motivation of foreign students in the learning process, promoted by gamified systems, personalized narratives but also by integrated methods that facilitate the development of all four linguistic skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) through practical and authentic activities. Another benefit would be the facilitation of the social and cultural integration of foreign students through their interaction with their colleagues and the community in general. Contextualized learning of Romanian as a foreign language connects foreign students with real-world contexts, helping them to understand Romanian culture and develop a new intercultural identity.

Regarding the challenges of integrated teaching-learning of Romanian as a foreign language, these refer both to teachers who have to adapt their methods to the

diverse backgrounds of foreign students and to the potentially different prior knowledge of the target language, as well as to foreign students who may encounter difficulties adapting to a new cultural and linguistic space, requiring support to navigate these differences.

Conclusions

Studying in a foreign country offers invaluable opportunities for personal and professional development for international students. International students benefit from access to high-quality academic programs, which often involve innovative teaching approaches. In addition, this experience gives them the chance to connect with professors and colleagues from diverse cultural backgrounds. Teaching-learning activity has borne fruit when it has focused more on communication and interactivity than on the mechanical learning of morphosyntactic elements (these being acquired in the process of communicating in Romanian).

The process of integrated teaching and learning of Romanian as a foreign language, which can be given the intercultural attribute, has a dual role: on the one hand, of maintaining identity by making foreign students aware of their mother tongue and their own culture, and on the other hand, of developing fields of action by developing the intercultural communication competence of foreign students. Knowledge of Romanian as a foreign language guarantees, in a broad sense, the foreign student's access to social life and success in professional life. However, full success does not depend only on linguistic competence in the target language, Romanian in our case, but also on a set of communication and sociocultural competences that allow both the approach, perception, interpretation and understanding of the foreign/target environment, as well as intercultural dialogue, which is why an integrated teaching and assimilation of Romanian as a foreign language is necessary.

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Article Info

Received: October 30 2025

Accepted: November 16 2025

How to cite this article:

Burtea-Cioroianu, C.-E. (2025). Integrated Approach to Teaching and Learning Romanian as a Foreign Language. *Revista de Științe Politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques*, no. 88, pp. 172-181.



ORIGINAL PAPER

An Essential Overview of the Connection between Application and Interpretation in Law

Roberta Ploscă¹⁾

Abstract:

Can or must the connection between the application and the interpretation of law be permanent? Starting from the idea that some texts, by their simple content, “cannot be interpreted”, one can draw the conclusion, before any relevant analysis, that the application-interpretation connection in law is not generally valid. At the same time, if interpretation is not permanent, it can lead to the thought that it is occasional. If it turns out to be occasional, it is hard to explain its necessary character, necessity being an essential feature of this phenomenon impossible to avoid in law.

In addition to application, interpretation explains the power of the text of a legal norm in different situations, in situations judged to be similar, in situations in which we see ourselves obliged to endow the text of the norm, to expand or restrict it with wisdom. In law, there are no chosen texts to be interpreted in one way or another, but the “necessity” determined by the content of some texts to be conditioned in application by their interpretation. The appropriate connection between application and interpretation is given by the source of law: the legal norm thus perceived as the perfect means of resolving issues brought before the court and achieving justice.

Keywords: application, legal norm, interpretation, justice.

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Introduction

If the strict application of legal norms were singularly achieved in proving the truth, we would eliminate any doubt about a fact and would no longer discuss the “difficulty” of interpreting that fact and, moreover, we could appreciate with too much ease a repeatable, but in no way identical situation. As a consequence, the interpretation of a separate framework must also be established, independently of the general framework, interpretation that can be used to demonstrate, according to certain criteria, an adequate application of the norm.

From a legal perspective, we function in two enshrined dimensions, and this is also from a real standpoint: space and time in which we, everywhere, create rules for ourselves. What is significant is that these rules are influenced, modified, differ and, consequently, produce effects based on the exclusive identification of the needs of a particular social entity and are interpreted in different ways in relation to the present. The present is not interrupted, it is permanent, but not the same. We thus imply new, correct rules from our point of view, which can be adapted, interpreted and assigned by presenting them as the most appropriate to the continuous moment, therefore created and interpreted by the demand of the conjuncture.

Moreover, it is argued that “When we tackle the origin of law” (Dănișor, Dogaru, Dănișor, 2008:36), “it is not about determining the historical beginning of law, but its essence, the set of objective and *permanent* conditions which determine its existence and constitute its essence.” (Dănișor, Dogaru, Dănișor, 2008:36)

We apply the rules depending on what we experience, and this means the creation of norms by the interpretation of the moment. But we understand the moment in relation to “our days”. In a few years we will understand it differently because we will face other needs, insist on other ideas and conform to other ideals that we tend to pursue until we seek others.

It is natural to get involved in similar activities, but over time we tend to understand them from a different perspective, as a result of both the approaches to common needs and our own approaches. We can ask ourselves, in this context, how powerful and interesting interpretation is.

It is obvious that there is no precision of relations that would determine and allow an application of the norms, of all norms, without any kind of interpretation. The law follows its purpose and, clearly, its content can often be, at the same time, interpretable.

Content

I believe that we must pay attention to interpretation in compliance with the law, restrict or expand its text by considering whether or not the law would be more accurate in its application with or without interpretation, and to assign to the interpretation in certain contexts the meaning due to it. It is obvious that we must read the law and understand its depth and, at the same time, observe it strictly, as the authority pronounced it, thus effectively preserving its objective substance. However, we appreciate in the subsidiary and concomitantly the power of the spirit of the law and the prevailing “authority” of the need for its interpretation. The power of the law thus becomes an indication for us and not an inconvenient imperative.

An analysis of the acceptance of the interpretation of the law is all the more convincing as we feel vulnerable at the moment of applying the law and think of alternatives. The judge is then the author who speaks his/her word and expresses justice, worthy of trust and the law worthy of being highlighted by its spirit. The identity of the case determines its interpretation which should be sufficient and convincing in the application of the legal rule.

Let us consider, however, that, for example, the clear claim of mandatory norms regarding their application eliminates interpretation and although, in these cases too, there many circumstances that often attract points of view, they all converge towards an obvious solution through the observation and concrete examination of the evidence.

Therefore, there is a need for the application-interpretation balance in law determined by the solidity of the law, a balance which leads to a fulfilment of the meaning of the norm. It is said that "Law is full of inconsistent areas, it is often lost in an ocean of 'vague'." (Dănișor, Dogaru, Dănișor, 2008:40) "However, this 'vague'" state reputable law professors (Dănișor, Dogaru, Dănișor, 2008:40) "can also play a role as a vector of progress in law and of the adaptability of texts to situations impossible to take into account by the legislator at the time of regulation, through a constructive interpretation."

It is therefore very pertinent to note that the phenomenon of application-interpretation in law eliminates discrepancies or gaps and essentially creates a profound and complete legal work.

We rightly tend to avoid the interpretation of the law, arguing that the law must be applied in the strict sense of its provisions. Yet, we underline that the very deficiencies of the law require its interpretation, and we thus embrace the point of view according to which it is impossible to avoid it precisely because interpretation comes in support of the law and, at the same time, helps us to preserve the possibility of demonstrating our own arguments.

We thus understand the rationale for the existence of interpretation methods: historical, logical, systematic, grammatical, appropriate to the analysis of the legal norm, either separately or together, for the purpose of removing doubts, for the purpose of verifying, explaining and finding a final answer claimed to be truthful in the two dimensions, time and space, with regard to a specific case.

In other words, we resort to these methods in order to find out, through pertinent verification, to what extent they are useful in clarifying the text of the norm, for each case that essentially claims to find the truth. The methods of interpretation of a legal norm must be approached especially when the application of the norm must be in harmony with the necessity that requires its application.

The historical method represents, for example, the "primary", fundamental, necessary means of information, regarding the evolution of our legal system by which we mark essential points in the history of law as a result of the reality of our entity over time, but also in the continuous present.

On the other hand, the opinions concerning the entire class of norms expressed by lawyers represent the doctrinal interpretation. This affirmation of points of view worthy of consideration constantly increases because it can lead to genuine conclusions regarding many details offered through the accuracy of the law or to the

creation of ideas provoked by its absence and can lead, generically, to legal convictions that determine the process of approaching any law under the close scrutiny and special care of those who thus create a true tradition of interpretation registered as an unofficial interpretation of the law.

Numerous valuable points of view have been collected over time, often understood *in concreto* in the action of applying the essential content of legal norms.

As for any other discrepancies between terms, one can also make examinations, assessments, whereas opinions and conclusions to one's own opinions found in the specialised literature, even without binding force, can be explained and can create a basis of inspiration under the sign of authenticity.

It is appropriate to list and explain other possible interpretations of a legal norm. We thus appreciate the extraordinary scope that extensive interpretation offers to the original textual material of the law, which can somehow recreate its authority. We do not refer to the norms of strict law. The norms of strict law, as it results from the legal literature (Dănişor, Dogaru, Dănişor, 2008:242), "are norms of strict interpretation." The renowned authors of the General Theory of Law add that "the law is normally explicit, clear, precise, rigid. It does not leave the one who enforces it the faculty to recreate it through interpretation." (Dănişor, Dogaru, Dănişor, 2008:242) with reference, obviously, to the norms of strict law.

The precisely established norm imposes from the very beginning the "ability" of application in its rigid content by taking into account the claims of the text expressed without contradictions or inaccuracies, using its strictly "original" letter pronounced in the field.

It is noted, at the same time, that "the inconsistency of law results both from its linguistic nature and from the complexity of the reality to which the law must respond." (Dănişor, Dogaru, Dănişor, 2008:40) But the extremely effective means in applying the norm can be its particularly careful interpretation, without the tendency to move away from its text, in order not to move away from its actual power, but rather to penetrate deeper into its core. It follows that interpretation is not a means of correcting the law, but an additional way to discover its value. This is the strong point of interpretation.

We thus record an authentic official interpretation, judicial and administrative, and an unofficial interpretation as we have already reiterated. The fact that there are comments regarding the law does not question the reality that a norm expresses and the inspired views on the entire system of norms justify and determine its complexity.

The field of law includes a multitude of norms and auxiliary doctrines of experts in the field that can lead to written conclusions of a certain importance regarding the creation and application of legal rules, thus constituting permanent points of attraction necessary in the knowledge of the legal phenomenon.

The doctrine often brings strong arguments that can change our initial beliefs through amazing discoveries of the substratum of the law. However, the concordance with the text of the law is not absent in any circumstance despite the expression of points of view that may become known, but often indecisive in modifying the certain and poignant concerns of the phenomenon of "law". The doctrinal contribution in the field of legal inspiration is notable.

At the same time, “Legal science resorts, more and more frequently in the contemporary period, to the methods of systemic, structural and functional analysis.” (Craiovan, 1999:17)

Another established method is therefore the systematic method concerned with proving the authenticity of the norms in accordance with the higher norms and the concordance of all the norms in the system, laying the foundations of the entire hierarchical pedestal on the constitution, accredited as the most important norm. “Fundamentally,” says Professor Gheorghe Mihai, “systematic interpretation is based on the idea that positive law is a system construction; this construction lies under a concept that gives it unity, that links the laws together.” (Mihai, 2003:507) Through such knowledge, it is demonstrated that the norms are based on each other, giving a strong validity to the entire legal system. “A genuine legal science is one that is constituted in the system and has as its primary object precisely the system.”, say professors Dan Claudiu Dănișor, Ion Dogaru and Gheorghe Dănișor. (Dănișor, Dogaru, Dănișor, 2008:22)

By practically implying the difficult overall knowledge of the system, we agree with the conclusion expressed in the legal literature, namely that the legal system appears to be complete. “A legal system is complete because it does not contain gaps.” (Dănișor, Dogaru, Dănișor, 2008:40) “In other words, if the law can have gaps, law cannot.” (Dănișor, Dogaru, Dănișor, 2008:40)

The unifying elements of the legal system are the legal norms which, even if they are not complete at times, ensure the completeness of the legal system through their unity, by sharing the same views directed, in fact, in one respect: justice. They all have this unitary message, perhaps difficult to explain, but through which the norms become proof of the possibility of proving reality by logical conclusions, despite their own deficiencies.

Moreover, “The most important activity of contemporary jurists is the description, analysis, interpretation, and commentary of laws, other legislative acts, and legal norms in general.” (Craiovan, 1999:18)

Returning to the significance of the dimension - time - it descriptively provides us with inevitable changes and determines the basis of legal regulations with their own characteristics, contributing to the transformation of the structure of law by a permanent, careful and accepted revision in the sense of a more efficient adaptation to the requirements of the re-emerging society. And our beliefs cross time and we continue to learn new analyses to establish truth and justice.

The arguments expressed through interpretation must be appreciated because they support the law and are all the more convincing as the law supports us. Without such an explanation, interpretation would indeed be meaningless. The effect produced is sometimes of major importance and strengthens our confidence that the law is enforced for us, not against us. We then wonder what contribution the existence of the law can have in adapting each one within society and in keeping society within the perimeter of good.

The constancy and, at the same time, the adaptability of the law according to permanent requirements makes the law constantly establish the bases through which we manage to legally overcome, in life, continuous obstacles.

“The identical as a principle is a primordial question, it is the *problematic* as such, the state of ambiguity of all that is, the possibility of any concrete thing to pass from itself to something more comprehensive”, says Professor Gheorghe Dănișor. (Dănișor, 2014:25)

To understand the law-citizen-man relationship, we must understand man’s conception of the law and the force of the law towards man. In this way, we can free ourselves from the “fear” of the law and understand the meaning of its creation, that of good. The identity of the law is valid for certain categories of people, but its prominence differs for each person. In this way, we create room for interpretation.

Law... “Monumental hypostases and countless facets seem to configure it...”, says professor Ion Craiovan. (Craiovan, 2009:42)

The contradictions continue and force us to observe the attitude of the norm that promises a strong response for a just cause. From this standpoint, examining the norm grammatically is a unique, very eloquent means that creates the opportunity for an advanced understanding of its text in order to dispose correctly in accordance with it. Judicial interpretation also has its say, with priority, the essence of which lies in the devotion to the provisions of the law, including by literally taking into account its terms by comparison or association.

We can compare, in fact, the types and methods of interpretation or we can pollinate them, in both cases, under the certainty that they lead to a clarification of the norms and to their acceptance, in the most correct sense.

In the context, “The term ‘logic’ has a vast diversity of meanings, outlined throughout history and suggesting just as many ‘methodological clues’.” (Craiovan, 2009:173)

In particular, we observe and study logic in order to end up accessing this method with a convincing description of the meaning of the norm as a result of the conclusions of reality. Moreover, on the basis of a continuous reality, law was created and spread everywhere, in particular forms, to be exercised completely and conclusively on what is necessary.

The logical method, as it emerges from legal literature, “has the widest use, being in essence the basis of any interpretation, being the foundation of the other methods.” (Dănișor, Dogaru, Dănișor, 2008:468)

According to the renowned professor of law and philosophy, Ion Craiovan, the logical method “also calls in legal research for the connection with other complementary and integrative types of rationality, which do not ignore the value of the logical approach, but do not reduce knowledge, especially in the sphere of social sciences, to this approach, a mutually profitable view, for various ‘centres’ and ‘types’ of knowledge.” (Craiovan, 2009:181)

Moreover, “the object of legal logic are the norms, but not only in themselves, but also in the intellectual process of their creation, interpretation and application.” (Dănișor, Dogaru, Dănișor, 2008:17) Examining a logical argument from a legal perspective can lead to the creation of circumstantial situations in the sense of accrediting the veracity of a case.

It is appropriate to mention that “Depending on the purpose pursued by interpretation, a purpose of primary importance in the process of enforcing the law, several important currents of thought have emerged: the exegetical method, based on

the will of the legislature, the evolutionary theory, the theory of the autonomy of texts.” (Dănişor, Dogaru, Dănişor, 2008:459-465)

Advanced theories explain the trust in the power of interpretation on different bases. It is natural to assimilate the image of the law, but without changing its substance, as this would lead to a dramatic transformation of the norm. We conclude that the appreciation of the value of interpretation in determining the most explicit content of the legal norm represents a weighing of its texts to correspond to the various situations that may occur, deeply implementing, from the position of those knowledgeable in the field, the idea of justice.

The interpretation of legal norms, states Professor Ion Craiovan, “*designates the intellectual process of establishing the exact meaning of legal norms in order to apply them, to decide certain cases.*” (Craiovan, 2001:275) Therefore, through the legal, official value of judicial interpretation, one can formulate conclusions in relation to the provisions of the law and, through a rational and intelligent approach, one can eliminate doubts regarding the application of norms in order to establish a truthful decision. From the legal literature it results that “here we do not actually have an act of interpretation, but a legal act of application, given on the basis of a legal norm whose content could be revealed following a more or less complex effort of interpretation.” (Craiovan, 2001:277) We thus accredit the text of the law under all its pretension and we refer to the depth of the law that justifies the purpose of its creation with all its specific features, valid, generically speaking, for each legal norm.

In an original way, the law is created by the legislature and “The interpretation of the legislature, respectively of the body that drafted the legislative act – Parliament – is an authentic official interpretation.” (Mihai, 2002:152)

Ambiguities are eliminated, the validity of the text of the law is accredited in all its details, while one can notice an additional solid support in the letter of the law specific to the complexity of such a type of interpretation. The criterion that is above any possibility of planning the interpretation of the law is the legislative climate of the creation of the norm itself and the reaction of the authority that occurs on the very act that it itself thought of. “The legislature can interpret its normative acts adopted through normative acts of interpretation, including the result either in the text of the interpreted legislative act, or in a subsequent legislative act.” (Mihai, 2002:153)

From all considerations, the authentic official interpretation is particularly significant because through this means the authority can reconstruct for essential reasons the very norm established by it, towards a new identification of its content or, possibly, new ramifications of the meaning of the norm can be found.

Last but not least, “Executive interpretation is the responsibility of the bodies that implement the law.” (Mihai, 2002:153) From the legal literature, it results that “Both the authentic interpretation of the legislature and that given by the executive become binding for the courts when deciding cases.” (Mihai, 2002:153)

Conclusions

The substance of the norm can be found through different analyses of its provisions and in order to be able to observe the content of the rule properly, the principles which underlie the legal system and which implicitly constitute the foundation for the realization of legal norms are worthy of consideration.

The open reaction of the law to interpretation creates the balance between its letter and its spirit under which the law acts with all the force of consequences, removing doubts about its exact application. We can opt for an interpretation of the law so that the law can manifest its deep significance.

The content of the norm must coincide with the reason for its creation. This is how we find out, illustrate and mark in fact and in law the necessity of the rule. Through norms, we create for ourselves the chance to aspire to good, truth and justice, but the wisdom to understand them and, consequently, to respect them, is our own, ultimately depending on each of us.

This mechanism of application-interpretation in law confirms the firmness of the provisions of the law, but also requires adaptability to changing situations in order to cover as wide a spectrum as possible.

The mechanism does not work before the rigidity of imperative laws which, alarmed by the gravity of the facts, intensify their force and impose a special concentration in their application in relation to the nature of the situations.

Similar, but not identical cases pervade society. We assign to doctrinal interpretation the art of convincing, through explanations, the “particularities” of the norm, in the sense of depicting their proper application to a “maximum” extent.

At the same time, the official judicial interpretation of the law, always present, establishes in the name of the law, the reason for judgment, understood in the skilful proof of reality by entrusting the truth to society.

The sign of extensive or restrictive interpretation in the application of law is the result of the permission of the norm for such an intervention. By thinking about the text of the law, we appreciate its authenticity and learn to perceive its substance by following its interpretation.

Interpretation means the opportunity to consider the substance of the norm, its importance and often the harmonisation of the legal norm with the causes of its existence. The genuine evidence of the reasons underlying a certain content of the law is achieved through the method of historical interpretation, a method that brings to light the conditions under which the norm is justifiably created and thoroughly appropriated.

Interpretation is certainly a topical subject and the prudent attitude of those who implement it presupposes its acceptance directly or indirectly in the process of enforcing the law.

We consider the role of interpretation and pay serious attention to it in the appropriate application of the text of the legal norm in many situations. In essence, interpretation intervenes in completing and supporting the legal norm that it manages to articulate in relation to the complexity of the cases and in order to settle them, preserving overall the completeness of its own legal system, which imperatively and constantly meets the needs of the community.

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Article Info

Received: October 29 2025

Accepted: November 15 2025

How to cite this article:

Ploscă, R. (2025). An Essential Overview of the Connection between Application and Interpretation in Law. *Revista de Științe Politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques*, no. 88, pp. 182-190.



ORIGINAL PAPER

Teaching the Digital Natives - Incorporating AI in Classrooms

Costina Denisa Bărbuceanu¹⁾

Abstract:

The access of artificial intelligence (AI) into education brings with it unmatched opportunities to interact with digital-native students. In this paper, we present the possibility of incorporating AI into the classroom to improve learning outcomes, student motivation, and tailor education. We present the pros and cons of AI incorporation into educational background as well as run-through strategies for teachers. Digital natives, those students who have been brought up with technology around them, need different tutoring that can be sensitive to their own learning cycles. Old pedagogies cannot motivate these students. AI-enabled tools hold out a lot as they tailor teaching to the student needs, systematize routine management, and create interactive learning spaces. Applying Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education can redefine how you present content, engage with students, and measure learning accomplishments. AI can be utilized to personalize tutoring, maximize interactivity, and provide instant response, all of which are beneficial to augment the learning process. Digital natives- so labeled by Marc Prensky in 2001, due to the students brought up amidst digital technologies like mobile phones, computers, and the internet - is the term used to refer to a peer group of students born encircled by such digital tools. Such students are voluntarily at ease with the technology and incline towards more interactive multimedia-based learning spaces. Thus, the digital natives expect and are most suitable for prompt information access and learning activities that are tailored, real-time, and interactive.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence, digital technologies, interactive, AI-enabled tools, student needs.*

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Understanding Digital Natives

AI is changing the way we teach and learn, especially with a new generation growing up surrounded by technology namely, the “digital natives”-a term Marc Prensky coined back in 2001-who have been online since they could walk, bouncing between social media, games, and all kinds of digital spaces without missing a click, because of this, teaching methods have to catch up. Teachers can’t just preserve the old ways and expect these students to engage. This essay dives into how AI fits into classrooms now, it looks at what AI brings new-both the good and the bad-along with the ethical questions that arise. By exploring real-world examples from around the globe, we get a clearer picture of how AI can actually help learning, as long as we keep people at the center and don’t just follow the latest tech. Just because someone knows their way around technology doesn’t mean they can think critically or handle academic work in today’s tech-driven world. “In the universe of communication, there is practically a vulnerability of reception of the individual who perceives himself to be a unique and original snowflake.” (Lăpădat, Lăpădat, 2020b:121). Now that AI is stirring up everything, including education, we really need to discover how to bring it into classrooms in a way that actually helps students. It’s not just about meeting the needs of digital natives but also of making sure we’re striving for real critical thinking, making things inclusive, and keeping ethics in mind because “it is the human nature itself to pursue the maximal outcome at the minimal amount of effort.” (Buşu, 2022:98). Digital natives grew up surrounded by technology, so it’s second nature to them because they don’t just use technology, they actually prefer it when they are learning. Their brains are wired and comfortable with screens and digital tools change how they process information and how they interact in class with their colleagues. “Students who account to have warm interactions with their peers and teachers also have the inclination to show better academic self-drive and engagement than students who lack this reciprocal affect.” (Bărbuceanu, 2022: 185). The rapid rise of AI and computer technology in the 21st century is shaking up schools in such a way that, teachers can’t just keep to the old ways of teaching, thus they have to rethink and adapt their methods to keep up. We shall look at what happens when AI steps into the classroom, the manner AI actually changes how teachers teach and how students learn because teachers have to tweak their methods, and schools need to think wisely about the right way to use AI without losing sight of what really matters. In the end, bringing AI into education should push things forward, in a thoughtful manner to make sure every student benefits, not just chase the latest trend.

AI as an Instructive Tool

The applications of AI technologies have the potential to revolutionize instruction by delivering customized, specific learning experiences, automating administrative tasks, and intelligent tutoring systems and boost “social well-being” aimed to increase the resilience status of the communities.” (Olimid, Olimid, 2022:91). Tools like adaptive learning platforms (e.g., Squirrel AI, Knewton) can analyze student performance in real time and tailor content to individual learning styles, needs and paces and are able to provide feedback, respond to students' queries, and support differentiated instruction. AI stirs up the classroom in many ways, starting with things like gamification and interactive simulations, students don’t just sit and watch-they actually get involved making learning feeling more like playing a game than going through a textbook, and that keeps people hooked. Additionally, AI studies how each student learns and adjusts the

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material for them so everyone gets a learning experience that actually fits them, even “vulnerable groups” (Paraschivu, Cotuna, 2021:573). By automating routine administrative tasks such as grading and scheduling, AI allows teachers to spend more time teaching and engaging with students, such that overall the learning environment is improved. AI achieves its most significant educational success through individualized learning experiences which Squirrel AI in China demonstrates through machine learning evaluation of student strengths and weaknesses to generate customized course materials (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). Carnegie Learning, a U.S. education company, builds math curricula that adjust practice and feedback for each student making students more engaged and helping them do better in class (Holstein et al., 2019). AI-powered tutoring systems like ALEKS and Duolingo step in with instant feedback and advice exactly what today’s digital natives expect- help right when they need it. Studies even show that these tutoring systems can boost learning just as much as working one-on-one with a tutor (VanLehn, 2011). AI gives teachers a real break from tedious tasks like grading and tracking attendance, Gradescope, for example uses AI to automate grading open-ended responses in STEM classes which means teachers spend less time buried in paperwork and more time actually connecting with students or planning better lessons. Squirrel AI Learning is a Chinese ed-tech company that has developed AI in more than 2,000 learning centers. Their system checks how students answer questions, spots where they’re getting things wrong, and tweaks the material to fit each student. Studies show that kids using Squirrel AI actually improve their test scores a lot more than those in regular classrooms (Zhang et al., 2020). It’s a clear example of how AI can make personalized education possible for a huge number of students and to “...boost personal, social and professional growth in future career and social interaction within the academic environment or imminent job.” (Bărbuceanu, 2019:46).

Rethinking the Role of Educators

With learning instructions being turned over to artificial intelligence systems, the teacher's role is modified, no longer merely the bearers of knowledge, instructors now become facilitators of questions, guides, and mentors in ethics. This shift comes from the idea that students learn best when they interact and reflect, building their own understanding, moreover these days, with AI in the classroom, teachers aren’t just there to walk students through the curriculum, they need to help them figure out how to use, question, and make sense of AI-responsibly, too. Surely, professional development is fashionable now, but it’s not enough for teachers to just know how to use AI tools, they have to understand where those tools fall short, how bias can slide in, and what it means to use them the proper way. If schools want AI to actually work in the classroom, teachers have to be both tech-savvy and flexible in their teaching , and that is the real challenge-expanding the role and function of modern day teachers. “This result can be accomplished by personal and social awareness and proper emotional feedback in specific circumstances.” (Buşu, 2020:205). As AI is stepping in to handle more of the technical teaching, teachers aren’t just lecturing anymore, they guide students through learning, help them figure out right from wrong, and show them how to use AI responsibly. In these AI-powered classrooms, teaching blends with hands-on learning and curiosity, encouraging students to work together, solve problems, think for themselves, access information but not so much its validity.

Professional Development

If one wants AI to really work in education, teachers need ongoing training, thus Finland's "Elements of AI" program is a good example. It's a free online course that helps both teachers and regular citizens get what artificial intelligence is all about (European Commission, 2020). Nevertheless, training can't just be about learning, teachers need to actually understand AI-how it works, what it means for their students, and why it matters. The Elements of AI course were not designed just for teachers at first, but Finnish officials made it part of teacher training anyway, now, teachers in Finland can bring AI into their classrooms with a real grasp of the basics and the ethics involved (European Commission, 2020).

Pros of AI in Learning

Artificial Intelligence is changing the way students learn and now, with the right software, every student gets a learning experience that fits them-not *one-size-fits-all* approach. AI platforms actually understand on how each person learns best, they tweak how they present information, switch up the difficulty, and even adjust the speed to match what the student needs. Programs like Smart Sparrow, Squirrel AI, and DreamBox do all of this on the fly as they watch how students handle questions, detect where someone's struggling or excelling, and then shift their approach in real time which is a smarter, more responsive way to teach and learn. "From a social constructivist perspective, the learner builds his knowledge through active interaction with his physical and social environment." (Scorțan, 2021:143). The potential results could be the boost in motivation of the student, reduced frustration, optimization of learning results for most students. "Increase of motivation and enthusiasm of students and teachers through active involvement in the process of live communication, possibilities of language acquisition are increasing thanks to the cooperation, interaction and communication in learning language." (Chirițescu, Păunescu, 2017:376). Artificial intelligence (AI) can be used to automatically grade assignments, provide written feedback on student responses, and detect plagiarism. Tools such as Turnitin (for AI-based plagiarism detection) and Gradescope (for automated grading of open-response questions) help reduce teachers' workloads while offering students immediate, consistent feedback. AI doesn't just sit in the background-it pushes accessibility forward with tools like Microsoft Immersive Reader or Google's Live Transcribe read texts out loud, translate on the fly, and provide visual or audio support when students need it, furthermore they level the playing field for students with disabilities, for English Language Learners, and for anyone whose learning style doesn't fit the pattern. With this kind of tech, classrooms become more welcoming, flexible, and effective for everyone towards an "active and constructive learning that can be applied later in social, professional and cultural terms." (Lăpădat, Lăpădat, 2020a:142).

Intelligent Tutoring Systems (ITS)

AI instructors act a lot like private tutors coaching students with additional info, feedback, and quizzes, guiding them step by step, for example, MATHia from Carnegie Learning or Duolingo's AI tutor-both step in after school to help students keep learning when class is over. These programs don't just teach, they also keep an eye on how each student is doing. Tools like Canvas and Blackboard track progress and spot early signs when a student's losing interest or at risk of failing thus early warning systems like these let teachers step in before things derail. AI doesn't stop there, it recommends courses,

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automatically grades assignments using tools like ScribeSense, and even helps teachers brainstorm or plan lessons with ChatGPT. All this tech frees up teachers, so they can focus more on students and less on paperwork, changing how classrooms work, making it easier for teachers to help every student succeed “(...) may interfere with learning or consolidate it.” (Scorțan, 2022:146). AI-powered ed-tech tools have the potential to enhance learning by becoming more engaging through gamification, for example Ed-tech software like Kahoot!, Quizizz, or learning games developed on the pattern of AI are encouraging student involvement and learning retention “activities that are meant to encourage the student’s creativity, critical thinking and communication skills.” (Stoian, 2019a:131).

Limitations of AI in Education

When schools use AI, they need hardware, software, and a solid internet connection-not every student gets that, especially in poorer or rural areas , subsequently making things less fair and cutting into learning chances for students who are already at disadvantage, additionally relying too hard on AI means students miss out on real conversations, working with others, and building emotional intelligence thus losing those social and communication skills that come from actually connecting with people in the classroom. Additionally, AI systems tend to detect and even amplify the biases in their training data-race, income, gender, thus predictive models start labeling minority students as “at risk” more often, leading to unfair outcomes and discrimination in education. Other AI-based curricula bypass teacher imagination and professional judgment, teachers merely acting as administrators of technology instead of learning facilitators. Large student data (performance, learning habit, whereabouts) are captured by AI programs and thus possibly vulnerable to data exposure, third-party exploitation, or student activity tracking. Students often rely too much on AI, which chips away at their problem-solving skills, independent thinking, and sense of intellectual autonomy and if is done across a whole generation, that’s a real concern. Furthermore, running AI in schools isn’t simple or cheap, schools need reliable infrastructure, ongoing training, constant updates, platform maintenance, making all of this straining budgets, and if the system goes down, learning also pauses. Policy brings its own questions because nobody really knows who actually owns the data and who is in charge of the AI, moreover the whole debate keeps spinning in circles, with people talking about the need to tackle uncertainty and take responsibility for the ethics of using AI in classrooms.

Challenges and Ethical Problems

AI has the power to entirely change the way we think about education, but it comes with a lot of problems-especially when it comes to data privacy -because these systems collect student info, without students even giving real consent, thus AI systems gather and process vast quantities of student data and pose questions regarding consent, ownership, security. Algorithmic bias is another real problem, when AI relies on biased data, it can reinforce harmful stereotypes or unfairly target certain student groups, wrongly judging someone just because their way of speaking doesn’t fit the standard. Teachers need to stay alert to these mistakes and push for more inclusive, transparent algorithm design because when one lets machines take the lead, real human conversation, empathy, and intuition start to fade into the background thus learning isn’t just about passing along facts, it’s rooted in connection, creativity, and teamwork-things AI can’t just yet replace. Education now leans heavily on AI, which means student data gets used all the time and this without strong security, puts student privacy at risk. The EU’s GDPR rules pushed

data providers to rethink their policies, but there's still a disconnect between different regions (Williamson & Eynon, 2020). AI often ends up reinforcing old social inequalities, too-voice recognition, for example, struggles with students who have non-native accents (Blodgett et al., 2020). Teachers have to stay alert to these biases and push for more inclusive AI designs, nevertheless relying too much on AI takes the human touch out of learning. Surely, AI can deliver facts, but it can't offer empathy, tact, or moral judgment thus learning stays human at its core with AI supporting, not replacing the teacher. A 2020 Stanford study revealed a troubling gap: facial recognition technology used by some learning platforms struggled with accuracy when identifying students with darker skin tones (Buolamwini & Gebru, 2018). That's not just a tech problem-it's a serious issue of AI fairness and bias furthermore schools need to take a hard look at the tools they adopt and push for technology that treats everyone equitably. Teachers don't just use AI as a tool, they also have to help students become fluent in its language thus students need to understand how AI shapes society, the ethical stakes, and the human impact thus the best approach pulls together the humanities, ethics, and computer science, so students learn to think critically and act responsibly in a digital world. When students dive in-building their own machine learning models or designing AI products with ethics in mind-they shift roles, they're no longer just using technology they are shaping it. These experiences push them to work together, think creatively, and actually solve problems, not just memorize answers. UNESCO said it best in 2021: digital and AI ethics deserve a place in every classroom. The aim isn't just to make students comfortable with technology, but to turn them into informed, engaged citizens. "The present tense conditions the listeners to actively listen and be involved in the activity of learning in the present with a view of improving the future." (Chirișescu, Păunescu, 2021:102).

Conclusion

AI in the classroom is a disruptive promise because it puts the digital lives of today's students right at the heart of learning, and, for digital natives, AI isn't just another tool-it opens the door to learning that actually fits them: personalized, interactive, and relevant, to make learning more human, using AI carefully and thoughtfully. The integration of AI into instruction is an educational imperative as AI can craft lessons that keep students engaged and meet them where they are, still, these advantages come with a catch because one has to weigh them against real social, ethical, and pedagogical concerns "in order to obtain better student outcomes" (Stoian, 2019b). Bringing AI into education isn't just about the acquisition of new tools, it means rethinking what really matters-putting people, critical thinking, and social responsibility at the top of the list. Everyone-from policymakers to technologists, to teachers- needs to work together so AI actually strengthens what makes learning human, not replacing or eliminating it.

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Article Info

Received: October 29 2025

Accepted: November 16 2025

How to cite this article:

Bărbuceanu, C. D. (2025). Teaching the Digital Natives - Incorporating AI in Classrooms. *Revista de Științe Politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques*, no. 88, pp. 191-198.



ORIGINAL PAPER

Digitalisation in Europe: Between Inclusion and Social Inequality

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Abstract:

This paper examines the relationship between digitalisation and social inequality, highlighting how access to technological resources and the possession of digital capital influence social, educational, and economic inclusion. The first objective is to identify the disparities generated by the digital divide across European states, while the second seeks to explore the mechanisms through which these disparities shape a new dimension of social stratification. The study employs a secondary analysis of European statistical data, integrated with relevant academic literature, focusing on two main indicators: median income and digital skills levels. The findings reveal a statistically significant correlation between the degree of digitalisation and population income, with marked differences between Eastern and Western European countries. The conclusions suggest that digitalisation has become an emerging factor in social stratification, generating new forms of inequality. At the same time, public policies promoting digital inclusion, combined with the active participation of social actors, can help mitigate these disparities and foster inclusive economic and social development.

Keywords: *digitalisation, digital capital, social stratification, social inequality, public policies.*

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1. Introduction

Over the past decades, digitalisation has emerged as one of the most significant drivers of social and economic transformation worldwide. This process is redefining how people communicate and interact across various domains of everyday life, family, education, work, as well as civic and political participation. Technologically mediated interactions are increasingly replacing physical proximity. Education has become more accessible through digital resources and online platforms, while participation in public life is now closely linked to individuals' technological competencies. At the same time, employment and access to public services have become increasingly dependent on the ability to use digital tools. Public institutions are gradually shifting from traditional bureaucratic procedures - based on physical documents and face-to-face interactions - to automated electronic services available online. These transformations aim to enhance efficiency, reduce bureaucracy, and provide faster, more transparent, and more accessible services for citizens and businesses alike.

Across Europe, the pace of digitalisation varies considerably, with some countries and regions being far more advanced than others. Western European states have succeeded in integrating technology more effectively across all spheres of activity - economy, education, and public administration - while Eastern European states continue to face challenges related to digital infrastructure, the quality of online services, and the development of digital competences. This difference reflects a new form of socio-economic division within Europe. Consequently, the disparities between East and West shape citizens' opportunities to access essential resources and services such as education, stable employment, and efficient public administration. Individuals with a high level of digital skills and constant access to technology display a greater capacity to adapt to new social and economic requirements, whereas those with lower levels of digital competence face difficulties in navigating online services and risk being unable to benefit from the opportunities offered by digital technologies. This gap in digital access and use constitutes a new criterion of social stratification and differentiation, reinforcing processes of repositioning among individuals and groups within pre-existing social hierarchies, both nationally and at the European level.

At the national level, Zamfir (2019) highlights that social vulnerabilities in Romania have been exacerbated by historical legacies and the structural transformations associated with the post-communist transition. The decline of industry led to the loss of numerous jobs, especially in mono-industrial regions, resulting in increased unemployment and declining living standards. In parallel, external migration - particularly among young people - has deepened demographic imbalances, especially in rural areas where the remaining population is largely elderly and vulnerable to social isolation (*as cited in* Niță & Pârvu, 2020:107). The effects of this transition remain evident today, reflecting the difficulties of Romanian society in adapting to the new economic and social realities shaped by modernisation and digitalisation. Economic inequalities inherited from the transition period have persisted - and in some cases intensified - as a result of ongoing digital transformations, which disproportionately affect vulnerable social groups. Today, access to digital infrastructure, skills, and services largely depends on income levels, perpetuating the cycle of social inequality.

2. Digitalisation as a Social Phenomenon

Beyond its technical dimension - the conversion of information into a digital format - digitalisation should be understood as a complex social phenomenon that

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reconfigures social reality through new patterns of interaction and relationships between individuals and institutions. From a structural perspective, digitalisation reflects the ways in which technology shapes the behaviours, structures, and values of contemporary society.

In analysing the transformative processes of the modern era, Castells (2010:21) describes the transition from the industrial to the informational society, emphasising the emergence of new forms of social and economic organisation generated by the digital revolution. He outlines a coherent and sociologically relevant theory of the information society, in which communication networks, the Internet, and the knowledge-based economy constitute the central pillars of social and economic functioning.

Mosco (2017:5) proposes a complementary approach focused on the cultural-symbolic dimension of digitalisation. From this perspective, technology is not confined to infrastructure and organisational functions; rather, it constitutes a space for the production of meaning, where individuals and communities invest values, meanings, and collective experiences. Consequently, digitalisation emerges as a complex social process that links the economic dimension of power with the cultural construction of meaning, defining a new form of social consciousness characteristic of the contemporary era.

From a systemic and action-oriented perspective, Prodanciuc (2012a, 2012b) highlights the complementary roles of institutions and social organisations within the social order, emphasising the role of leadership in integrating and adapting the system to its social environment. Institutions accentuate the normative dimension and the legitimacy of actions, providing order, predictability, and social identity - elements transmitted through socialisation from one generation to the next. By contrast, organisations perform practical and operational functions, focused on planning, coordination, and the attainment of specific objectives. In the current context, marked by the expansion of digitalisation across all spheres of social life, this equilibrium is being reconfigured as information technologies transform institutional structures and generate new forms of organisational digital capital, grounded in competences, virtual collaboration, and social innovation. These institutional and organisational transformations are accompanied by profound value shifts that reflect individuals' adaptation to new social and cultural realities. Within this framework, Motoi (2017:227-228) emphasises that social and cultural values - particularly those related to family, education, and professional life - have undergone significant changes in recent decades. These shifts can be interpreted as expressions of a broader process of redefining social identity. They acquire a new dimension in the digital era, where technology has become a central driver of social and cultural change.

Addressing the issue of digital transformations in labour and the impact of parental occupational status on their children, Nicholas and Lehdonvirta (2023:1945-1946) highlight significant changes in the relationship between employment structures and professional relations in contemporary society. Operational processes such as algorithmic recruitment, online testing and selection, and client-based rating systems are reshaping traditional criteria for access and professional advancement. Communication and interaction mediated by the digital environment between employers and employees contribute to the erosion of classical mechanisms of social mobility. An important aspect to consider is how digitalisation influences social inequalities, depending on individuals' access to resources.

The concept of the "third-level digital divide", introduced by van Deursen and Helsper, explains that beyond differences in access to technological infrastructure (first level) and those related to skills and patterns of use (second level), there are also disparities

in the outcomes and benefits derived from technology use. In this regard, the authors (2015:31-32) emphasise that the third-level digital divide tends to reproduce existing inequalities, as individuals from advantaged backgrounds are more capable of converting access to technology into tangible benefits.

In the same vein, Scheerder et al. (2017) highlight the unequal distribution of digital skills and access to technology, reflecting the economic and cultural differences among individuals. People from privileged socio-economic backgrounds are therefore better positioned to capitalise on the opportunities offered by the digital economy, while disadvantaged groups risk marginalisation in the absence of the necessary skills and resources. At the same time, the digital environment may contribute to reducing dependence on traditional forms of cultural capital - such as educational credentials, family background, or networks of social influence - by fostering contexts in which individual performance, innovation, and adaptability become the main criteria for professional evaluation and recognition (*as cited in* Nicholas & Lehdonvirta, 2023). Consequently, digital capital can be regarded as an extension of the classical forms of cultural and social capital, adapted to the logic of interaction and the social and organisational hierarchies that characterise the digital environment.

3. Digital Capital: Between Opportunity and Social Inequality

In recent years, digitalisation has become established as a complex social process capable of reconfiguring economic, cultural, and institutional structures. It is therefore essential to examine how this transformation is reflected in individual and collective resources and opportunities. The concept of digital capital refers to the accumulation and use of technological skills, knowledge, and resources by individuals within new forms of social interaction mediated by virtual environments. It is thus relevant to interpret digital capital as a derivative form grounded in Pierre Bourdieu's theories of social and cultural capital. In the online environment, the accumulation of technological, informational, and relational resources functions as a new type of capital that influences individuals' positions within social hierarchies. Consequently, digital capital reflects the tension between the opportunities offered by the virtual space and the inequalities generated by the uneven distribution of access and the varying levels of digital competence across the population.

The specialised literature highlights the dual nature of digitalisation, reflecting its capacity both to stimulate social participation and to amplify existing inequalities. This reality raises important questions about opportunities for social mobility, as new forms of inequality emerge concerning access to digital infrastructure, as well as the use and benefits of digital technologies. Consequently, there is a growing emphasis on the empirical analysis of digital competences, which serve as a key indicator of active participation within new social arrangements. In this context, digital organisations, whether fully virtual or the result of the transformation of traditional structures, create new forms of social participation and recognition, where access and visibility are closely tied to individuals' digital capital and level of technological literacy. Accordingly, digital capital can be understood as the set of digital resources available to an individual: competences, access to technology, membership in online networks, and the ability to leverage these elements for social, economic, or cultural purposes. From this perspective, digitalisation can be interpreted as a new and evolving mechanism of social stratification, in which digital resources function as forms of social, economic, and cultural capital essential for integration into the information society (Bourdieu, 1986; van Deursen & van

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Dijk, 2014:509; Feng & Tan, 2024:2-3).

Delibeys, Vergidis, and Delimpei (2024:140-141) explore the relevance of Pierre Bourdieu's theory for understanding how cultural capital influences the development of digital competences among young people enrolled in educational programmes. The authors emphasise that individuals with higher levels of cultural capital (expressed through formal qualifications, access to cultural goods, or familiarity with educational norms) tend to perform better in terms of fundamental digital skills. For instance, individuals with higher education and frequent access to cultural materials (such as books) exhibit greater confidence in using digital environments, demonstrate higher efficiency in solving technical problems, and show more creativity in producing digital content. The study's findings confirm the theory of the reproduction of social inequalities, underscoring that the level of cultural capital plays a crucial role in shaping the competences required for active participation in today's digitalised society. Access to and the effective use of digital competences are strongly influenced by an individual's cultural position. Consequently, young people from backgrounds with limited cultural resources face significant obstacles in developing digital skills, which contributes to the widening of the digital divide and the perpetuation of social inequalities (Scheerder, van Deursen, & van Dijk, 2017; Feng & Tan, 2024).

In a different line of inquiry, Gómez (2020) examines how economic, cultural, and social capital can be transformed into digital capital, as well as the reverse processes through which digital capital contributes to the regeneration of the three original forms of capital. The findings indicate that digital inequalities are rooted in economic capital, which constitutes a direct material barrier to accessing digital resources. Cultural capital is internalised in the form of digital competences through processes of technological socialisation, while social capital finds its digital expression through activities on online platforms. Moreover, digital capital itself becomes a transferable resource that can reinforce or generate other types of capital-economic, social, and cultural-through the effective management of networked interests.

The analysis conducted by Cortoni and Perovic (2020:171-172) highlights the interdependence between the digital capital of educational institutions and the social and cultural capital they possess. A school's ability to integrate digital technology into its educational activities is directly influenced by the effectiveness of its leadership mechanisms and its capacity to attract external resources, including funding and partnerships with institutional actors.

The findings indicate that these forms of institutional social capital contribute to expanding access to digital infrastructure and to creating an environment conducive to pedagogical innovation. At the same time, the involvement of teaching staff in continuous professional development programmes and in educational initiatives with a digital component reflects the institution's strategic commitment to modernisation, inclusion, and the improvement of educational quality.

Within this framework, in which educational institutions play a crucial role in developing digital competences and reducing disparities in access to resources, adopting a systemic perspective on education also becomes relevant. Motoi (2018) emphasises that the efficiency of an educational system is not confined to academic performance but lies in its capacity to integrate social and technological change, thereby contributing to the formation of the human capital required by the knowledge-based society.

In this study, the relationship between the level of digital competences and individual income is analysed as a relevant example for understanding how digital capital

contributes to either reinforcing or mitigating social inequalities. However, this relationship does not capture the full complexity of the phenomenon, as a comprehensive approach should also integrate other factors-such as education, place of residence, age, and gender-that may influence the distribution and utilisation of digital resources in contemporary society. These aspects represent potential directions for future research.

4. Methodology

For the present study, a secondary analysis of statistical data available from Eurostat was conducted to highlight the relationship between *Median Equivalised Net Income* (annual, expressed in thousand euros) and *Individuals' Level of Digital Skills* across the European Union member states. The analysis compares the 2023 values of the selected indicators between Romania and the European Union average. The *Median Equivalised Net Income* indicator reflects the average standard of living of the population, calculated by adjusting household income according to household size and composition, thus allowing for comparisons between countries and families of different sizes.

In analysing digital competences, the European Commission and Eurostat employ a common reference framework through the *Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI)*, which monitors the progress of digitalisation across EU member states. According to the European framework, digital competences encompass five main dimensions-information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, content creation, safety, and problem-solving.

Individuals considered to possess basic or above-basic digital competences are those who demonstrate at least a minimum level of proficiency across all these domains, including activities such as searching for and evaluating online information, using digital communication tools, managing personal data, and applying technologies for practical or professional purposes. This definition, adopted within the European Digital Decade 2030 indicators, enables the comparison of digital literacy levels among EU member states.

The descriptive analysis of the data made it possible to identify trends and differences across EU member states. To explore the association between income and digital competences, the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) was employed to assess the strength and direction of the relationship and to test its statistical significance.

The selection of these indicators was exploratory in nature, aiming to illustrate, in a comparative manner, potential associations between the economic resources and digital capital of the member states. However, the analysis presents certain limitations, as it relies on aggregate data and does not account for individual-level variables such as age, gender, educational attainment, or place of residence, factors that could provide a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between population income and digital competences. In this context, the study of digital stratification and social inequalities calls for broader, longitudinal research capable of capturing in greater depth the dynamics of the transformations generated by the process of digitalisation.

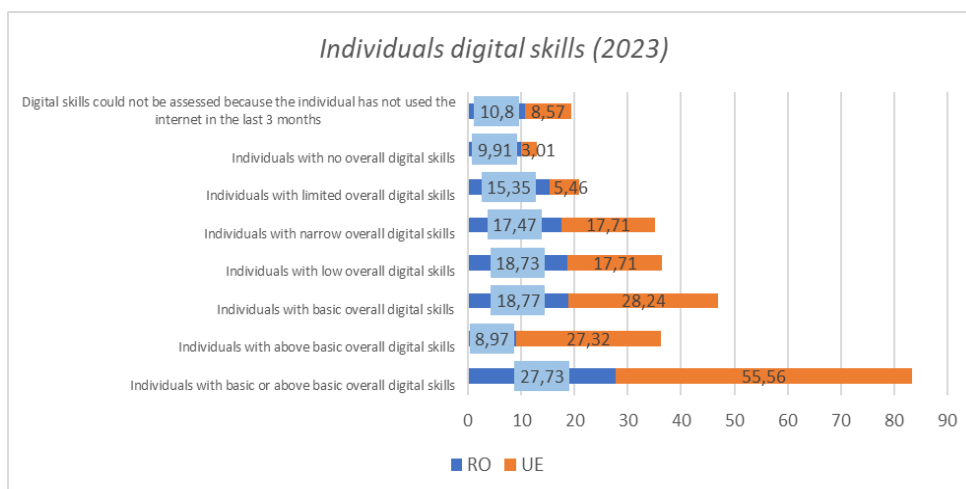
5. Digital and Economic Inequalities in the European Area

In the context of the rapid transformations generated by digitalisation at the global level, the European Union continues to exhibit significant disparities among its member states, particularly between Western and Eastern countries. Romania serves as a representative case of these digital and economic gaps, consistently ranking among the lowest positions, together with Bulgaria, in indicators related to digital competences, infrastructure, and the integration of digital technologies.

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Drawing on the common framework for assessing digital competences established at the European Union level, the comparative analysis of Eurostat statistical data for 2023 highlights substantial differences between Romania and the EU average in terms of digital competence levels.

The data presented in Figure 1 reveal a significant gap between Romania and the EU average regarding digital competences. Individuals possessing basic or above-basic digital competences represent only 27.7% of Romania's population, approximately half of the EU average of 55.6%.



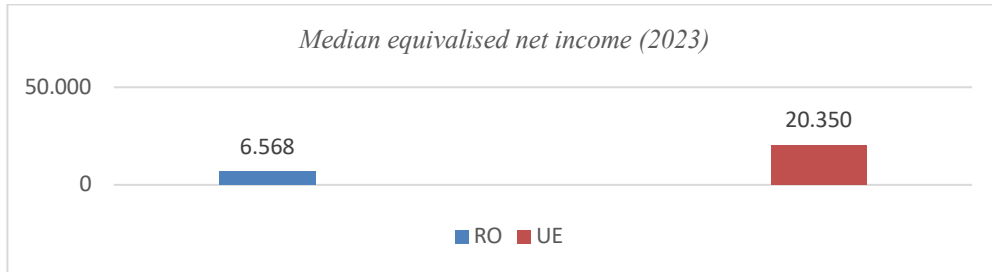
Source: Author's own compilation based on data retrieved in March 2025 from Eurostat. *Individuals' level of digital skills (from 2021 onwards)* [isoc_sk_dskl_i21\$defaultview] available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/main/data/database>

Figure 1. (%) Individuals' Digital Skills in 2023

With regard to above-basic digital competences, Romania records only 8.9%, compared with 27.3% at the European level. Romania also remains below the EU average in terms of basic digital competences.

The category of individuals with low digital competences (classified as “low” and “narrow”) is relatively similar between the two groups, at around 17–18%, indicating a fairly balanced distribution of minimal skills. However, major differences become evident at the extremes. Romania has a higher proportion of citizens with no digital competences (9.9% compared with 3% in the EU), as well as a larger share of individuals who could not be assessed because they had not used the internet during the previous three months.

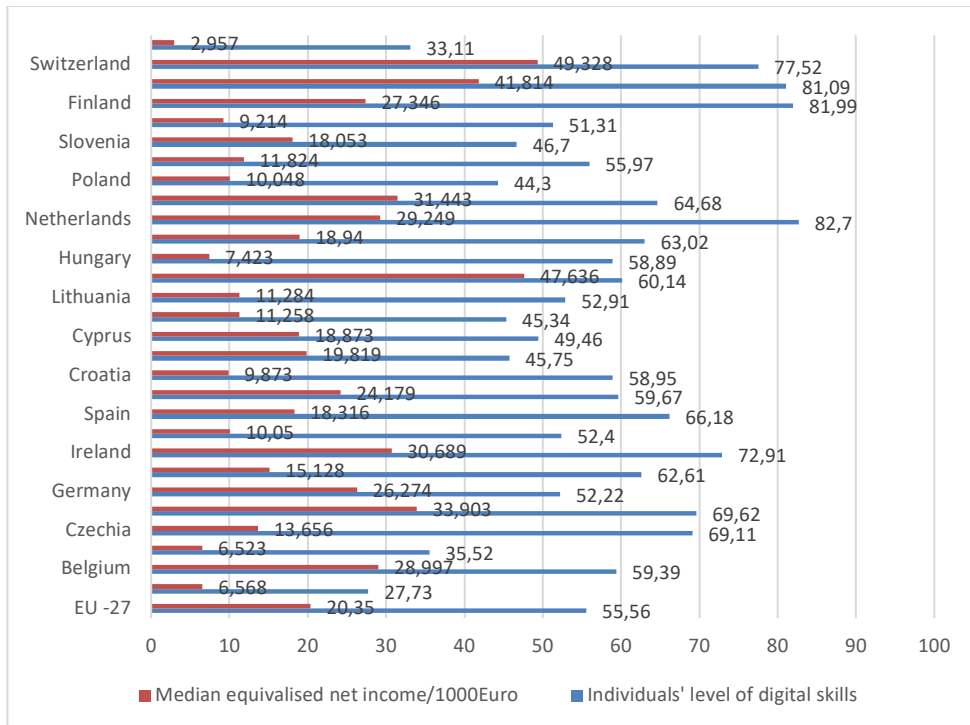
Following the analysis of digital competences, the next section presents data on Median Equivalised Net Income, to capture the relationship between economic resources and the level of digital literacy across the member states of the European Union.



Source: Author's own compilation based on data retrieved in March 2025 from Eurostat. *Mean and median income by total age class and sex* [ilc_di03\$defaultview] available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/main/data/database>

Figure 2. (Euro) Median Equivalised Net Income in 2023

The data presented in Figure 2 reveal a major income gap between Romania and the European Union average. In the year analysed, the median equivalised net income was €6.568 in Romania, compared to €20.350 at the European Union level. This means that the median income of Romanians represents approximately one-third of the European average, indicating a significantly lower purchasing power and a reduced capacity for investment in technological and educational resources.



Source: Author's own compilation based on data retrieved in March 2025 from Eurostat. [ilc_di03\$defaultview] & [isoc_sk_dskl_i21\$defaultview]

Note: Income values are expressed in thousand euros and have been rounded for graphical representation, while preserving the actual proportional relationships between the countries analysed.

Figure 3. Relationship between Income and Digital Skills (2023)

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Income differences are reflected in disparities in digital competences, as access to devices, high-quality internet connections, and training programmes depends on the economic resources available. Consequently, economic inequalities exacerbate the digital divide, influencing individuals' ability to adapt to and participate in the transformations driven by digitalisation. This issue became particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, when a significant share of the low-income population faced difficulties in accessing online education, digital public services, and remote work opportunities. The pandemic underscored that digital transformation depends not only on the existence of technological infrastructure but also on the economic resources and competences required to use it effectively.

To provide a broader comparative perspective, the analysis was extended to include all European Union member states, as well as several associated countries. Figure 3 illustrates the relationship between Median Equivalised Net Income and the overall level of digital competences in 2023.

A positive correlation can be observed between economic resources and the degree of digitalisation: countries with higher median incomes, such as the Netherlands, Finland, Norway, and Switzerland, also register the highest levels of digital competences (over 75%). Conversely, Central and Eastern European states, including Romania, Bulgaria, and Hungary, fall below the European average in terms of both income and digital competences.

This distribution reflects the trend that economic capital remains a key determinant of digital capital, influencing the population's ability to access, use, and leverage new technologies.

As Reis et al. (2020) point out, digitalisation is redefining the way institutions and companies operate, optimising both internal and external processes, facilitating the circulation of information, and supporting data-driven decision-making. At the same time, this phenomenon extends its impact to everyday life, influencing the ways in which individuals interact and relate to different spheres of society. Thus, in education, digitalisation transforms teaching and learning processes through the introduction of digital tools; in public administration, it contributes to increased transparency and efficiency of services; and in the business environment, it stimulates innovation, competitiveness, and adaptability to market dynamics. Therefore, digitalisation emerges as a process that transforms and enhances organisational performance while redefining social, economic, and cultural interactions on a global scale (*as cited in Rădăcină, 2023:210*).

However, it remains to be analysed to what extent these transformations stimulate social mobility and offer real opportunities for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds to attain more advantageous positions within the social structure, or whether, on the contrary, they contribute to the perpetuation of traditional inequalities within the new digital arrangements. In this regard, Shafik emphasises that technological and economic progress is not always accompanied by an equitable distribution of opportunities. Modern societies are grounded in the belief that individual effort can lead to an improvement in one's personal condition; however, reality reveals major differences between countries in terms of the "architecture of opportunity." In some states, social advancement is achievable within one or two generations, whereas in others, several generations may be required to overcome disadvantaged social positions. From this perspective, the impact of digitalisation on society raises an important question: will

digitalisation become a tool for social mobility and equity, or will it reinforce existing social hierarchies under a new, digital form? (2021:24–25)

In this context, analysing the relationship between income and digital competences becomes relevant for understanding how economic resources shape participation in the digital economy. Figure 3 illustrates this association across the member states of the European Union.

To statistically evaluate this relationship, the Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated. The results of the Pearson correlation analysis indicate a significant positive relationship between median equivalised net income and the level of digital competences ($r = 0.687$, $p < 0.01$). This means that member states with higher median incomes also tend to record higher levels of digital competences.

Table 1. Correlation between Income and Digital Skills

		Digital skills
Income	Pearson Correlation	.687**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	30

**, Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation is statistically significant at the 0.01 level, confirming the existence of a consistent relationship between the two variables across the European Union. This result supports the hypothesis that economic resources influence the population's ability to access and capitalise on digital technologies, thereby reinforcing the connection between economic capital and digital capital.

6. Conclusions

The results obtained confirm the existence of a digital stratification model within the European space, determined by economic resources and public policies aimed at supporting digital competences. The analysis presented highlights that digitalisation constitutes a complex social process situated at the intersection of economic, cultural, and institutional transformations. Beyond its technological dimension, digitalisation functions as a mechanism for reconfiguring social relations and redistributing resources within contemporary society.

Romania continues to rank below the European Union average in terms of both income and digital competences, reflecting a dual structural vulnerability—economic and educational. This discrepancy between resources and skills indicates an urgent need for integrated public policies focused on reducing the digital divide through investment in infrastructure, digital training, and social inclusion.

From a theoretical perspective, the study supports the interpretation of digital capital as an extension of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986), adapted to the information age. Digital competences are not merely a technical indicator of technology use but also a form of social power and symbolic capital that determines access to education, the labour market, and civic participation. Therefore, digital capital can function both as a vector of inclusion and as a factor of social exclusion.

For Romania, the major challenge lies in transforming digitalisation into an instrument of equitable economic and social development through sustained investment in digital education, infrastructure, and skills training - particularly among vulnerable groups.

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In this regard, the objectives outlined in the Digital Decade 2030 provide an essential strategic framework for promoting an inclusive digital society capable of harnessing technological potential for human development and social cohesion - supporting education, civic participation, and the development of digital competences. The European vision seeks to maintain a balance between innovation and equity, ensuring that digital transformation supports education, the economy, and public services while upholding the values of freedom, security, and solidarity.

In the same vein, Olimid, Georgescu, and Gherghe (2023:134–135) emphasise the need for a solid framework of democratic governance and institutional reform, one capable of integrating emerging technologies into public decision-making processes, thereby promoting more efficient, transparent, and adaptable public governance aligned with contemporary social dynamics.

Following the logic advanced by Shafik (2021), who analyses the *architecture of opportunity* and *social mobility*, it becomes legitimate to ask how many generations will be required for Romania to close the gap with the European Union average, exploring digitalisation as a genuine mechanism of progress and social change.

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Article Info

Received: October 29 2025

Accepted: November 17 2025

How to cite this article:

Anghel, M. E. (2025). Digitalisation in Europe: Between Inclusion and Social Inequality. *Revista de Științe Politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques*, no. 88, pp. 199-211.



ORIGINAL PAPER

Philosophical hesitations on the nature and consequences of the human right over one's own body

Dan Claudiu Dănișor¹⁾

Abstract:

Although the concept of human right over one's own body seems clear, the nature and consequences of this right are in reality particularly confusing, as there is no indisputable philosophical substantiation of them. Philosophical hesitations on the nature and consequences of this right make the option of constitutionalizing either the principle of the unavailability of the human body as such, or that of its complete availability impossible. The two principles weigh each other in a conjunctural manner. But the choice of the criterion of conjunctural balancing is not decided either, as it does not seem clear in this area whether liberal democracies are determined to stand firmly on the ground of neutrality towards moral doctrines, aiming only at the achievement of a just society, or are willing to give in to perfectionist temptations, aiming to achieve the good society in itself.

Keywords: *human rights, habeas corpus, unavailability of the human body.*

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Philosophical hesitations on the nature and consequences of the human right over one's own body

The notion of human body seems clear; everyone knows what a human body is. However, from a legal point of view, the notion is not at all transparent. The ambiguity stems, first of all, from the fact that there is no legal definition of the body. Secondly, from the fact that, if it seems natural that the life of a person is linked to the body, it is not at all necessary that the notion of body be linked to that of life. We must admit that in a way the human body appears before birth, which means, as a rule, from a legal point of view, before being alive and continues after death. This will raise particularly complex problems regarding the protection granted to the foetus, with regard to the right to terminate a pregnancy, the right to remove organs from corpses, etc.

The third difficulty, the one I am concerned with here, results from the different understanding of the human body, sometimes as a substratum of the soul, sometimes as a thing. The body hardly fits into the distinction Justinian made in the Institutes: "*Omne autem jus quo utimur, vel ad personas pertinet, vel ad res, vel ad actiones*" (The whole of the law that we use concerns either persons, or things, or actions in justice). It is difficult to state that when we refer to the body we refer to the person, because the person is much more than this body, but the body is so linked to the person that it can only be seen as an extension of it, as a "substratum" of the human soul (Carbonnier, 1994). It is, therefore, sacred. Seen in this way, the human body, even if it remains somewhat a thing, is a separate thing, one that must be intangible and unavailable.

If, however, this sacred character of the human body is not accepted, is the right to the body, remaining a simple thing, a property right? In other words, can the body be the object of transactions, like things, or is it outside of commerce, of the civil circuit? Can the trade in one's own body be admitted, in the form of prostitution or giving birth for another, or the trade in body parts, in the form of the trade in organs for transplantation, or are such acts prohibited? And if the latter is the case, how and to what extent can the right to dispose of one's own body be limited?

We see that both the classification of the body outside the category of things and its removal from this category raise particularly complex, sometimes insurmountable problems. It is clear that the personal right to one's own body is far from being a property right as such, since it does not confer on each person a kind of "sovereignty" over the body. But it is equally clear that it implies a right of disposal that cannot be limited under the same conditions in which individual rights in general can be limited.

It is obvious that the body belongs to us, but it is equally obvious that we do not know very clearly how it belongs to us. From a legal perspective, this belonging can be conceived in terms of property. This is how some theories, which can be brought together under the category of "proprietary liberalism", support the existence of a property right that the individuals would have over themselves. Other theories "sweeten" this analysis by supporting only a freedom to dispose of one's own body, but it is obvious that the analysis is still within the scope of the legal category of property, yet introducing only one aspect of the right of property: the disposal. Many legal theories avoid generalizing the problem, treating each of its consequences as if it were a distinct problem, but the price is, if the philosophy that underpins the analysis is missing, incoherence, and if it is present but not disclosed, euphemism.

Treating the problem of the legal relationship between the subjects and their own bodies in terms of property rights has great symbolic force. First of all, because of history: the dependents of the feudal era did not have possession of their own bodies. Their bodies – not their souls – were owned by their lords. When they acquired it, they did so by referring to the patrimonial-senior conception of legal relations. Therefore, *habeas corpus*

is naturally constructed in the mirror of this, as a possession of what had been taken from them, so on the ground of regaining the right of ownership over the body. Secondly, the symbolic power of conceiving the relations of the persons with their own bodies in terms of property is due to the political function of property in the Middle Ages and, then, in societies that were configured by “fleeing” from this type of constitution. Being the owner of one’s own body means in the modern era defining oneself as the holder of a political power. A man who has property of himself is a “master”, i.e. a man who has political power. No one can touch your property rights, which are, in essence, all the rights you have because you rule yourself. There is no power separate from you that can rule you, at least politically, that is, on the level of physical existence, of corporeality, because, spiritually, God can (still) subsist.

Proprietary liberals make the most of this symbolic and political force of the idea of property. They use the concept of self-ownership to demand greater freedom and more rights for individuals and to require the limitation of political power, of the state, which must be minimal at most (Nozic, 1974; Nozic, 1991), but which can become ultra-minimal or even “null” (Rothbard, 1973). Ownership of oneself makes the individual, in the eyes of some libertarians, even “sovereign” (Lemieux, 1987). At the forefront of these contemporary conceptions are the ideas of John Locke: “Every man is [...] the *owner* of his own *person*. No one else but himself has any right over him.” (Locke, 1690; Locke, 1990). Starting from this idea, which will constitute one of the pillars of modern liberalism, Locke will base not only private property on self-ownership, but also the identity of man on property: “[...] man has in himself the great foundation of property” (Locke, 1690; Locke, 1990: 79)

“A liberal proprietary theory defines a just society as a society that does not allow anyone to extort from an individual what is due to him in a predefined sense” (Van Parijs, 1991). This is what R. Nozick stated in the first lines of the preface to *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (1974): “Individuals have rights and no one – person or group – can do certain things to them (without violating their rights). These rights are so strong and go so far that one can ask what role the state and its official representatives still have, if any? How much space does the state leave for the rights of individuals?” (Nozic, 1991: 35). The idea on which this position in favour of individual rights is based is that individuals “own them”. It is the appropriation of rights that defines them as rights prior to any society, as “natural”, and a society that “defeats” their natural character becomes one against nature, unjust. Any social redistribution finds its limits in this “defeat” of nature. It remains just if it is only the result of the voluntary trading of legitimate property rights, without any intervention of any redistributive power that could redefine their legitimacy. Everything therefore depends on the just “genealogy” of property rights. If they are initially constituted justly, individuals can freely negotiate their transaction and, if these two conditions are met, the society resulting from the contractual redistribution of rights is just.

The differences between the liberal proprietary theories concern, first, how the original irreproachable appropriation, the genealogy of rights, is conceived, and, secondly, how the just character of the subsequent transaction of rights is conceived. But they agree on the fact that, as Murray Rothbard argued, “the concept of Rights makes no sense unless we understand them as Property Rights. For not only are there no Human Rights that are not at the same time Property Rights, but Human Rights lose their precise and absolute character when they are not founded on the criterion of Property Rights. We say [...] that Property Rights are identical with Human Rights [..., because] The personal Right to

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one's own body, personal freedom, is a Property Right [...]" (Rothbard, 1982; Guillaumat, Lemieux, 1991: 148-149).

For a first category of liberal proprietary theories, for a society to be judged as just it is sufficient that the genealogy of rights is irreproachable and that their transaction is free. For a second, the redistribution resulting from the transaction must also be just. This requires the fulfilment of an additional clause, which is called the "Lockean" clause: "a society cannot be just if certain individuals have within it a worse fate than what would have been theirs in the state of nature. Injustice consists, again, in extorting the individuals from what is their due, now interpreted as the level of well-being they would have enjoyed in the absence of society. [...] The exact implications of the theory depend, of course, on the interpretation given to the 'state of nature'." (Van Parijs, 1991)

When the right to one's own body is conceived in terms of *disposal*, as the right to dispose of one's own body, what changes is the *emphasis*. The theories summarized above emphasize the constitution of the right to one's own body, only then the freedom of transactions with it, and only sometimes the justice of the outcome of these transactions. In contrast, theories that affirm only the *disposal* of one's own body emphasize the latter aspect, demanding that the outcome of transactions with one's own body be just and apply the requirement of justice to the transactions themselves.

The differences are not only theoretical, but practical. The result of the proprietary theories of the first category - the one I am concerned with here - is that any transaction with one's own body is legitimate if it is free, since no one normally questions the irreproachable character of the proximity of one's own body, and the result cannot be unjust once the two conditions - irreproachable genealogy and freedom of transactions - are verified. Society cannot, as a consequence, adopt any rule that would limit free transactions with one's own body, for example, prohibit prostitution or the rental of the womb, or the sale of body products, etc.

The consequence of introducing the "Lockean" clause by the second category of liberal proprietary theories is that transactions with one's own body, even if made freely, can be judged as unjust if they do not achieve a just result, that is, some of those who transact are placed in a worse situation than in the state of nature. Society can, therefore, legitimately restrict the exercise of the rights to trade one's own body, but only to guarantee this minimum level of well-being. It can regulate prostitution or the rental of the womb or other such transactions to ensure minimal protection for the most vulnerable in such transactions, but it cannot prohibit transactions as long as they are free.

The consequence of the theory that reduces the right to one's own body to a right of disposal is that society can prohibit certain forms of trading the right to one's own body if they are in themselves unjust, even if they are freely consented and do not place one of the parties in a position of diminishing the natural well-being. This time, prostitution or the rental of the womb, or the like, can be prohibited in order to guarantee the just character of the society in which we are placed. The prohibition can be pushed further if instead of the justice of society, the restriction of the right to dispose of one's own body is made with a view to achieving a good society. This time, society can impose *moral* limits on the market for transactions with one's own body.

Current positive law is not decided on the choice of the philosophical foundations of the right that people have over their own bodies and, consequently, is not coherent regarding the limits that society can impose, through legal norms, on the right that persons have over their own bodies. Some limits on the state's power to restrict the exercise of this right are less debatable than others, but it is clear that liberal democracies do not agree

on the legal treatment of the use of one's own body parts, the use of its functions, or the use of its products. The only aspect that seems consistent is the prohibition of slavery, conceived in terms of ownership of the body.

The body is therefore inviolable, a consequence resulting from its sacralization, which implies that man has the right to life and the right to physical integrity and the right to physical security, that is, a security understood in a narrow sense, as the security of bodies. But it is not clear whether it is available or unavailable. The principle of the unavailability of the human body is not regulated at a supra-legislative level except in terms of the prohibition of slavery and servitude. The rest of the issues involved in unavailability are decided at the legislative level. In most systems, the norms that regulate issues related to the unavailability of the body are in principle civil, with criminal norms intervening only to guarantee absolute prohibitions, such as, for example, slavery, servitude or forced labour. But even in terms of the choice of the type of norm, current legal systems are not always convergent, since there are still many systems that penalize some acts of disposal over the body, for example attempted suicide or abortion, or some transactions with the body, for example prostitution. The Romanian legal system has for the time being abandoned the penalization of certain acts of disposal or transaction of the body, regulating the prohibition of certain patrimonial acts concerning the body, in art. 66 of the Civil Code: "Any acts that seek to confer a patrimonial value on the human body, its elements or products shall be affected by absolute nullity, unless otherwise provided by law". But this norm does not limit the power to legislate, because the Code is an ordinary law, which can be modified at any time by the legislature. It has a symbolic superiority, but it is not a privileged and protected norm.

It seems, therefore, that philosophical hesitations over the nature and consequences of the human right to one's own body make the option of constitutionalizing either the principle of the unavailability of the human body as such or that of its complete availability impossible. The two principles weigh each other in a conjunctural manner. But the choice of the criterion of conjunctural balancing is not decided either, because it does not seem clear in this area whether liberal democracies are determined to stand firmly on the ground of neutrality towards moral doctrines, aiming only at achieving a just society, or are willing to give in to perfectionist temptations, aiming to achieve a society that is good in itself. This is the reason why it was proposed to abandon any claim to constitutionalize the principle of the unavailability of the human body (Lemennicier, 1991: 111).

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Philosophical hesitations on the nature and consequences of the human right over one's own body

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Article Info

Received: November 07 2025

Accepted: November 18 2025

How to cite this article:

Dănișor, D. C. (2025). Philosophical hesitations on the nature and consequences of the human right over one's own body. *Revista de Științe Politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques*, no. 88, pp. 212-217.



ORIGINAL PAPER

English Conditionals – IF Clauses – Rules and Language Structures

Andreea Mihaela Stoian¹⁾

Abstract:

English grammar is the one that sets the basis of speaking and writing correctly in this language. English grammar can be seen as a separate subject/ discipline for learners because it comprises key information, rules and examples of correct language structures. All of these enable English language to be learnable and accessible to those who want to study and afterwards use it. Through English grammar, the learner can create his/ her own grammatically correct sentences and links/ connections between words. In English, the verb category is considered the most complex one due to the fact that each context and placement in time lead to changes of the verb tense. In addition, English has conditional structures in which verbs have to follow a set of rules in order to form correct sentences / phrases.

English Conditionals or If Clauses have a complex aspect because they need to apply different rules that change the verb tenses in correlation with what the speaker wants to transmit. An English Conditional sentence has two parts: one part – the conditional one that is introduced by **if** or a similar word (e.g. even if, unless) and the other part includes a verb that has to take a certain tense.

In fact, the hypothetical or potential situation is very important because it determines the type of conditional that should be used. For English learners, If-Clause sentences are difficult to master because, in most languages, a hypothetical or less likely to happen situation does not come with the need to have a certain verb tense.

Keywords: *English grammar, conditionals, types, rules, different verb tenses.*

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English Conditionals – IF Clauses – Rules and Language Structures

English grammar is well-structured, offering the learner the possibility to exercise the same verb tense, the same grammatical structure or part of speech in different contexts.

In English, each grammatical structure has a specific function that follows certain patterns. The English learner has to master the main parts of speech (verb, noun, adjective, adverb, pronoun, preposition, etc.) in order to go further and deal with: verb tenses, conditionals (if-clauses), reported(indirect) speech, passive voice, modal verbs or gerunds and infinitives.

English conditionals do not represent a unique trait for this language because we can find conditional structures in Romanian language as well as in German. The only difference is that English employs verbs at different tenses according to the clause/conditional type. It is obvious that these structures cannot be taught to an A1 or A2 English learner/ student. Such conditional structures can be introduced to B1 students and they can contain a higher level of difficultness for the B2 and C1 students.

As students improve their English language, teachers can involve them in more complicated grammar structures. When and how these structures are introduced, are decisions that the English teacher has to take. For *how* – there are several teaching methods and even devices (the smart table and the projector) which can be used during English classes/ courses.

The teaching methods, even for English conditionals, can involve, at a certain point *the didactic game*. This didactic game:” ... is an attractive activity in a lively, humorous and motivating atmosphere in which the students carry out instructive – educational tasks. This is the element that prevents the appearance of fatigue and monotony in foreign language classes” (Chirițescu&Păunescu, 2024:237)

As mentioned, the didactic game can be employed when teaching English conditionals at least for generalities.

English conditionals or IF-clauses structures can be divided in three parts (except zero conditional and mixed conditionals), or in other words, there are three types of conditionals based on the given context.

English Conditionals: Types and Examples

English conditional sentences are often created in order to emphasize a point of view:

e.g. Unless they stop this discussion the agreement is down. = If they do not stop this discussion, the agreement is down.

Most English grammar books present If-clauses structures as divided in three. The first type of conditional offers a predictive situation therefore is based on reality. The second conditional is also hypothetical presents imaginary situations from the present or future. These hypothetical contexts are unlikely to happen.

The third type conditional is counterfactual conditional because the context belongs to the past and the speaker imagines how things would have turned out if he had done something different.

Along with these three types, English grammar books also mention zero conditional, mixed conditionals as well as exceptions to the general rules. In his book, *Explaining English Grammar*, Yule George states that: “English has a general tendency to move longer or ‘heavier’ chunks of information to the end of sentences. Known as END-WEIGHT, this process creates a strong motivation for putting lengthy if-clauses in final position” (Yule, 1998:137)

e.g. People have no other alternative than to pay if local authorities decide to increase taxes for vehicles made before 2000 and for private properties.

Such examples demonstrate that English conditionals can be included in longer sentences and phrases and that they are useful in expressing a point of view, a condition, a supposition, a possibility or a hypothetical situation.

The English conditionals are as follows:

- Zero Conditional – used for general truths and proven scientific facts. It has a simple structure: if + Present simple tense + ... Present simple tense:

e.g.: *If I heat water, it boils. / If you press start, the game begins. / If I drop glass, it breaks. Do not use gloves if you want to get a good mix of ingredients, / Ask her to check the result if she finishes the exercise before me.*

- First Conditional is used for real future possibility meaning that the action is most probably to happen. *Its structure is: if + Present Simple Tense + ... Simple Future Tense*

(will+ verb base):

e.g.: *If I learn this, I will get a good grade. / If you skip this class, your teacher will notice.*
/

If he submits his project he will participate in the contest. / If I need help, I will ask you to come. / If you do not call her, she will not know you are interested in the job.

- Second conditional expresses hypothetical situations in reference to what could happen if certain facts or events were possible. *The structure of this type of conditional is: If + Past Tense Simple + ... Present Conditional (would and verb base):*

e.g. *If it were colder, I would turn the heat on. / If he did not eat so much fast food he would be thinner. / If I were you, I would change the title. / If she saved money she could go in that exotic trip to Mexico.*

In this type of conditional we can replace if with was/ were followed by subject and infinitive. The meaning of the sentence does not change, denoting the same hypothetical situation:

e.g.: *Were people from that country to win the project, they would rebuild some factories. / Were I to listen to your advice I would sell the car. / Was he to see the Taj Mahal he would tell you in the video.*

- Third conditional refers to the past. More precisely they things that did not happen although we imagined how a situation could have been different if another situation had happened. The situation described by the 3rd type conditional is an impossible one and the sentences / phrases that are formed are unreal and truly hypothetical because they describe a context in the past that can no longer be changed in the present.

We form the 3rd type like this: If + Past Perfect Tense + ...+ would+ have + past participle of the verb:

e.g.: *If you had told me the truth I would have behaved differently. / He would have accepted my request if I had asked him to. / If he had seen that movie he would have known the plot. / Mary would have bought those shoes if she had received her salary.*

Other considerations regarding If Clause/ Conditionals in English

The learning strategies for English conditionals rely on the student's previous patterns in acquiring knowledge. Moreover, the role of teachers is essential for correct guidance because the aim is according to Scortan: "... each student must be able to master:

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the transformation of information into knowledge. This is a fundamental process for academic success. The child and then the adult are in possession of tools, instruments, methods which will allow them to learn throughout their life” (Scorțan, 2023:77)

It is clear that English classes and courses are designed to help the student acquire correct grammatical structures which will help him communicate in the targeted language – English.

At first sight, English conditionals seem to be quite accessible because they follow a set of rules. Nevertheless, in some cases there are exceptions which can act as extensions for the existing patterns. *For example, the use of should, were and had as replacements or as key words that lead to the omission of if:*

e.g.: Should he come, prepare something to eat. – If he comes, prepare something to eat.

Were I you, I would submit the article as soon as possible. – If I were you, I would submit the article as soon as possible.

Had he called, I would have prepared dinner. – If he had called, I would prepare dinner.

Another rule that can be extended and modified *is the use of will/ would after if*. It is well known that future forms are to be avoided after if, but in exceptional situations, things change:

e.g.: If you would not mind waiting, the manager will see you right away. (polite request)
If you would check our website, the discount will be applied immediately. (polite request – if you do not mind checking our website...)

If he will drink so many energizers it is not surprising that he is so agitated. (To insist on – if he continues to drink so many energizers....)

If they will eat so many sweets daily it is not surprising that they have increased levels of glycemia. (To continue doing something – If they continue to eat....)

As for other exceptions, if can be omitted and the result is an Implied Conditional (Ellipsis):

e.g. He never would have passed the exam without my help. (this sentence implies – If I had not helped him, he would not have passed the exam)

Jim would have missed Math classes, but he realized their importance.

(this sentence implies – If Jim had not realized the importance of Math classes, he would have missed them)

Moreover, English language provides alternatives for if. Expressions like: **unless, as long as, in case, provided (that), but for, whether**, etc.; can be used as a substitute for if:

e.g.: He can go out with his friends as long as (if) he learns for the Math exam afterwards.
The bank will lend you the money provided that (if) you sign the contract.

Once (if) he starts playing video games, he will find it difficult to stop.

Without the ambulance's intervention, the victim would not have survived. (If the ambulance had not intervened, the victim would not have survived)

In addition to the exceptions mentioned above, English conditionals also work in a mixed way. In certain contexts, we can find mixed conditionals – between second conditional and third conditional. Mixed conditionals express either a present result for a past situation or a past result for a present/ continuing situation:

e.g. If he had paid attention to what you said, he would not be in trouble (a present result from a past situation). This example is a combination between third and second conditional.

***If she applied** for the job, **she would have been hired** by now (the result of her action from the past). This last example is a combination between the second and third conditional.*

All these examples demonstrate that although English conditionals have exceptions to the general rules, they still represent English language with all its grammatical varieties.

ESP integrates English conditionals

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) integrates English conditionals during its courses. Although ESP courses are designed for specialized vocabulary and terminology, they also integrate grammar parts. Teaching If-clause in ESP courses requires a careful approach from the teacher. The ESP teacher has to keep in mind that English conditionals have their varieties and exceptions from the rules. To try and explain to ESP students all these exceptions and different contexts in which IF may be omitted or replaced, could become boring and students may lose interest. A long and detailed explanation in the grammar part is not so dynamic and interactive therefore ESP students may lose interest during the ESP course.

Students who take part in ESP courses are focused on accumulating the necessary English terminology for their domain so the grammar part should be structured in an accessible way. English conditionals for ESP courses need: "... to combine frequency and range, that is, to make sure that the examples selected are not only frequent but also appear in many different text types in order to ensure representativeness." (De Knop, De Rycker, 2008:105)

Therefore *IF-conditionals structures* can include specific terms from the student's field of study. For example, a student in the IT domain may find interest in conditionals if they are presented like:

e.g. 1st type – *If I press the start button, the computer will turn on.*

2nd type – *He would recover his files if you deleted them from the computer.*

3rd type – *If I had applied for the software analyst position, I would have got the job based on my experience in this domain.*

Such examples demonstrate to the ESP student that English conditionals are an important factor in their communication and that the *If – clause rules* are to be learnt because such English structures are useful in their targeted domain as well as in general conversations.

ESP courses are based on diverse methodologies that are involved in Teaching English as a Foreign language. Every ESP teacher has his/her way of combining different teaching activities that have: "... emerged, each with its unique theoretical underpinnings and instructional strategies. From the Conventional Grammar-Translation and Direct Methods to the more contemporary Communicative Language Teaching and Task – Based Language Teaching approaches..." (Lăpădat, 2023:253)

All these teaching methods may be applicable to English conditionals depending on the level of English for each class/ course. These methods can be adapted to the needs of the course and the exercises should reflect specific terminology if we speak about ESP courses.

English conditionals are essential for each student who decides to join ESP courses. If-Clauses help the student in his English communication showing a certain level of language proficiency if he uses them correctly. As a result, the grammatical theory

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behind If-clauses should be packed in an attractive way and it should be backed up by a lot of practice.

Many English learners including those from ESP courses need accessible, short, eye-catching, easy-to-understand explanations related to grammar. “To learn, how and when to use a certain grammar rule, is essential for a good and comprehensive communication in English. Each part of speech has its importance in the *infrastructure* of a language” (Stoian, 2023:334)

English conditionals can be seen as a metaphoric milestone that, if passed successfully by students will offer them more flexibility in using English as a foreign language. It is obvious that:” English grammar can be challenging for foreign learners. Even if they learn the main parts of speech (the noun, the verb, the adjective and the adverb) with all their exceptions; English learners should also know how to connect these parts of speech, how to give as many details as possible, in other words – to speak and write English fluently” (Stoian, 2024:211).

If we speak of connections, we can state that English conditionals have the purpose to link our thoughts from the past to present and those from present to future.

Another discussion that can arise from teaching English conditionals is how to present them to digital natives. “A digital native is a person who includes in his everyday communication web applications that he considers to be part of his life: Twitter, WhatsApp, chat, Facebook, online games, etc.’ (Bărbuceanu, 2020:137).

To convince these teenagers to grab a pen and a piece of paper and to start writing grammar rules or the key points of IF-clauses could be an impossible mission. Therefore, alternative teaching methods are suited for digital natives, especially the methods that employ technology: to project the course, to create PowerPoint slides, to use visual aids including tables and diagrams for the presentation of IF-clauses types, to have digitalised multiple - choice exercises, to send via internet useful English materials, etc. All these are ways to keep digital natives connected and, at the same time, to be focused on the information that they receive in English courses.

The advent of social networks and the connection through the World Wide Web (WEB) has made a great transformation because: “Media transformation actually means the decisive transformation of social systems, a revolution in communication methodologies, both at the individual and social level” (Lăpădat,2022:12)

Consequently, teaching English grammar means to include technology during courses and in the assignments given to students. The presence of technology during an English class/ course includes all types of approaches – from ESP classes to English taught as a foreign language in other contexts.

Conclusions

English conditionals are a vast subject in English grammar. To teach IF-clauses can be challenging in the context of digitalization. To learn how to use them requires a lot of practice and practice requires patience. So, the entire process: teaching - receiving – learning - using English conditionals needs effort and concentration from the teacher as well as from the student side.

If-clauses help English users to express probability, possibility, regret/ criticism of something that happened in the past. By using conditionals, English learners are encouraged to speak about imaginary or hypothetical situations and to express the cause and effect of certain actions.

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Article Info

Received: October 28 2025

Accepted: November 16 2025

How to cite this article:

Stoian, A. M. (2025). English Conditionals – IF Clauses – Rules and Language Structures. *Revista de Științe Politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques*, no. 88, pp. 218-224.



ORIGINAL PAPER

Ephemeratisation and its Impact on Language Learning and Teaching

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Abstract:

The current paper seeks to investigate the impact of our habits of using increasingly sophisticated technology on the way in which we learn and teach foreign languages. Ephemeratisation, i.e. doing more with less, is the term used to describe the performance of technology in today's world as well as the way in which we are currently putting it to use. The focus of the present research is to discuss the implications of ephemeratisation on the technical students enrolled in English L2 language classes. The central question is whether increasingly smarter technology and the unlimited availability of information is producing better learning outcome in foreign languages classes or it is merely creating an illusion of learning within a gapped foundation of concept comprehension.

Keywords: *digital exposure, English for Specific Purposes, ephemeratisation, learning outcome*

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1. Introduction

In the post-communist Romanian education system, the introduction of technology into language classrooms was relatively slow but it has now become an integral part of learning activities at all levels, starting from kindergarten. Moreover, most language students boast great competence at English resulting from game playing, video and music exposure and social media interactions at very early ages. The current paper will try to investigate the effects of exposure to ephemeral digital content on the overall English learning and teaching outcome, with a focus on what are the areas in which digital exposure can be harmful and how these shortcomings can be overridden by awareness, careful planning and integration into classroom activities in the development of skills for the future.

Coined by Buckminster Fuller, an American architect, systems theorist, designer, inventor, philosopher and futurist, *ephemeralisation* is a term used to refer to the technological progress that enables **increased output** (in the form of services and information) with **reduced input** (such as time, effort and resources). The term can be defined as "doing more and more with less and less until you can do everything with nothing". *Ephemeralisation* represents the concept of enhancing efficiency to achieve better results with minimal expenditure of time, energy and money. The noun *ephemera* deriving from Greek *ephemeros* (for a day) makes reference to the *ephemerid* or mayfly or anything of short life or duration. *Ephemeral* thus describes anything that lives for only one day or anything transitory or lasting for a very short time. With reference to the pervasive technological tools of the present, ephemeralisation also renders the idea that all technology and digital resources soon turn obsolete as they are being replaced by increasingly complex and easier to use tools and resources. We shall also be using the term *ephemera* to refer to digital resources that are accessed and consumed at high speeds with little impact on long term memory: (short) videos, podcasts, tutorials, video and console games etc.

When applied to language learning, ephemeralisation makes reference to the deployment of technology tools of digital content aiming at increasing learning results. What language teachers might expect from the use of digital tools is:

- optimised memorization and enrichment of vocabulary, concept comprehension, accuracy enhancement, linguistic data structuring and use;
- rapid and engaging access and exposure to genuine language through audio, video, Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), and
- the creation of dynamic, customised learning journeys that minimize learned and learning input to maximize communicative output.

As the students of today grew up with technology tools, they develop tech-saviness from an early age and are able to use a multitude of digital instruments in their learning quests. Much like most modern teachers, Bălănescu & Marcu (2025: 68) identify their ESP students' sources of information as „Wikipedia and ChatGPT frequently, alongside social media [...]. At the same time, more traditional means were added, such as books, dictionaries and scientific articles. Some of them even mentioned mass media, particularly TV news and documentaries, which they find helpful in further adding knowledge to their field of interest.” The main concern associated with pervasiveness of the digital tools used for information gathering is that they are often unverified and volatile. With AI and even browser search queries retrieving results that are based on previous browsing history, one might enjoy the idea of being offered a customised search result but this can still be highly

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subjective in nature and not necessarily accurate. We often hear students invoke ideas such as „I read it on the internet, so it must be true”. This represents a vulnerability that teachers can address by helping their students improve their research skills in a number of ways:

- by showing them how to cross reference, how to cite reliable sources;
- by encouraging them to actually use citations rather than passing ideas as their own;
- by showing students how to access copyrighted materials and acknowledge the source;
- by demonstrating how to refine search vocabulary for more specific and relevant search results;
- by encouraging students to subscribe to recognised repositories, libraries, websites etc., to access credentialed associations and professional bodies etc.

As underlined by Lăpădat & Lăpădat (2025:10) “digital literacy has moved from an optional enrichment to a defining competence of modern education”, be it formal or informal. Therefore, this rolling stone of students’ digital literacy represents a phenomenon that can no longer be ignored by modern education. Additionally, language students have nowadays developed their linguistic skills with technology to such extent that its presence in the classroom is not only welcome, but rather expected. The question arising from this is whether the shortcomings of fast information consumption can be overcome during language classes by raising awareness and planning intentionality into a framework of education that yields the desired learning outcome.

2. Skills for life and the dangers of ephemera

Lin et. al. (2020) have put together a list of skills for students to possess in the 21-st century for an optimised performance in their subsequent social and professional lives, most of which can be enhanced with digital resources. Within a refined conceptual framework, they list three types of skills attainable with the help of technology that will enable students to adapt to modern society and enhance their competitiveness on the labour market (Shadiev et al., 2022a,b):

- (1) learning and innovation skills: critical thinking and problem solving, creativity and innovation, active communication and peer-collaboration,
- (2) digital literacy: information literacy, media literacy, information and communication technologies (ICT) literacy, and
- (3) career and life skills: flexibility in thinking, initiative and self-direction, social and cross-cultural interaction, productivity and accountability, leadership and responsibility.

Language teachers have a responsibility to ensure students are equipped to function in their chosen professional domains by helping students develop the above mentioned skills in their class interactions. One way of achieving an increase in the quantity and quality of educational outcome is to develop proficiency in the use of digital tools such as smart devices, AI, applications and streaming platforms for a number of purposes:

- creating instant communication skills with no L1 intervention,
- generating customised learning plans, charts and quizzes of learned content and
- accelerating comprehension, linguistic competence, accuracy and fluency in a social and professional environment that is meaningful for the students’ integration into a subsequent network of like-minded individuals.

Secondly, students need to be made aware of and avoid the *ephemera* traps in terms of optimal quantity and learning quality. In this respect, the two immediately visible dangers of ephemera are:

- a) Excessive exposure to social and digital media for unproductive purposes and
- b) The apparent acquisition of knowledge in the absence of skills formation.

The former is an entertaining addiction that can be tackled consciously and coherently with a little help from the educators in the presence of clear criteria for relevance in skills development, life and work applicability and credibility. Lăpădat & Lăpădat (2025:13) propose “to make critical evaluation explicit and routine. Short cycles of claim checking and lateral reading can be integrated into weekly coursework”. Not only is the development of critical thinking a useful tool in education, but it is also a solution for the gullibility manifested in relation to the un-verified online content which is sometimes downright dangerous. Moreover, when students learn to discern true from false and verify multiple sources, they develop the ability to crystallise what they have learned into a personal viewpoint, a genuine production of opinion stemming in their own minds.

The latter, resulting in elusive and incomplete learning, can be approached by being intentionally confronted as part of classroom activities aimed at concept defining and refining paired with practical skills development in the form of applicative exercises, hands-on experiments and simulations etc. In other words, instead of merely verifying if the knowledge has been acquired, educators might opt for testing its existence in the development of an actual skill. Therefore, debriefing no longer suffices whereas applying learned content is much better when integrated into assessment tools.

Shadiev & Wang (2022:16) make reference to an additional set of challenges that are to be overcome in the process of technology aided learning:

- a) **Technology challenges**, when learners encounter difficulty to use technology during learning activities because of the mobile applications interface or device incompatibility, poor network quality and speed.
- b) **Self-competence challenges**, with learners perception of learning tasks as difficult, especially when multitasking, or blaming insufficient time to complete learning tasks, absence or inappropriateness of research skills or with insufficient language skills needed to complete tasks. Additionally, challenges in identifying interesting topics and choosing the appropriate tools to create original work are often invoked.
- c) **Peer-collaboration challenges**, when learners noting are faced with uncoordinated teamwork, uneven distribution of tasks and unequal student contributions during collaborative tasks. Self-awareness was also mentioned by learners who experienced anxiety about video chatting when communicating remotely, as well as fear of having their writing/ speaking errors made visible to their partners when communicating in writing or speaking, all of which constitute a hinderance of learning.

The first category of challenges can be overcome with some basic organisational interventions. The second category, however, is more difficult to tackle. Insufficient time and language resources may indicate that the tasks have not been carefully adapted to students' level of capability, both linguistic and operational. But, perhaps the most important challenge is that of empowering students with the right research tools that can help them create genuine work rather than plagiarism. This requires careful planning and actual incorporation of research tools development during language classes, as previously

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mentioned. One specific example in this respect is a situation that I personally encountered some years ago when I asked a group of Computer science students to create a presentation (following a course on how to make a good presentation) about a topic deriving from a personal interest they had, either professional in nature, for instance a programming language or a favourite computer game, or simply some activity they liked to spend time doing (sports, reading, music etc.). To my surprise, they followed the guidelines about what to include on their presentation slides, but only a small percentage of them possessed good research skills in the sense that they did not know how to refine their search queries or how to properly discern reliable websites, repositories, dictionaries from unverified ones. This kind of discovery revealed the stringent need for educators to guide students as they shuffle through vast amounts of data, digital content and tools in order to help them crystallize acquired knowledge and input into original and personal output. After all, we all use the knowledge of our predecessors to build our own but it is with the tools of critical thinking and creativity that we can genuinely recompose it into original output. And the absence thereof should be addressed sooner rather than later.

The third category of challenges can be addressed by teaching students how and when to self-regulate, how to collaborate in harnessing emotions and putting them to good use. For instance, the fear of public speaking (especially in a foreign language) is one that terrorizes many adults who have never had a chance to refine their emotional intelligence at an early stage. Ephemerisation may also play a role in increasing participation anxiety since fast digital content consumption may leave students with the impression they have not retained much. Hence the need for educators to be excellent coordinators of learning tasks, making sure each student understands and can play their role, empowering them to participate actively and be given more time if need be, breaking content into manageable chunks and distributing work evenly and fairly.

3. Is technology exposure affecting our brains?

The lure of digital engagement is by no means restricted to the young and impressionable generation who grew up with technology. “Mobile learning (often ‘m learning’) is in itself not new, but new devices with enhanced capabilities have dramatically increased the interest level, including among language educators” (Godwin Jones, 2011:2). As actors on the stage of education, teachers have been exploring means of incorporating a variety of media into language classes for the benefit of all parties involved. In other words, not only are language classes more interesting and engaging when digital content is included, but they also satisfy an unspoken need to incorporate what students are familiar with and interested in, i.e. technology. Ignoring this salient need and refusing to adapt to the new requirements would probably represent professional suicide for educators. This ever-growing resource of human knowledge and creativity is presumed to produce better learning output since it ticks both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational boxes, it is interesting and entertaining as well as less time-consuming and cost effective.

Literature cited by Correia de Barros (2024) mentions a number of encouraging outcomes resulting from learning with digital tools including notable benefits in second-language acquisition, (Osterhout et al., 2008) learning new motor skills, (Scholz et al., 2009) and even formal education (Draganski et al., 2006). However, more recent studies have revealed that the extensive usage of internet search engines for factual information might irreversibly affect brain areas associated long-term storage in the memory and impairment of sustained concentration in the case of attention (Firth et al., 2020).

Despite the negative connotation and in the absence of irrefutable evidence, the term “digital dementia” (Spitzer, 2012) further depicts an entire set of cognitive impairments, such as memory loss, attention deficit, and impaired decision-making abilities, attributable to the excessive use of digital technology (in Manwell et al., 2022:28). Despite the volatility of evidence that digital consumption is eating away at our brains, it can easily be postulated upon self-observation that information tends to linger less effectively when we are being exposed to digital content that is perceived as *ephemera* by the brain: whatever results from fast exposure to enormous amounts of data in a short time span is handled as such, i.e. it is deemed either unimportant or gulped down without being chewed on. Similar to fast food consumption that is not nutritious in nature, we tend not to bother retaining content that is not informative in nature.

Additionally, excessive use of devices can create what we may call *cognitive load*, a short-circuit if you will, that results in a division of attention, thus leading to poorer performance on tasks and reduced information retention in long-term memory. Moreover, daily multitasking and constant information overload from digital exposure can contribute to shorter attention spans and make it harder to develop in-depth and long-term learning to pair up with palpable skill. Moreover, memory and attention have been demonstrated to be directly affected by constant consumption of technology-powered content (Lodge & Harrison, 2019, Hembrooke & Gay, 2003) in terms of:

- Divided attention and difficulty with focus:** when a device is present nearby, this can negatively impact focus as it creates an additional distraction, splitting resources away from the primary task which will be performed to a lesser extent or with poorer quality;

- Memory impairment and reduced retention:** Over-reliance on technology means students will spend too little time exploring concepts and developing skill as they with scrutinize websites for very specific answers rather than going through the entire process of information retrieval. Additionally, students may miss out on opportunities to do something with the knowledge in terms of developing and stabilizing synapses through repetition, drilling and skill development. For example, using a keyboard can be less effective for learning than using pen and paper, which takes longer and requires multiple sensory engagement, or constantly multitasking can lead to less effective learning and less retention of course material.

- Reduced social and emotional intelligence:** excessive time with digital communication tools can negatively impact the ability to recognize and interpret social and emotional cues learned through face-to-face interactions. Students who spend most of their social interactions online develop social anxiety and sometimes they do not know how to handle themselves in the actual presence of people with a variety of body language manifestations and gestures that are not visible in online universes. Added to this is the occasional immersion into dark online worlds that leave a psychological mark on the state of mind, often leading to depression and dark thoughts and behaviours. From a linguistic viewpoint, we often hear students using a number of English expressions they have learned online and they transfer into real life, often with no relevance or appropriateness in actual social exchanges.

- **Long-term over-reliance resulting in loss of skill:** users may experience significant loss of previously formed abilities when gadgets do the tasks for them, known as the “use-it-or-lose-it” principle, which shows that processes of learning and memory can stimulate the growth of new synaptic connections and preserve existing ones. Or perhaps they are missing out on developing and perfecting new skills. Two very simple

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examples are how quickly we lose the ability to do mental calculations when calculators are used instead or how fast we lag behind on fluency in a foreign language if we don't practise. Additionally, one can also perform tasks erroneously and develop faulty skills if the accessed digital content provides incomplete or inaccurate information.

4. Mitigating the negative effects of ephemera- strategies for a carefully balanced and mindful digital engagement

Once educators become aware of the perils that lie within the alluring layers of technology resources, they can start taking measures for the optimal retrieval of learning outcomes and for increasing the positive impact of technology onto education. In discerning between the implications of using digital literacy as learning and teaching tools, Lăpădat & Lăpădat (2025:18) call attention to the extent to which it falls into a visionary framework of learning development: "What distinguishes strong implementations of digital literacy is the way they tie small design moves to big educational purposes". Resultantly, unless technology serves the purpose of a socially and professionally integrative tool, it will remain a mere form of entertainment: "It is a daily craft. It is the thoughtful arrangement of tasks, tools, and conversations so that learners encounter authentic language, analyze it carefully, and use it responsibly to make things that matter, [...] prepare students not just to pass a class but to participate in the public life of their communities with judgment and imagination."(2025:18).

- **Practice mindful and purposeful usage of technology:** become conscious not only of when and how one uses devices, but also what educational purpose they serve, if there is one. If there is none, educators can train students to create one. For instance, if they are film or video bingeing on steaming platforms, they can watch the movies/videos with subtitles and audio in English or any other language they wish to learn. Thus, they can benefit from the double input strategy, i.e. they hear and see at the same time. This yields great benefits, especially since most students challenge themselves to watch movies without any subtitles at all. Additionally, movies and videos should be paused every time one encounters a new concept/ turn of phrase or challenging word and consciously make an effort to retain it, even by writing it down with a contextual usage example. Also, music can be played with lyrics on and students should be encouraged to sing along for an entertaining and educational investment of time. This approach will promote active learning and skills development rather than passive consumption of digital content.
- **Engage students in offline activities following online tasks:** generate time for extensions into analog activities such as reading one physical book after playing a recording of three distinct book/film reviews or abridged short stories. Technology thus plays the role of *captatio benevolentiae*, winning the students' goodwill and arousing the curiosity to further dive into the story by reading the actual book that caught their attention and interest while also satisfying their need for control. Though technology is initially present, the learning outcome is a digital detox that students will appreciate.
- **Control and reduce multitasking:** removal of unnecessary distractions and dedication of focused blocks of time to single tasks to deepen understanding and optimize concentration. An ongoing challenge of modern education is the difficulty of convincing students to study without listening to music. Despite the obvious, most claim they actually study better with music than without it playing in the background. In order to make the most of both, students may try the following sequencing of tasks

instead of overlapping them: study for ten minutes in silence, then listen to a song for 5 minutes for relaxation and repeat. Similarly, the experiment can prove useful during class activities as well. For instance, the teacher might ask students to remain perfectly quiet for 10 minutes while doing a listening task after which they are rewarded with 5 minutes of free social interaction with each other in English.

- **Intentionally and purposefully schedule technology use:** we should all include specific times for the use of devices for constructive purposes, such as learning or work/school-related tasks. Students may be asked to keep a diary of every time they touch their phone or laptops during a couple of days and the duration use, be it 5 minutes or hours. After analyzing the results, they can decide which incursions into the online content can be put to better use and redirected towards learning something useful or doing some productive work. The challenges here would be to convince them to actually keep the diary, to analyse the results and tackle the addiction by turning some of it into productiveness. Focusing on high-quality educational content and the redistribution of time must be intentional and measurable within reasonable limits as students might not be willing to give up their drug so easily without palpably becoming better at something.
- **Eliminate destructive temptations:** Uninstalling social platforms, apps or games that distract us from developing productive skills or acquiring meaningful knowledge can be made easier if we all increase our awareness of whether we are wasting or investing time in a specific digital channel. A typical example of destructive ephemera is the TikTok social app, with short videos that press a variety of emotional buttons but convey little to no content value. Moreover, in recent years it has been rumoured to be politically manipulative and highly addictive. Once students are made aware of the dangers of fast digital consumption, they might be willing to cut back on it if not remove it completely from their digital consumption habits. Instead, they can be encouraged to listen to podcasts, TEDtalks or watch Youtube tutorials related to their subjects of professional interests, thus expanding towards new horizons of curiosity and knowledge.

5. Conclusions

As the world is changing into a place where computer technology has become ubiquitous, students and educators alike are faced with challenge of using rather than abusing it. With the range of negative effects technology can have on the learning process as well as on the brain itself, there is much need for awareness and empowerment in the direction of skills development and measurable learning output. In order to use technology with maximum learning yield, all parties involved in the educational process must collaborate to raise awareness, disseminate knowledge and find satisfactory solutions to the newly emerging realities generated by the use of digital tools everywhere and for everything. As digital devices are doing more and more with less and less, so should humans learn to use it less to create more. In other words, to put ephemeralisation in its right place, it should be used with care and awareness to construct and improve the professionals who will be operating with technology in their workplaces in a creative, ethical and mindful way.

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Article Info

Received: October 19 2025

Accepted: November 09 2025

How to cite this article:

Boncea, I. J. (2025). Ephemeralisation and its Impact on Language Learning and Teaching. *Revista de Științe Politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques*, no. 88, pp. 225-234.



ORIGINAL PAPER

The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Promoting Economic Sustainability and Resilience

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Abstract:

The latest developments in artificial intelligence (AI) can transform most economic sectors, thereby improving both resilience and sustainability. Through improved efficiency in resource allocation, energy efficiency, and facilitating the creation of sustainable business models, AI is important for having an environmentally sustainable economy. Through machine learning, big data analytics, and automation, AI can minimize waste, lower carbon emissions, and enables economic models. Moreover, AI-based smart grids are able to predict energy demand and plan capacity better, which results in a more efficient use of the resources that we have.

Aside from environmental benefits, AI also enables economic resilience in the form of better financial stability, robust supply chains, and better crisis response capabilities. Predictive analytics enable businesses and policymakers to foresee market fluctuations and implement proactive interventions to mitigate potential economic downturns. AI-driven blockchain and automation technologies also improve supply chain agility, allowing for increased transparency and reduced risks of disruption. In the financial sector, AI risk management systems offer real-time data insights to enable informed decision-making and promote long-term stability.

Despite these advantages, AI incorporation into economic and environmental models has pitfalls like data privacy and ethical concerns, and the initial high cost of implementation. Algorithmic bias needs to be tackled with transparent regulatory frameworks that ensure fairness and accountability in AI usage. Continuous research and adaptive policymaking are required in the best use of AI while minimizing the associated risks.

This research stresses the profound influence of artificial intelligence on economic resilience and sustainability, underlining its potential to create a more sustainable global economic paradigm. Through the tactical implementation of AI technologies, countries

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can accelerate the shift towards more adaptive and ecologically sustainable economic paradigms that are more resilient to future crises and environmental constraints.

Keywords: *Sustainable economy, economic resilience, green technology, energy efficiency, predictive analytics.*

JEL Classification: O33, Q55

1. Introduction

The fast evolution of artificial intelligence (AI) represents one of the most transformative technological shifts of the 21st century, with far-reaching implications for economic sustainability and resilience. As economies across the globe grapple with environmental degradation, resource scarcity, and heightened vulnerability to systemic shocks, the integration of AI into economic frameworks emerges as a potential catalyst for a paradigm shift towards more adaptive and sustainable models. The capacity of AI to process vast volumes of data, identify complex patterns, and facilitate real-time decision-making provides unprecedented opportunities to optimize resource allocation, enhance operational efficiency, and develop environmentally responsible business models.

From an environmental perspective, AI enables substantial improvements in sustainability through targeted interventions in energy management, waste reduction, and carbon footprint minimization. Advanced machine learning algorithms, in combination with big data analytics and automation, can support the transition to a low-carbon economy by forecasting energy demand, improving capacity planning, and enabling more effective integration of renewable energy sources into national grids. In doing so, AI does not merely improve efficiency but also helps restructure the foundations of economic activity to align with the imperatives of environmental stewardship.

The potential of AI to foster economic resilience is equally significant. In an era marked by increasing global interdependence and exposure to crises (whether economic, environmental, or geopolitical) AI technologies offer valuable tools for anticipating risks and managing uncertainty. Predictive analytics can identify emerging market fluctuations and inform proactive policy measures to avert or mitigate downturns. In the financial sector, AI-based risk management systems deliver real-time insights, enabling informed strategic decision-making and supporting long-term economic stability. Likewise, AI-driven blockchain systems and automation enhance the transparency, flexibility, and robustness of supply chains, ensuring continuity in the face of disruption.

Nevertheless, the incorporation of AI into economic systems is not without its challenges. Concerns regarding data privacy, algorithmic bias, and ethical governance necessitate the development of transparent and accountable regulatory frameworks. Moreover, the high initial cost of implementation, particularly in less developed economies, may exacerbate technological divides unless mitigated by targeted policy interventions and cooperative initiatives. Addressing these challenges requires a balanced approach that fosters innovation while safeguarding societal and environmental interests.

This study examines the multifaceted role of AI in promoting both economic sustainability and resilience, emphasizing its potential to support a transition towards adaptive, ecologically responsible, and crisis-resistant economic paradigms. Through an analysis of the technological mechanisms, policy considerations, and structural changes enabled by AI, the research aims to illuminate pathways for its effective and ethical integration into economic systems worldwide. In doing so, it underscores the necessity of

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continuous research, adaptive governance, and international cooperation in harnessing AI's transformative capacity for the benefit of both present and future generations.

2. Artificial Intelligence as a driver of economic sustainability

The integration of artificial intelligence into economic systems has demonstrated significant potential for enhancing resource allocation efficiency, particularly through energy efficiency optimization, waste and emissions reduction, and the facilitation of sustainable business models. AI's ability to process vast datasets, recognize patterns, and predict future scenarios allows for more precise management of resources in both production and consumption contexts. In energy efficiency optimization, AI-powered smart systems have achieved substantial reductions in energy use by dynamically adjusting operations based on real-time data. For example, the deployment of AI-driven heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) control systems in commercial buildings has led to measurable decreases in energy consumption and associated costs, as documented in empirical case studies (Olawade et al., 2024). In industrial and urban infrastructure contexts, predictive analytics within smart grid systems have been shown to reduce energy waste and carbon emissions by enabling more accurate forecasting of demand and improved capacity planning (Abonamah et al., 2025). Such systems support the transition to low-carbon energy networks while enhancing operational stability.

Beyond energy systems, AI plays a crucial role in minimizing waste and emissions across supply chains and manufacturing processes. Machine learning algorithms can identify inefficiencies in material usage, production scheduling, and logistics, leading to reduced raw material consumption and lower greenhouse gas outputs (Tuli et al., 2021). In cloud computing environments, AI-based holistic resource management models such as HUNTER optimize workload allocation to minimize thermal and cooling demands, achieving reductions in overall energy consumption and improving operational speed (Tuli et al., 2021).

These approaches illustrate that energy efficiency gains are not limited to physical infrastructure but also extend to digital resource management.

The facilitation of sustainable business models is another key area where AI contributes to resource allocation efficiency. AI-enabled circular economy strategies support product lifecycle tracking, predictive maintenance, and material recovery processes, thus extending product lifespans and improving recycling efficiency (Madanaguli et al., 2024). Research in this field has highlighted how AI capabilities can accelerate the adoption of circular business models by improving product traceability and optimizing reverse logistics operations. Energy-efficient AI architectures tailored for circular economy applications have been shown to reduce workflow energy consumption, enhance resource recovery efficiency, and significantly cut transportation-related emissions in case studies involving battery recycling and urban waste systems (Ranpara, 2025).

Finally, big data analytics and predictive modeling constitute essential tools for sustainable planning. AI-driven decision support systems can simulate multiple scenarios to identify optimal strategies that balance economic, environmental, and social objectives (Deveci et al., 2024). By integrating large-scale datasets from diverse sources, these systems allow businesses and policymakers to anticipate resource needs, avoid supply disruptions, and maximize efficiency gains. Collectively, these developments indicate that AI-based resource allocation efficiency measures are foundational to achieving both environmental sustainability and economic resilience.

Artificial intelligence has emerged as a pivotal enabler of sustainable business models, particularly through its capacity to integrate circular economy principles into operational and strategic decision-making. By leveraging real-time analytics, predictive capabilities, and autonomous control systems, AI supports a transition from linear production-consumption paradigms toward regenerative systems that optimize material use and extend product life cycles. The literature consistently highlights AI's role in enhancing traceability, optimizing resource flows, and enabling innovative service-based and sharing economy models that reduce overall environmental impact (Madanaguli, 2024).

In the context of circular economy approaches, AI facilitates closed-loop value chains by identifying optimal recovery strategies for end-of-life products and by supporting dynamic remanufacturing processes. Machine vision systems, for instance, can accurately classify and sort recyclable materials with higher precision than traditional mechanical methods, significantly improving recovery rates (Geissdoerfer et al., 2017). Furthermore, AI-driven optimization of reverse logistics reduces transportation distances, minimizes fuel consumption, and lowers associated emissions, thereby enhancing both environmental and economic performance (Ranpara, 2025). Such applications exemplify how AI technologies can operationalize the restorative and regenerative aspirations of circular economy frameworks.

Big data and predictive modeling further extend AI's contributions by enabling sustainability-oriented strategic planning. Predictive analytics can be employed to forecast market demand for sustainable products, anticipate raw material availability, and assess the long-term viability of specific business models under varying economic and environmental conditions (Deveci, 2024). These tools allow companies to evaluate multiple scenarios in which supply, demand, and regulatory contexts shift, thereby informing proactive adjustments to production schedules, sourcing strategies, and investment portfolios. By combining machine learning algorithms with environmental and economic indicators, AI-based systems can identify the most resource-efficient and resilient pathways for business operations (Abonamah, 2025).

The synergy between AI, sustainable business models, and predictive planning is particularly evident in industries undergoing rapid technological transformation. In renewable energy markets, for example, AI is used not only for operational optimization but also for business model innovation, enabling firms to design flexible pricing structures, predictive maintenance services, and energy-sharing platforms that align with sustainability goals (Olawade, 2024). Similarly, in manufacturing, AI supports the integration of eco-design principles into product development, ensuring that environmental considerations are embedded from the earliest stages of innovation.

Overall, the literature suggests that AI-driven sustainable business models are characterized by adaptability, resource efficiency, and systemic thinking. By embedding AI capabilities into circular economy strategies and long-term planning processes, firms and policymakers can align economic growth with environmental preservation, fostering a resilient and regenerative global economy.

3. Artificial Intelligence and economic resilience

3.1. Financial stability and risk management

Building on documented practice in large universal banks, artificial intelligence augments financial stability by improving the forecasting of tail risk and by informing capital and resource allocation policies in real time; a salient case is JPMorgan Chase,

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where AI-enabled advisory and risk tools helped advisers triage client flows and sustain sales growth during pronounced market volatility in April–May 2025, with management attributing a 20 percent year-over-year rise in gross sales to these systems and projecting substantial client growth as AI scales across wealth management (Reuters, 2025). Management reported a 20 percent year-over-year increase in gross sales for the asset and wealth management division, attributing much of this performance to AI’s predictive capabilities. The same systems also underpin fraud detection, trading optimization, and credit decision processes, with cost savings estimated at approximately USD 1.5 billion annually.

These outcomes can be formalized through a distribution-aware decision framework in which AI-generated forecasts feed into a tail-risk optimization model. Let r_{t+1} denote a financial outcome (e.g., portfolio return or revenue growth) and X_t the set of observed predictors (market factors, macroeconomic data, client interaction metrics). An AI model M estimates the conditional distribution:

$$F_t(\bullet) = P_r(r_{t+1} \leq \bullet | x_t)$$

Following standard risk management practice, define Value-at-Risk (VaR) and Conditional Value-at-Risk (CVaR) at a given confidence level α :

$$\text{VaR}_{\alpha,t} = \{ \inf\{q : F_t(q) \geq \alpha\} \}$$

$$\text{CVaR}_{\alpha,t} = E[r_{t+1} | r_{t+1} \leq \text{VaR}_{\alpha,t}]$$

Let $L_{t+1}(x)$ be the loss function associated with decision variables x (e.g., capital buffers, liquidity reserves, or advisory resource allocation). The decision problem can then be written as:

$$\min E_{F_t}[L_{t+1}(x)] + \lambda \text{CVaR}_{\alpha,t}(L_{t+1}(x))$$

subject to regulatory and budget constraints, such as:

$$K_t \geq k \cdot \text{VaR}_{\alpha,t}(L_{t+1})$$

where K_t is available capital and k a prudential multiplier.

Using the reformulation for CVaR, introduce an auxiliary variable ζ to obtain a tractable form:

$$\min \frac{1}{n} = \sum_{i=01}^N L_{t+1}^{(i)}(x) + \lambda \left(\zeta + \frac{1}{(1-\alpha)N} \sum_{i=01}^N L_{t+1}^{(i)}(x) - \zeta \right)$$

In this formulation, $L_{t+1}(x)$ are scenario-based losses generated from the AI model’s forecast distribution F_t , and $(u)^+ = \max(u, 0)$.

In the JPMorgan example, AI-enhanced forecasting reduces the estimation error in the lower tail of F_t . This has two main effects: first when the model signals elevated tail risk, the optimizer increases K_t and reallocates advisory resources to vulnerable segments, enhancing resilience and second when risk is forecasted to be moderate with higher confidence, the optimizer can maintain stability with smaller buffers, freeing capacity for client acquisition and investment. Over time, this mechanism enables the institution to preserve financial stability while also improving profitability, consistent with empirical findings on AI-enhanced VaR/CVaR forecasting (Chronopoulos et al., 2024; Gu et al., 2020) and supervisory research on big data in risk monitoring (Doerr et al., 2021).

3.2. Supply chain resilience

Artificial intelligence contributes to supply chain resilience by improving transparency, anticipating disruptions, and optimizing operational responses in real time. A prominent case is IBM’s deployment of its Watson Supply Chain platform for Lenovo,

a multinational technology company. Lenovo integrated AI-driven predictive analytics and natural language processing to monitor supplier performance, detect potential bottlenecks, and forecast disruption risks. This system allowed the company to re-route logistics and adjust production schedules proactively, reducing average response times to disruptions by more than 90 percent and significantly lowering inventory costs (IBM, 2020).

From a modeling perspective, supply chain resilience can be formulated as a stochastic optimization problem in which AI provides the probability distributions of potential disruptions. Let x represent the vector of decision variables (e.g., supplier selection, inventory levels, transportation modes), and let c_i be the cost per unit for supplier or route i . AI generates an estimated disruption probability p_i for each i , based on features such as geopolitical risk indicators, weather forecasts, and supplier financial health scores. The basic cost minimization with disruption risk can be expressed as:

$$\min \sum_i c_i x_i + \gamma \sum_i p_i L_i(x_i)$$

subject to:

$$\begin{aligned} \sum_i x_i &\geq D \\ x_i &\geq 0 \quad \forall i \end{aligned}$$

Here:

- $L_i(x_i)$ is the expected loss if supplier or route i is disrupted.
- D is the required demand fulfillment level.
- γ is a parameter capturing the decision-maker's aversion to disruption risk.

A more resilience-focused formulation introduces a service level constraint:

$$P\left(\sum_i (1 - z_i)x_i \geq D\right) \geq \alpha$$

where Z_i is a Bernoulli random variable indicating disruption for supplier i (with probability p_i), and α is the target probability of meeting demand despite disruptions. AI plays two roles in this formulation:

- Estimation of p_i – by processing diverse data sources, AI provides updated and more accurate disruption probabilities.
- Scenario generation – AI simulates realistic disruption patterns for use in robust or stochastic optimization algorithms.

In the Lenovo case, Watson's AI module continuously updated p_i based on real-time data and automatically suggested contingency plans, effectively reducing both $L_i(x_i)$ and the variance of outcomes. This proactive approach enhanced resilience while maintaining cost efficiency, exemplifying how AI-driven probability estimation feeds into quantitative decision-making for robust supply chain performance (IBM, 2020; Ivanov & Dolgui, 2020).

3.3. Crisis response and adaptive economic systems

The capacity of artificial intelligence to enhance crisis response and support adaptive economic systems has become increasingly evident over the past decade, as societies face a rising frequency of disruptive events, ranging from pandemics and natural

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disasters to geopolitical conflicts and cyberattacks. A particularly illustrative example is South Korea's integration of AI-driven analytics into its COVID-19 management strategy between early 2020 and 2021. Unlike many countries that relied primarily on manual tracing and reactive policymaking, South Korea embedded AI tools into a broader "Smart Quarantine" framework, combining epidemiological modeling, mobility tracking, and predictive logistics.

The system aggregated diverse datasets in real time (telecommunications records, credit card transactions, CCTV footage, and hospital admission logs) allowing AI algorithms to rapidly identify potential infection chains and forecast outbreak hotspots. This process reduced the average contact tracing time from approximately 24 hours to under 10 minutes (Park et al., 2021), enabling authorities to isolate clusters before they expanded. Crucially, AI was not merely used for epidemiological purposes; it also guided economic and logistical decisions. For instance, predictive models informed the allocation of testing kits, ventilators, and hospital beds to regions forecasted to face surges in demand. By anticipating where medical shortages were likely to occur, policymakers could avoid the bottlenecks and regional inequalities in healthcare provision that were observed in many other countries during the pandemic's early waves.

From an economic resilience perspective, this rapid and data-driven crisis response had tangible effects. By containing outbreaks more efficiently, South Korea avoided prolonged nationwide lockdowns, allowing a greater portion of the economy to remain operational. While countries without such adaptive systems saw severe contractions in GDP and surges in unemployment, South Korea maintained relatively stable industrial output and experienced a comparatively quick economic rebound (Lee et al., 2020). For example, manufacturing plants could continue operations under targeted quarantine measures, supported by AI-enhanced health screening and workforce management tools. This approach demonstrated that public health protection and economic stability need not be mutually exclusive if supported by intelligent, adaptive systems.

The South Korean case underscores several broader lessons for the role of AI in fostering adaptive economic systems. First, predictive and integrative capabilities are central to moving from reactive to proactive crisis management. Instead of waiting for disruptions to manifest fully, AI can flag early warning indicators and provide decision-makers with actionable scenarios. Second, interoperability between AI tools and existing governance structures is essential. South Korea's success was not solely due to technology, but to its seamless integration with public health agencies, local governments, and private-sector partners. Third, adaptive systems benefit from cumulative learning. With each crisis, AI models become more robust as they are trained on larger and more diverse datasets, thereby improving their predictive accuracy and operational value.

However, this case also raises important ethical and governance questions. The use of personal mobility and financial data in AI models sparked debates about privacy and civil liberties, illustrating that resilience-enhancing technologies must be balanced with strong safeguards for individual rights. Furthermore, reliance on advanced AI infrastructure could exacerbate inequalities between countries with differing technological capacities, unless international cooperation facilitates the sharing of both tools and expertise.

Ultimately, the South Korean experience demonstrates that AI can serve as a strategic asset in crisis response, enabling faster decision-making, better allocation of scarce resources, and a more controlled economic environment during systemic shocks. When embedded within an adaptive economic framework, such capabilities can transform the resilience of

both public health and economic systems, ensuring that societies can recover more quickly and sustain long-term stability even in the face of recurring global challenges.

4. Challenges, risks, and ethical considerations

While artificial intelligence offers significant opportunities for fostering economic sustainability and resilience, its integration into economic and environmental systems presents a range of challenges that cannot be overlooked. These challenges are multifaceted, encompassing legal, ethical, technical, and socio-economic dimensions, and addressing them effectively is essential for ensuring that AI becomes a long-term driver of inclusive and sustainable growth.

One of the most pressing concerns relates to the development of adequate legal and regulatory frameworks. The speed at which AI technologies evolve often outpaces the ability of legislators and regulators to establish rules that safeguard transparency, accountability, and fairness. As Spulbar (2025) argues, the digital economy requires adaptive legal frameworks that can address both the opportunities and the risks associated with AI-driven markets. This includes not only protecting consumers and businesses from unfair practices, but also ensuring that AI systems used in economic decision-making adhere to ethical standards and are free from discriminatory biases. The difficulty lies in crafting regulations that are robust enough to prevent misuse, yet flexible enough to avoid stifling innovation.

Algorithmic bias represents another significant risk, particularly when AI systems are trained on historical datasets that may contain embedded social or economic inequities. When left unchecked, such biases can perpetuate and even amplify disparities, undermining the very goals of sustainability and resilience. This issue is particularly concerning in financial services, where biased AI-driven credit scoring or lending models could lead to systemic exclusion of vulnerable groups. Addressing this challenge requires both technical solutions (such as algorithmic fairness metrics and bias mitigation techniques) and policy interventions to enforce transparency and accountability in AI deployment.

Data privacy and security are equally critical issues. The effective functioning of AI systems, especially in contexts such as smart grids, supply chain optimization, and crisis management, depends on access to vast amounts of sensitive data. Without strong safeguards, the risk of data breaches, misuse of personal information, and erosion of public trust becomes substantial. Mitrache et al., (2024) note that the widespread adoption of AI in business environments must be accompanied by rigorous data governance policies, emphasizing that innovation can only thrive if stakeholders feel confident in the protection of their information. This is particularly relevant for cross-border applications, where data may be subject to multiple and sometimes conflicting regulatory regimes.

The economic costs associated with AI adoption pose another barrier, especially in developing regions. The implementation of advanced AI infrastructure requires significant upfront investment in hardware, software, and skilled human resources. Without targeted policy measures such as subsidies, tax incentives, or public-private partnerships, the gap between technologically advanced economies and those with limited resources is likely to widen. In their study on regional resilience, Mitrache et al., (2024) stress that economic adaptability in the face of technological change depends heavily on the ability of regions to invest in both digital infrastructure and human capital. This suggests that addressing economic disparities in AI readiness is essential for ensuring that the benefits of AI-driven sustainability and resilience are equitably distributed.

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A further consideration lies in the social dimension of AI integration, particularly its impact on the workforce. While AI has the potential to increase productivity and create new employment opportunities, it also poses risks of job displacement and skills obsolescence. Spulbar and Mitrache (2025) emphasize the importance of fostering human–AI collaboration in the workplace, arguing that organizations should focus on designing hybrid systems in which AI augments human capabilities rather than replaces them. This requires comprehensive reskilling and upskilling programs, along with organizational strategies that encourage adaptability and continuous learning. Ensuring that workers can transition into new roles created by AI technologies is critical for maintaining economic and social stability during technological transformations.

There is the challenge of public perception and trust. Even the most technically robust AI systems will fail to achieve their intended impact if they lack legitimacy in the eyes of the public. Building trust requires transparency not only in how AI systems operate, but also in how decisions are made about their deployment. This includes clear communication of AI's benefits and limitations, open consultation with stakeholders, and visible mechanisms for redress in cases where AI-driven decisions cause harm. Public trust is especially important in the context of sustainability and resilience, where the adoption of AI often involves sensitive areas such as energy management, healthcare, and crisis response.

The integration of AI into strategies for economic sustainability and resilience cannot be separated from the parallel task of addressing its legal, ethical, and socio-economic challenges. Effective governance frameworks must balance innovation with accountability, bias mitigation with efficiency, and data utilization with privacy protection. Moreover, policies that support equitable access to AI technologies, workforce adaptation, and public trust will be essential to realizing the transformative potential of AI in building sustainable and resilient economic systems.

5. Conclusions

The evidence explored in this research shows that artificial intelligence is not merely an incremental improvement to existing economic processes but a transformative force with the potential to redefine how modern economies pursue both sustainability and resilience. By enhancing efficiency in resource allocation, optimizing energy systems, reducing waste, and facilitating new forms of sustainable business models, AI directly contributes to the transition towards more adaptive and environmentally responsible economic structures. Its applications in predictive analytics, financial stability, supply chain optimization, and crisis response illustrate its versatility and capacity to operate across multiple dimensions of economic life.

The case studies analyzed confirm that when AI is embedded strategically into operational and policy frameworks, it does more than improve performance; it reshapes the conditions under which stability and growth are possible. By anticipating risks, providing timely insights, and enabling precise allocation of resources, AI helps mitigate the impact of economic shocks and environmental pressures. In doing so, it supports continuity of services, sustains productivity, and shortens recovery times after crises. This capacity for proactive adaptation is at the core of resilient systems in an era marked by uncertainty and rapid change.

Yet, the findings also make clear that technological capacity alone is insufficient to guarantee these outcomes. Without deliberate attention to governance, ethics, and inclusion, the very same technologies that promise to enhance sustainability could deepen

inequalities, undermine trust, or entrench systemic biases. For AI to become a genuine enabler of long-term economic stability, its deployment must be aligned with transparent legal frameworks, strong safeguards for privacy and fairness, and policies that ensure access for both advanced and developing economies. Equally important is the human dimension: AI should be viewed not as a substitute for human decision-making, but as a collaborator that amplifies human capabilities while preserving the social fabric of employment and community resilience.

The path forward demands a coordinated effort between policymakers, private enterprises, and civil society. This involves sustained investment in digital infrastructure, education, and skills development; the creation of adaptive regulatory environments; and a commitment to cross-border cooperation in sharing best practices and technological resources. As global challenges grow in complexity (from climate change to geopolitical instability) AI's role as a catalyst for adaptive and sustainable solutions will only become more critical.

The question, therefore, is no longer whether artificial intelligence can be harnessed to build a resilient and sustainable future. The real question is whether we, as a global community, are prepared to guide its evolution with the vision, discipline, and shared purpose needed to realize the future we claim to desire.

Authors' Contributions:

The authors contributed equally to this work.

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Article Info

Received: October 14 2025

Accepted: November 10 2025

How to cite this article:

Mitrache, L. A., Spulbar, L. F. (2025). The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Promoting Economic Sustainability and Resilience. *Revista de Științe Politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques*, no. 88, pp. 235-245.



ORIGINAL PAPER

From Vulnerability to Stability. A Strategic Plan for Preventing Economic Shocks

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Abstract:

In a period marked by a succession of economic crises and increasing volatility, the regional capacity to absorb and recover quickly from economic shocks is of paramount importance to sustain long-term development. Regional economic resilience is analyzed in this research through a multidimensional framework, with a focus on determinants, theoretical underpinnings and case studies.

Based on a comprehensive literature review, the paper discusses the main factors through which regions can absorb and prevent the impact of economic shocks, including economic diversification, good governance, high-quality infrastructure and innovation. It also highlights the role of digitalization, flexible labor markets and cross-sectoral cooperation in increasing economic resilience.

Examples from Europe and other parts of the world demonstrate the value of proactive policies, economic adaptability and social harmony in crisis management. Building on these insights, the report develops a strategic blueprint for the development of a comprehensive economic shock prevention strategy with specific applicability in vulnerable regions.

This outline stresses the importance of risk assessment, resilience-based policy responses and economic stabilization policies. The findings underline the importance of a comprehensive and forward-looking approach that balances sustainable development with sound institutional arrangements and effective shock absorption mechanisms, thereby fostering competitiveness and social welfare in the long term.

Keywords: *Economic resilience, economic shocks, sustainable development, economic diversification, regional governance, innovation.*

JEL Classification: R11, R58

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1. Introduction

The intensification of global economic interdependencies, the multiplication of geopolitical uncertainties, and the increasing frequency of systemic disruptions (ranging from financial crises to pandemics and environmental catastrophes) have exposed a persistent vulnerability in regional economic systems. This vulnerability is particularly evident in territories lacking the institutional and structural capacity to anticipate, absorb, and recover from external shocks. As such, the imperative of fostering economic resilience is no longer a peripheral concern but a central tenet of sustainable development policy. Economic resilience, in this context, refers not merely to the ability to recover from a crisis but to adapt proactively, mitigate potential disruptions, and maintain a trajectory of stable growth.

The recent global crises, particularly the 2008 financial downturn, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the subsequent repercussions of supply chain disruptions alongside fluctuations in energy prices, highlights the imperative to shift the narrative from a framework of reactive crisis management to one focused on proactive shock prevention. Variations in regional vulnerability and adaptive capacity indicate that resilience is not uniformly distributed but rather influenced by underlying structural factors such as economic diversification, institutional strength, and infrastructural interconnectivity.

Moreover, the evolving nature of economic shocks (characterized by their increasing complexity, cross-border spillovers, and compound impacts) demands a recalibration of policy tools and analytical frameworks. The traditional macroeconomic stabilization tools, as effective as they still remain in the vast national context, need now to be complemented by more localized approaches that will operate on a micro-regional scale.

These approaches need explicitly to consider the specific vulnerabilities existing as well as the built-in capacities that abound in various local settings. It is against this background that the present study seeks to construct an integrating framework that will provide a conceptual framework as much as an action agenda towards moving from economic fragility towards healthy resilience. This will be realized by intensely identifying the vital determinants that underlie regional adaptability based on lessons drawn from a global compendium of diverse experience and ample empirical evidence.

The objective of this research is to explore how a region's capacity to prevent and absorb economic shocks can be strategically enhanced through proactive, multidimensional planning. By articulating a comprehensive framework rooted in both theoretical insights and practical case studies, the analysis aspires to contribute to the design of forward-looking economic policies that are not only reactive to crisis events but structurally preemptive. The emphasis lies on integrating resilience into the broader paradigm of long-term competitiveness, equity, and social cohesion, thereby reframing resilience not as a transient goal, but as a foundational pillar of economic governance.

2. Theoretical foundations of economic resilience

Economic resilience has evolved into a fundamental concept within contemporary regional studies, increasingly framed through the lens of complex adaptive systems and heterodox economic theory. At its core, economic resilience refers to the capacity of an economy to withstand, adapt to, and recover from exogenous disturbances while maintaining or quickly regaining its functional integrity and developmental trajectory.

The main theory bases of economic resilience are rooted in several interrelated paradigms. Starting with evolutionary economic geography (EEG), regions emerge as

path-dependent zones where their ability to adapt to perturbations depends on past industrial patterns, institutional structures, as well as innovation abilities (Martin & Sunley, 2015). This tradition stresses the importance of related variety in increasing adaptability as well as innovation in the midst of crises. Likewise, the institutional tradition stresses the importance of both formal institutions as well as informal institutions in determining resilience, suggesting that effective government, regulatory flexibility, as well as social capital, act as important system disruption buffers (Pike et al., 2018). These theoretical pillars find further strength in views drawn on the basis of ecological resilience theory that suggests that economies as systems operate much like ecosystems such that, in these systems, diversity, as well as redundancy, coupled with feedback loops lead to long-term sustainability on a sustained basis (Folke, 2006).

A second critical element is the distinction between three interconnected capacities: resistance, recovery, and reorientation. Resistance refers to the ability of an economy to absorb shocks with minimal disruption to its output and employment levels. Recovery involves the speed and efficiency with which the economy returns to its pre-shock trajectory. Reorientation, often overlooked in short-term analyses, refers to the capacity to adapt structurally (through innovation, workforce re-skilling, and institutional reform) to new realities, thereby enhancing future resilience (Pendall, Foster, & Cowell, 2010). These three dimensions are essential for constructing a holistic view of resilience that integrates short-term stability with long-term adaptability.

Additionally, endogenous development theory contributes to resilience thinking by highlighting the role of internal resources: human capital, social networks, localized knowledge, in fostering self-sustained and context-specific solutions to external shocks (Barca, McCann, & Rodríguez-Pose, 2012). This orientation shifts the analytical focus from exogenous interventions to the empowerment of local actors and the strengthening of regional autonomy, a perspective that has gained renewed relevance in the context of post-pandemic recovery and decentralization trends. By incorporating diverse theoretical strands (ranging from EEG and institutionalism to ecological and endogenous development theories) a more nuanced and operational understanding of economic resilience can be developed, one that accommodates both structural and agency-driven variables.

In recent academic discourse, the integration of sustainability and digital transformation into resilience theory has gained momentum, as scholars increasingly recognize that adaptive capacity is no longer limited to traditional economic metrics but extends into technological, environmental, and corporate domains. According to Mitrache et al. (2024), “resilience must be understood as a dynamic capability that evolves in tandem with sustainability imperatives, where institutional flexibility, social cohesion, and environmental awareness converge to buffer regional systems from transformational shocks”. This reconceptualization broadens the theoretical scope by linking resilience with ESG-driven transitions, thus positioning resilience not as a reactive mechanism but as a proactive development strategy aligned with long-term sustainability goals.

Concurrently, Spulbar et al., (2024) argue that “digitalization operates as both an accelerant and an equalizer in regional resilience strategies, allowing underdeveloped territories to leapfrog systemic constraints and reconfigure their economic base in response to disruption”. This insight aligns with ecological and endogenous development frameworks, highlighting how access to digital infrastructure and corporate innovation ecosystems can support bottom-up resilience through enhanced connectivity, data-driven governance, and adaptive policy responses. By embedding these dynamics into regional

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planning, policymakers can harness the synergies between digitalization and sustainability to create more elastic and future-proof regional economies.

3. Determinants of regional economic resilience

The capacity of a region to prevent or absorb economic shocks is fundamentally shaped by the structural composition of its economy and the mechanisms through which it evolves in response to external disturbances. Among the most robust determinants of economic resilience is economic diversification, which acts as a buffer against sector-specific shocks and reduces dependence on volatile or declining industries. Diversified regional economies benefit from greater sectoral interdependence, which creates spillover effects that stabilize employment and income during downturns. Empirical findings from Faggio and Overman (2014) reveal that regions with balanced sectoral distributions showed significantly lower volatility in employment during the 2008 financial crisis, suggesting that economic complexity acts as a cushion against systemic disruptions.

Beyond structural variety, the quality of governance and institutional integrity plays a critical role in shaping both the immediate response and the long-term trajectory of regional economies under stress. Effective leadership, policy continuity, regulatory transparency, and institutional trust are not only drivers of investor confidence but also enablers of coordinated action in times of crisis. As Rodríguez-Pose (2013) argues, institutions matter is more than a rhetorical statement, it is a statistically verifiable principle that links good governance to development outcomes, especially in regions where structural vulnerability is compounded by weak administrative capacities. Governance becomes the scaffolding through which economic and social systems navigate uncertainty, allocate resources, and sustain public legitimacy.

The support of innovation and digitalization increasingly shape how flexible and adaptable a regional economy can be. Digital infrastructure, smart data systems, and innovation networks help firms and governments change their strategies, adjust supply chains, and provide targeted help during economic troubles. Boschma (2015) points out that regions involved in innovation networks (especially those with strong related variety) are more likely to create new paths instead of sticking to old ones, which strengthens their ability to recover. Also, the speed up of digitalization after COVID has shown a gap between regions that can use digital tools in governance, business models, and workforce development, and those that are still disconnected. Therefore, digital skills not only help improve immediate responses to shocks but also change the way a region's resilience develops.

Another structural pillar of economic resilience is labour market flexibility, which enables regional economies to adapt employment structures in response to changing economic conditions. Flexible labour markets (characterized by adaptive wage-setting mechanisms, modular employment contracts, and robust active labour market policies) are better positioned to reallocate human capital across sectors during periods of stress. According to Arpaia and Mourre (2012), countries and regions that had more dynamic labour market institutions prior to the Eurozone crisis were significantly more successful in containing unemployment and facilitating transitions between sectors. This flexibility does not imply deregulation per se, but rather institutional configurations that balance protection with adaptability, including upskilling initiatives, workforce mobility schemes, and collaborative employer-union frameworks.

Closely related to this is the role of infrastructure quality, both physical and digital, which serves as a foundational enabler for resilience across economic sectors.

Physical infrastructure (such as transportation, energy, and logistics networks) ensures the uninterrupted flow of goods, services, and people, especially in times of crisis. Meanwhile, digital infrastructure facilitates real-time communication, remote work, e-commerce, and access to essential public services. As Crescenzi and Rodríguez-Pose (2012) observe, infrastructure not only contributes to immediate productivity gains but also supports long-term innovation diffusion and institutional learning. In lagging regions, investments in broadband penetration and smart grid systems have shown measurable impacts in reducing the structural barriers that impede recovery from external shocks.

The third vector of this stage is cross-sectoral and regional cooperation, which significantly enhances resilience by promoting knowledge exchange, risk sharing, and collective innovation. Resilience is not solely a product of internal capacity but also of network embeddedness, where inter-regional partnerships, public-private alliances, and cross-sector platforms expand the resource base and diversify response options during crises. Cooke, Clifton, and Oleaga (2005) describe these arrangements as innovation ecologies, where institutional thickness and relational trust facilitate coordinated adaptation. Such ecosystems reduce fragmentation and enable a systemic response to economic shocks, especially in complex environments where sectoral interdependence and supply chain integration are high. In this context, cooperation is not just a development tool, it is a resilience strategy.

4. Practical applications and case studies

The comparative resilience of European regions during and after economic shocks such as the 2008 financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic offers a fertile ground for identifying systemic strengths and structural deficiencies. A particularly illuminating dichotomy exists between Scandinavia, often cited as a benchmark of institutional and economic resilience, and Southern Europe, a region frequently characterized by structural fragilities, institutional inertia, and protracted recovery trajectories. This North-South divide is not simply geographical but deeply rooted in differences in governance models, economic structures, labor market dynamics, and investment in innovation and social capital.

As Nisma Iriani et al. (2024) research has enriched our understanding of risk and uncertainty management, shedding light on their distinct characteristics and implications for decision-making in dynamic business environments. By synthesizing insights from diverse disciplines and leveraging cutting-edge methodologies, scholars continue to advance our knowledge, offering practical solutions to the challenges posed by risk and uncertainty. By embracing adaptive strategies and leveraging emerging technologies, organizations can navigate through turbulent waters with confidence and resilience, positioning themselves for sustainable success in an increasingly uncertain world.

Malynovska et al. (2025) affirms that the modern global economic environment is highly volatile, driven by a combination of geopolitical instability, energy crises, inflation, and technological shifts. One of the most significant factors affecting businesses today is geopolitical uncertainty, which has led to heightened risks and disruptions across various industries. The ongoing war in Ukraine, along with rising tensions between major economies, has created an unpredictable business landscape that demands constant adaptation.

Scandinavian countries (particularly Sweden, Denmark, and Norway) exhibit high scores across key resilience indicators such as governance quality, economic diversification, digital infrastructure penetration, and labor market adaptability. These

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countries have cultivated what might be called systemic elasticity, a multi-layered resilience structure built on proactive policy frameworks, strong social contracts, and institutional reflexivity. For instance, Denmark's flexicurity model (an amalgamation of flexible labor markets and robust social safety nets) has enabled rapid reemployment transitions during downturns, thereby preserving income stability without hampering economic dynamism. Norway's sovereign wealth fund and countercyclical fiscal policy mechanisms have further served as shock absorbers, insulating its economy from global commodity price swings.

By contrast, many regions in Southern Europe (including parts of Italy, Spain, and Greece) suffer from monosectoral dependency, weak institutional enforcement, and fragmented labor market policies. These vulnerabilities exacerbate the depth and duration of crises. For example, the Spanish region of Andalusia faced disproportionate unemployment shocks during both the 2008 and 2020 crises due to its overreliance on seasonal sectors like tourism and construction, compounded by lower levels of innovation capacity and digital infrastructure. Similarly, southern Italian regions with limited economic complexity and a persistent informal sector lack the adaptive institutional ecosystems necessary for a swift recovery. The absence of strong horizontal and vertical coordination between local and national governments often impedes coherent crisis response.

To interpret and act upon these disparities, we propose a conceptual tool: the Regional Resilience Matrix (RRM). This framework categorizes regions along two axes—adaptive institutional capacity and economic structural diversity, to map their resilience profiles. High-capacity, high-diversity regions (e.g., Stockholm, Oslo) are designated as transformational resilient, meaning they not only recover from shocks but adapt systemically. Conversely, low-capacity, low-diversity regions (e.g., Calabria, Extremadura) are vulnerably stagnant, requiring external intervention and structural reform. Intermediate zones may be structurally resilient (with strong institutions but low diversity) or adaptively fragile (with diverse economies but weak governance). This matrix allows policymakers to design tailored interventions based on regional profiles, rather than applying uniform policies that fail to address contextual realities.

Furthermore, the integration of resilience indicators (such as employment volatility, investment in R&D, policy response time, and inter-regional cooperation density) into the RRM enables the identification of specific leverage points. For instance, boosting regional innovation networks in Southern Italy or enhancing digital infrastructure in rural Spain could shift these regions upward on the adaptive capacity axis. Such an approach promotes resilience engineering, wherein resilience is not treated as an innate characteristic but a policy outcome that can be deliberately cultivated.

To bridge theory and policy application, a set of carefully selected case studies provides valuable empirical evidence on how different regions have responded to major economic shocks, particularly the 2008 global financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. These case studies focus on Germany (Baden-Württemberg), Estonia, and Greece (Attica), three regions that embody contrasting resilience trajectories. Through comparative analysis, we extract impact patterns, policy responses, and long-term adaptive strategies, offering a grounded understanding of how regional structures translate into outcomes.

1. Baden-Württemberg, Germany

Baden-Württemberg is a prime example of a high-capacity, high-diversity region. The region's economy is anchored in advanced manufacturing, particularly automotive

and engineering industries, supported by dense innovation ecosystems and public-private research institutions. During the 2008 crisis, GDP contracted by roughly 5%, yet the region rebounded within two years, regaining pre-crisis output by 2010.

The key to this rapid recovery was the region's highly skilled workforce, export flexibility, and embeddedness in global value chains. Moreover, institutions like Fraunhofer and local universities drove rapid product diversification and adaptation. During COVID-19, Baden-Württemberg's firms pivoted toward digital supply chain management, with SMEs adopting Industry 4.0 technologies at unprecedented speed.

Institutional collaboration and innovation-driven diversification dramatically enhance recovery speed. Strategic foresight in industrial policy matters.

2. Estonia

Estonia provides a compelling model of how a small, peripheral economy can leverage digital infrastructure to build systemic resilience. After the 2008 crash, Estonia underwent severe austerity, with GDP falling by over 14%. However, the government used the crisis as an inflection point to accelerate e-governance, digital public services, and e-citizenship.

By the time the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Estonia had fully digitized health records, tax systems, and educational infrastructure, enabling a frictionless transition to remote services and mitigating economic paralysis. GDP contraction in 2020 was limited to 2.9%, and recovery began within months.

Investing in digital infrastructure and state digitalization enhances systemic elasticity, allowing regions to remain functional under stress without physical dependence.

3. Attica, Greece

The Attica region, home to Athens, illustrates the vulnerabilities of institutional weakness and economic monoculture. During the 2008–2015 period, unemployment in Attica soared from 8.7% to over 26%, with youth unemployment peaking at 60%. The region's overreliance on services, public sector employment, and tourism exposed it to asymmetric shocks. Furthermore, fragmented administrative responses and low innovation expenditure contributed to a sluggish recovery.

The COVID-19 crisis also showed weaknesses in digitalizing public services, inter-institutional failures in coordination, and informality exposure. In spite of hefty EU investment, absorptive capacity was weak, as was structural reform uptake.

Lack of strong institutions, digital integration, and economic sophistication means that financial support measures do little good. Dependency without structural change fosters fragility.

In these diverse trajectories, a unifying theme exists: resilience is constructed more than it is inherited. Those that show adaptability share common characteristics: proactive government, innovation system integration, and flexible economic architectures. Those that use reactive government, undiversified industries, and institutional bifurcations experience longer, more intense crises.

The economic impact data underscores this: regions with embedded innovation (like Baden-Württemberg) recovered GDP in 24 months post-2008, whereas structurally vulnerable ones (like Attica) took over a decade. During COVID-19, digitally advanced regions had faster rebounds in employment and enterprise activity, highlighting the role of tech-enabled shock absorption.

These insights suggest a shift in regional planning paradigms: resilience must be an ex-ante strategy, not a post-shock improvisation. Future policy frameworks should include performance-based regional investments, digital inclusion benchmarks, and

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localized innovation incentives, tailored through resilience profiling tools such as the previously proposed Regional Resilience Matrix.

5. Conclusions

Increasing exposure of regional economies to frequent and multi-faceted shocks has necessitated changing paradigms in understanding and measuring resilience. This research has demonstrated that overcoming vulnerability and moving toward stability is not a mindless and uniform process. Rather, it is the product of deliberate multi-layered actions, which combine economic diversification, institutional resilience, innovation potential, and flexible labor arrangements into a holistic resilience design.

The theoretical analysis has shown that economic resilience can best be thought of not as a permanent trait but as a prospective potential guided by structural factors and institutional response. The areas that build 'systemic elasticity' (the capacity to absorb, adjust, and reformulate in the face of disruption) are the ones that integrate digital infrastructure, cross-sectoral synergies, and anticipatory governance into their development models. The Regional Resilience Matrix (RRM) conceptual framework is a realistic typology used to calculate regional vulnerabilities and formulate differentiated policy interventions. It equips policymakers with a tool that allows them to depart from remedial action, facilitating tailored investments with awareness of institutional as well as economic considerations.

Regional experiences such as those of Baden-Württemberg and Estonia validate the success of pro-active policies based on innovation ecosystems, state digitalization, and coordinated public-private initiatives. Conversely, the Attica case illustrates how institutional vulnerability and policy fragmentation are capable of converting external shocks into long-term stagnation. Through these case studies, a key lesson stands out: resilience is less about bouncing back than bouncing forward designing systems that become stronger, more inclusive, and better able to manage volatility in the decades to come.

The policy implications are clear. First, resilience must be an ex ante strategic priority, not an ex post-crisis reaction. Second, regional policy must be place-sensitive, balancing national frameworks against locally responsive solutions that empower regional institutions and actors. Third, investment in digital infrastructure, social capital, and innovation must be embraced as central, not add-on, to economic strategy. Lastly, cross-regional and cross-sectoral cooperation must be made institutionalized to develop collective knowledge and to share risk.

Ultimately, eschewing economic shocks and ensuring stability throughout the whole span will require a confluence of structural reform and institutional innovation. Resilience is not just survival through crisis, it is the creation of an economic and governance system that endures, is inclusive, and continues to be competitive in the face of uncertainty. As volatility makes its way into the new normal, communities that embrace this model will not only be shock-proof but chart the way towards long-term development in the 21st century.

Authors' Contributions:

The authors contributed equally to this work.

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From Vulnerability to Stability. A Strategic Plan for Preventing Economic Shocks

Article Info

Received: October 14 2025

Accepted: November 10 2025

How to cite this article:

Vasilas Pîrvu, R. C., Mitache, L.-A. (2025). From Vulnerability to Stability. A Strategic Plan for Preventing Economic Shocks. *Revista de Științe Politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques*, no. 88, pp. 246-255.



ORIGINAL PAPER

From global standards to local realities. How SMEs and microenterprises benefit from corporate frameworks

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Abstract:

Corporate governance codes, originally conceived for large corporations, are being modified to fit the needs of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and microenterprises. This paper discusses how governance codes, which were first created to promote transparency, accountability, and sustainability in multinational corporations, can be adapted for use by smaller firms. Though SMEs and microenterprises operate with fewer resources and simpler structures, adopting fundamental principles of governance such as ethical leadership, finance management, and stakeholder engagement can enhance their resilience, competitiveness, and long-term performance.

It discusses the real-life implications of governance codes on small companies, observing both the benefits and implementation challenges. Using a comparative analysis, it explores the degree to which small and micro-businesses can use governance mechanisms for enhancing investor confidence, strengthening risk management, and promoting business sustainability. The paper also considers the contributions of regulatory bodies, trade associations, and governments in supporting adjustments to governance standards to suit the special requirements of smaller companies.

The results indicate that although corporate governance codes provide many benefits, a one-size-fits-all approach is not suitable. Rather, responsive and proportionate systems of governance scaled to the size and complexity of SMEs and microenterprises provide more desirable outcomes. The study concludes by observing that there is a requirement for governance codes that provide a balance between structure and flexibility, and hence allow smaller firms to prosper in a progressively intricate economic environment.

This study adds to the existing literature on governance inclusiveness and how it counts in the development of economic sustainability at every level of business through the balancing of international standards with the realities that face the domestic business environment.

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Keywords: *Corporate governance, SMEs and microenterprises, business sustainability, regulatory frameworks, risk management.*

JEL Classification: M14, L26, G38.

1. Introduction

Corporate governance has long been regarded as a critical component in ensuring transparency, accountability, and sustainability in the business environment. Initially, governance frameworks and codes were developed with large multinational corporations in mind, designed to address the complexities of their operations, ownership structures, and financial reporting obligations. However, in recent years, there has been an increasing recognition of the need to extend governance principles to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and microenterprises. These businesses, despite their smaller scale, form the backbone of most economies and contribute significantly to employment, innovation, and economic stability. Given their importance, ensuring that they adopt sound governance practices is essential not only for their survival and growth but also for fostering economic resilience at a national and global level.

The challenge, however, lies in the fundamental differences between large corporations and smaller businesses. While multinational firms operate within intricate legal and regulatory frameworks, SMEs and microenterprises tend to have simpler structures, fewer resources, and more centralized decision-making processes. As a result, governance codes that were originally developed for large enterprises may not be directly applicable to smaller firms without significant adaptation. Applying rigid, standardized governance frameworks to SMEs and microenterprises risks imposing unnecessary burdens, increasing compliance costs, and creating inefficiencies that could hinder rather than support their growth. Therefore, there is a growing need to tailor governance mechanisms in a way that maintains core principles of accountability and transparency while allowing flexibility in implementation.

This study explores how corporate governance codes can be adapted to the realities of smaller businesses. It investigates both the benefits and challenges of implementing governance structures within SMEs and microenterprises, examining how governance mechanisms can contribute to improved financial management, enhanced investor confidence, and long-term business sustainability. Furthermore, the study analyzes the role of regulatory bodies, trade associations, and governments in facilitating this adaptation, ensuring that governance frameworks support rather than stifle small business development.

By drawing on a comparative analysis of governance adoption in different business contexts, this research seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of what works best for SMEs and microenterprises. It argues that rather than a one-size-fits-all approach, a proportionate and responsive governance system is more effective. The study ultimately aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on governance inclusiveness by emphasizing the need for a balance between international best practices and the unique realities faced by smaller businesses in domestic markets. In doing so, it highlights how governance can serve as a tool for strengthening economic sustainability across all levels of enterprise, ensuring that SMEs and microenterprises are not left behind in an increasingly complex global business environment.

2. Literature review

Corporate governance has evolved as a response to the need for greater transparency, accountability, and investor protection in business operations. Initially designed for large, publicly traded corporations, governance frameworks sought to address conflicts between managers and shareholders, ensuring that corporate decisions aligned with the long-term interests of investors and other stakeholders. Over time, the scope of corporate governance has expanded to include businesses of all sizes, including small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and microenterprises, which collectively contribute to economic growth, employment, and innovation (Claessens & Yurtoglu, 2013). However, the direct application of governance codes developed for multinational corporations (MNCs) to smaller businesses has been widely debated, leading to calls for proportional governance systems that accommodate the realities of SMEs.

The origins of corporate governance can be traced to landmark regulatory developments, including the Cadbury Report (1992) in the UK, the OECD Principles of Corporate Governance (1999, revised in 2004 and 2015), and the Sarbanes-Oxley Act (2002) in the United States. These frameworks emphasized board independence, financial disclosure, internal controls, and shareholder rights to mitigate agency problems a concept derived from agency theory (Jensen & Meckling, 2019). Large corporations, with their dispersed ownership structures, required strong governance mechanisms to ensure managerial accountability. However, SMEs, which often feature concentrated ownership such as family-owned businesses or single-owner enterprises do not always exhibit the same agency conflicts (Chrisman et al., 2005). This fundamental difference has raised concerns over whether the corporate governance models developed for publicly traded firms are relevant to smaller businesses.

Despite these differences, research suggests that SMEs can derive significant benefits from adopting corporate governance principles. Studies indicate that governance mechanisms tailored to SMEs such as clear financial reporting, ethical leadership, and structured decision-making can enhance business performance, improve access to finance, and strengthen risk management (Agyemang & Castellini, 2015). Governance adoption is particularly crucial when SMEs seek external funding, as investors and financial institutions require assurances regarding financial transparency and ethical business practices (Saffi et al., 2012). Furthermore, in economies where SMEs constitute the majority of businesses, good governance practices contribute to economic stability and resilience (La Porta et al., 1999).

However, imposing rigid, standardized corporate governance codes on SMEs without considering their specific operational realities can have unintended consequences. Studies suggest that excessive regulatory compliance requirements can place a financial and administrative burden on small businesses, diverting resources from core business activities (Bennedsen et al., 2008). This highlights the need for proportionality in governance frameworks meaning that governance mechanisms should be scaled to the size, complexity, and industry characteristics of SMEs (OECD, 2021).

Recent policy discussions have increasingly focused on tailoring governance frameworks to SMEs, recognizing that governance is not a one-size-fits-all concept. In response, several countries have introduced simplified governance guidelines for smaller firms, encouraging voluntary compliance rather than strict regulatory mandates. The Wates Corporate Governance Principles for Large Private Companies (2018) in the UK and the European Union's SME governance initiatives represent efforts to develop flexible

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governance codes that accommodate the needs of smaller enterprises while maintaining the integrity of corporate governance principles (Ali et al., 2021).

One of the primary barriers to governance adoption in SMEs is resource scarcity. Unlike large corporations that can allocate substantial budgets to corporate governance functions, SMEs operate with limited financial, human, and administrative resources (Bennedsen et al., 2008). Implementing governance structures such as forming independent boards, conducting financial audits, and adhering to regulatory requirements often requires expertise and funding that many small businesses simply do not possess (Chrisman et al., 2005).

Empirical studies have shown that compliance costs associated with governance regulations disproportionately affect SMEs. For example, a study by Djankov et al. (2002) found that the administrative burden of corporate governance compliance can be up to 10 times higher per employee for small firms than for large corporations. This cost disparity discourages SMEs from voluntarily adopting governance frameworks, as business owners often prioritize short-term operational survival over long-term governance improvements.

Moreover, SMEs frequently lack access to professional governance expertise. While large firms can hire corporate secretaries, compliance officers, and legal advisors, many SMEs rely on informal governance structures, often led by the owner-manager or a small group of trusted employees (Klapper & Love, 2004). The absence of formal governance training further hinders the ability of SMEs to understand and implement best practices effectively.

In many jurisdictions, corporate governance frameworks have been designed with large publicly traded companies in mind. As a result, one-size-fits-all regulations often impose excessive administrative and reporting requirements on SMEs, creating compliance burdens that outweigh the perceived benefits of governance adoption (Zahra & Pearce, 1989). Research by La Porta et al. (1999) suggests that high regulatory complexity discourages SMEs from formalizing governance structures, particularly in developing economies where institutional support may be weak.

A significant challenge is the disproportionate impact of regulatory changes on SMEs. For instance, post-financial crisis reforms such as the Sarbanes-Oxley Act (2002) in the United States introduced stricter financial reporting and internal control requirements, which while beneficial for investor protection imposed significant compliance costs on smaller businesses (Coates & Srinivasan, 2014). Similarly, in the European Union, governance reforms aimed at improving transparency in corporate reporting have been criticized for failing to account for the operational realities of SMEs (OECD, 2021).

To mitigate these challenges, some countries have introduced proportional governance frameworks, allowing SMEs to comply with simplified governance codes rather than full-scale regulatory frameworks designed for large corporations. The Wates Corporate Governance Principles for Large Private Companies (2018) in the UK and the EU's SME governance initiatives have sought to reduce compliance burdens while maintaining governance integrity (Ali et al., 2021). However, voluntary governance adoption remains low, as many SMEs still perceive governance as an unnecessary bureaucratic obligation rather than a strategic advantage.

Beyond resource and regulatory barriers, governance adoption in SMEs is also hindered by cultural and behavioral factors. Unlike large corporations, where governance structures are often mandated by law, SMEs especially family-owned businesses and sole proprietorships tend to operate based on informal decision-making processes, personal

trust, and close-knit management teams (Uhlener et al., 2004). This informality often results in resistance to external governance mechanisms, as business owners may view governance reforms as bureaucratic interference rather than value-adding strategies (Bruton et al., 2010).

A key challenge is the dominance of the owner-manager in decision-making. Studies have shown that in many SMEs, governance structures are highly centralized, with a single individual (typically the owner) exerting full control over business decisions (Gedajlovic et al., 2004). This structure can lead to governance risks, including limited accountability, conflicts of interest, and succession planning challenges. When governance reforms propose the establishment of independent boards or formalized management structures, owner-managers often perceive these changes as a threat to their autonomy (Zahra et al., 2000).

Moreover, SMEs often exhibit a short-term orientation, prioritizing immediate business survival over long-term governance improvements (Stafii et al., 2012). Research by Carney et al. (2011) indicates that SMEs with high levels of informal governance tend to focus on operational efficiency rather than transparency, leading to low adoption rates of formal governance codes. This mindset is particularly prevalent in developing economies, where informal business practices and regulatory avoidance strategies are more common (Bruton et al., 2010).

Governance adoption in SMEs is further complicated by the lack of institutional support and incentives. While large corporations often benefit from regulatory guidance, financial incentives, and advisory services, SMEs frequently struggle to navigate governance implementation due to a lack of accessible training programs, governance advisory services, and industry best practices (Bennedsen et al., 2008).

Studies highlight that governments and trade associations play a critical role in facilitating SME governance adoption by offering incentives such as tax benefits, compliance simplifications, and financial support for governance training (OECD, 2021). However, in many regions, support systems remain underdeveloped, leaving SMEs to adopt governance reforms without adequate resources or guidance (Chrisman et al., 2005).

3. Methodology

This study employs a comparative qualitative analysis to examine how corporate governance frameworks, originally designed for large corporations, can be adapted to SMEs and microenterprises. Given the inherent differences in firm size, resource availability, and regulatory exposure, a one-size-fits-all governance model is ineffective. Therefore, the methodology is structured around a multi-source data collection approach, integrating secondary research, case study analysis, and institutional policy review. This approach enables a comprehensive evaluation of governance adaptation, assessing both the benefits and challenges SMEs encounter when implementing governance principles.

The research is based on an extensive review of corporate governance literature, drawing on peer-reviewed journal articles, institutional reports (OECD, World Bank, European Commission), and regulatory guidelines relevant to SME governance. To ensure rigor, only studies published in recognized academic journals and policy documents issued by established institutions have been included. Additionally, comparative case studies have been analyzed to identify patterns in governance adoption among SMEs operating in different economic and regulatory environments. These case studies provide empirical insights into how governance models have been successfully (or unsuccessfully) adapted to SMEs, highlighting both structural challenges and best practices.

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To further validate the findings, the study employs document analysis of governance codes tailored for SMEs, including the Wates Corporate Governance Principles (UK), the German Corporate Governance Code for SMEs, and the OECD's SME Policy Index. These frameworks are critically assessed to determine their applicability, level of flexibility, and effectiveness in addressing governance concerns specific to small firms. In addition, reports from financial institutions and investor groups are included to understand the governance expectations imposed on SMEs seeking external funding.

A key component of this methodology is the comparative analysis of governance adoption in SMEs versus large corporations. Table 1 below presents a structured comparison of corporate governance dimensions across firm sizes, based on governance principles outlined in the OECD (2021) and Ali & Arslan (2021).

Table 1: Corporate Governance Comparison – SMEs vs. Large Corporations

Governance aspect	Large corporations	SMEs & Microenterprises
Ownership structure	Dispersed shareholders, complex hierarchy	Family-owned, centralized decision-making
Board composition	Independent directors, multiple committees	Owner-led, informal advisory roles
Regulatory compliance	Strict compliance with governance codes	Proportional compliance, often voluntary
Financial transparency	Formalized reporting (IFRS, SOX)	Simplified financial disclosure
Risk management	Dedicated risk committees	Owner-driven, informal risk assessment
Stakeholder engagement	Shareholder-centric	Close relationships with customers, employees

Source: OECD, Principles of Corporate Governance 2021;

Corporate governance structures vary significantly depending on firm size, ownership structure, financial complexity, and regulatory exposure. While large corporations operate under strict compliance requirements and formalized governance codes, SMEs and microenterprises tend to rely on informal governance mechanisms that align with their limited resources and centralized decision-making processes. Understanding these differences is essential to developing proportional governance models that support SME growth without imposing excessive regulatory burdens.

Large corporations typically have dispersed ownership, meaning that shares are widely held by institutional investors, individual shareholders, or other corporations. This creates a separation between ownership and management, requiring strong governance mechanisms such as independent boards and shareholder voting rights to prevent conflicts of interest (La Porta et al., 1999). In contrast, SMEs and microenterprises are often family-owned or closely held, where the owner-manager has direct control over business decisions. This reduces agency problems but raises concerns over succession planning, risk-taking, and strategic decision-making, as governance structures are often personalized rather than institutionalized (Chrisman et al., 2005).

Since SMEs are usually led by a small group of decision-makers, governance interventions should focus on leadership development and succession planning rather than

complex board structures. For example, advisory boards or mentor networks could provide external oversight without disrupting the firm's agility and informal decision-making process (Bennedsen et al., 2008).

Large corporations typically have formalized boards of directors, often composed of independent directors with diverse expertise. These boards are responsible for monitoring executive management, ensuring compliance, and safeguarding shareholder interests (OECD, 2021). Additionally, large firms establish specialized committees for audit, risk management, and executive compensation, ensuring transparency and reducing conflicts of interest.

SMEs, on the other hand, often have no formal board structure, and governance roles are concentrated in the hands of the owner or a small leadership team (Uhlener et al., 2004). This centralized approach allows for faster decision-making but can lead to governance risks, such as bias in strategic choices, limited oversight, and resistance to external input (Carney et al., 2011). Research suggests that SMEs benefit from small, flexible advisory boards rather than fully structured corporate boards, allowing them to receive strategic guidance without excessive bureaucracy (Saffi et al., 2012).

Large corporations are subject to strict regulatory compliance and governance codes, such as the Sarbanes-Oxley Act (2002) in the US, the UK Corporate Governance Code, and the European Union's corporate governance directives (Coates & Srinivasan, 2014). These frameworks require detailed financial disclosures, annual reporting, and risk management protocols, ensuring transparency for investors and regulatory bodies.

For SMEs, rigid regulatory frameworks often pose a compliance burden, as they lack the financial and administrative resources to maintain extensive reporting structures (Djankov et al., 2002). Many SMEs operate under simplified or voluntary governance frameworks, focusing on basic financial reporting, informal audits, and industry-specific self-regulation (OECD, 2021). The key challenge is ensuring transparency and accountability without imposing excessive bureaucratic hurdles. Some regulatory bodies have introduced scaled compliance models, allowing SMEs to adopt proportional governance measures instead of full-scale regulatory requirements (Ali et al., 2021).

For example, the Wates Corporate Governance Principles for Large Private Companies (2018) in the UK offer voluntary governance guidelines tailored to private firms, recognizing that rigid compliance may not be suitable for smaller businesses. Similarly, some jurisdictions exempt SMEs from full external audits unless they exceed a certain revenue or employee threshold (World Bank, 2020).

One of the most significant differences between large corporations and SMEs is the level of financial transparency and risk management structures in place. Large firms follow formalized financial disclosure frameworks, such as International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) or Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP), ensuring that financial statements are externally audited and available to investors (Claessens & Yurtoglu, 2013). Risk management is also institutionalized, with dedicated committees overseeing market risks, operational risks, and regulatory compliance.

SMEs, by contrast, operate with simplified financial reporting systems, often relying on basic accounting records rather than extensive financial audits (Bennedsen et al., 2008). Many small businesses adopt cash-based accounting methods and may lack formalized internal controls, increasing their vulnerability to financial mismanagement and fraud risks (Bruton et al., 2010). Additionally, SMEs often face challenges in accessing external financing, as banks and investors require governance assurances before providing credit or investment (Klapper & Love, 2004).

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To address these challenges, governance interventions should focus on financial literacy training, advisory support, and simplified reporting frameworks. Research suggests that SMEs benefit from gradual governance integration, starting with basic financial controls (e.g., independent audits, financial planning) and progressing toward more structured governance mechanisms as the business scales (Chrisman et al., 2005).

Large corporations often prioritize shareholder interests, aligning governance practices with profit maximization, dividend policies, and stock market performance. They engage in formal stakeholder management strategies, including corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, employee representation, and investor relations programs (Freeman, 2010).

SMEs, however, operate within close-knit business ecosystems, where personal relationships with employees, customers, and suppliers play a greater role in governance decisions (Spence, 1999). Family-owned SMEs, in particular, face challenges in succession planning, as ownership is often passed down informally without structured transition plans (Gedajlovic et al., 2004). Research indicates that poor succession planning is a major cause of SME failure, emphasizing the need for structured yet flexible governance models that incorporate long-term leadership transition strategies (Zahra et al., 2000).

Governance interventions for SMEs should therefore emphasize stakeholder engagement through mentorship programs, family business governance training, and external advisory networks. Unlike large corporations that focus on investor relations, SMEs benefit more from relationship-based governance structures that align with their business culture and operational realities (Uhlener et al., 2004).

6. Analysis and discussion

The implementation of corporate governance in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and microenterprises provides numerous advantages, ranging from improved financial management to enhanced investor confidence and long-term business sustainability. While corporate governance has traditionally been associated with large corporations, applying its principles to smaller firms albeit in a scaled and flexible manner can significantly contribute to their growth, stability, and credibility in the market.

One of the primary benefits of corporate governance in SMEs is increased financial discipline and transparency. Many small businesses operate with informal financial structures, often mixing personal and business finances or relying on ad-hoc financial planning. Implementing basic governance principles, such as clear accounting practices, regular financial reporting, and external audits, helps SMEs establish greater financial clarity and control. This, in turn, reduces financial mismanagement and fraud, making businesses more resilient during economic downturns and improving their ability to make informed strategic decisions.

Beyond internal financial discipline, good governance also enhances access to funding. Banks, venture capitalists, and investors are more likely to finance businesses that demonstrate governance structures ensuring accountability and risk management. An SME that implements governance mechanisms such as structured financial reporting, independent advisory boards, or ethical leadership policies is more attractive to lenders because it signals lower financial and operational risks. This access to financing is particularly critical for business expansion, innovation, and international market entry, where SMEs often struggle due to capital constraints.

Another key benefit of governance in SMEs is improved risk management. Many small businesses operate in volatile industries where sudden market changes, regulatory shifts, or economic downturns can threaten their survival. A well-governed SME, however, is better equipped to identify, assess, and mitigate risks. This does not necessarily require a formal risk management department, as in large corporations, but even simple governance practices such as scenario planning, compliance monitoring, and internal audits can significantly improve an SME's ability to anticipate and respond to challenges.

Good governance also fosters trust and credibility among key stakeholders, including customers, suppliers, employees, and regulatory authorities. SMEs that adhere to governance principles, such as ethical leadership and transparent decision-making, develop stronger relationships with business partners, ensuring long-term contracts, supplier loyalty, and customer retention. Ethical business practices and corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives often overlooked by small firms can enhance a company's reputation, giving it a competitive edge in the market.

From an internal perspective, corporate governance contributes to organizational stability and efficiency. Many SMEs, particularly family-owned businesses, face succession challenges, as leadership is often passed down informally without structured transition plans. Governance mechanisms, such as a succession strategy, formal leadership roles, and performance evaluation metrics, help SMEs manage ownership transitions smoothly, reducing conflicts and ensuring business continuity. Moreover, governance encourages better delegation and operational structure, preventing the common issue of over-reliance on a single decision-maker, typically the owner or founder.

Lastly, governance plays a crucial role in business sustainability and long-term growth. SMEs that incorporate governance principles such as clear strategic planning, transparent communication, and ethical operations are better positioned for longevity. Rather than operating on short-term survival strategies, governance-driven SMEs build resilient business models that can withstand economic fluctuations, regulatory changes, and market competition.

While corporate governance offers numerous benefits to SMEs and microenterprises, its implementation is not without obstacles. Unlike large corporations, smaller firms face structural, financial, and operational challenges that make governance adoption a complex and, at times, burdensome process. Governance frameworks, originally designed for large-scale enterprises, can become restrictive when applied to businesses that operate with limited resources, centralized leadership, and informal management styles. Understanding these risks is essential to developing governance models that do not hinder SME growth or impose unnecessary administrative burdens.

One of the most immediate drawbacks of governance implementation in SMEs is the cost and administrative effort required to comply with governance regulations. Large corporations have entire departments dedicated to governance, compliance, and reporting, while SMEs often operate with small teams or even a single owner handling multiple functions. Implementing governance measures such as independent audits, structured financial reporting, and formalized board oversight can demand resources that SMEs simply do not have.

For small businesses that operate on tight budgets, these compliance requirements can divert financial and human resources away from core business operations, potentially reducing efficiency and profitability. In some cases, SMEs are forced to hire external consultants, auditors, or legal advisors to navigate governance complexities, further increasing costs. Instead of improving business operations, governance may become a

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bureaucratic obstacle, especially when firms are subjected to rigid, one-size-fits-all governance mandates.

One of the primary advantages SMEs have over large corporations is their agility in decision-making. The absence of hierarchical structures allows them to quickly adapt to market changes, implement new ideas, and take risks that large companies might avoid due to excessive oversight and procedural delays. However, when governance structures introduce layers of formal decision-making such as requiring board approvals, detailed financial disclosures, and compliance checks SMEs risk losing their flexibility.

In many SMEs, business owners or small management teams make decisions based on personal experience, intuition, and direct relationships with stakeholders. When external governance mechanisms force companies to adopt formalized and bureaucratic decision-making processes, they risk becoming slow and unresponsive, losing the competitive advantage that comes from being lean and adaptable.

Governance reforms often face cultural resistance, particularly in family-owned SMEs or businesses where the owner has complete control over operations. Many SME owners see governance frameworks as an external imposition rather than a tool for business improvement. Some may resist delegating authority to independent boards or external auditors, fearing a loss of autonomy over business decisions.

Moreover, governance principles such as transparency, structured risk management, and stakeholder engagement may conflict with traditional business cultures where trust, personal relationships, and informal agreements carry more weight than written policies. In many cases, SME owners operate with a strong sense of personal identity attached to the business, making them reluctant to adopt governance mechanisms that challenge their decision-making power or introduce external scrutiny.

Regulatory frameworks for corporate governance are often designed for large enterprises, leading to over-regulation when applied to smaller firms. Many governance regulations require detailed financial reporting, formalized risk assessments, and compliance audits processes that are costly, time-consuming, and often unnecessary for SMEs.

In cases where SMEs operate in highly regulated industries, governance compliance can become a legal and financial burden, creating a cycle where businesses struggle to meet regulatory requirements, secure funding, or expand operations due to excessive governance-related costs. If the regulatory environment does not offer scaled or proportional governance requirements, SMEs may either avoid governance adoption altogether or operate in regulatory gray areas, increasing risks rather than mitigating them.

While large corporations have access to a wide network of experienced board members, SMEs and microenterprises struggle to attract independent directors or governance advisors due to their limited financial resources. Many SMEs lack the ability to offer competitive compensation packages, making it difficult to recruit qualified individuals who can genuinely add value to governance structures.

Additionally, governance principles emphasize board independence and external oversight, but SMEs especially family-owned businesses often operate in environments where decision-making is highly personal. Owners may prefer trusted family members, close associates, or long-term employees in governance roles, rather than bringing in independent directors with no personal stake in the company. This creates potential conflicts of interest, where governance structures exist only in form, but not in practice.

4. Conclusions

As corporate governance continues to shape the business landscape, one fundamental question arises: Can governance frameworks originally designed for large corporations truly serve the needs of SMEs and microenterprises without stifling their agility and entrepreneurial spirit? This study has explored both the benefits and challenges of governance adoption in smaller firms, revealing that while governance principles provide clear advantages, their rigid and uniform application can often do more harm than good.

On one hand, adopting governance structures enhances financial discipline, investor confidence, and risk management, providing SMEs with a foundation for long-term sustainability. Transparency, structured decision-making, and ethical leadership contribute to stronger stakeholder relationships and create pathways for small businesses to access external funding and expand their operations. In a world where economic volatility is a constant concern, can SMEs afford to ignore the stability that good governance offers?

On the other hand, forcing SMEs to comply with governance models designed for multinational corporations creates a costly administrative burden, slows down decision-making, and introduces layers of bureaucracy that contradict the very nature of small business flexibility. Many SME owners particularly those in family-run enterprises or sole proprietorships resist governance reforms, not because they lack an interest in accountability, but because they fear losing control over their own businesses. If governance is perceived as an external imposition rather than a business enabler, can it ever be truly effective in the SME sector?

The answer lies in a balanced, adaptive approach. Rather than enforcing one-size-fits-all governance regulations, policymakers and industry leaders must focus on tailored, proportionate governance models that support SMEs without restricting their growth and innovation. This means developing simplified reporting systems, voluntary compliance guidelines, and mentorship-driven governance solutions that encourage best practices without imposing unnecessary complexity. Governance should not be a bureaucratic burden it should be a strategic asset that strengthens SMEs while respecting their unique structures and constraints.

Ultimately, the future of corporate governance in SMEs depends on flexibility, education, and support, rather than rigid enforcement. Governance, when applied thoughtfully and proportionally, has the potential to empower small businesses, enhance their resilience, and enable them to thrive in an increasingly complex economic environment. But the key question remains: Will governance be a tool for SME growth, or will it continue to be an obligation that many small businesses struggle to embrace? The answer depends on how governance frameworks evolve to accommodate the realities of the SME sector ensuring that small firms are not left behind in the pursuit of global business standards.

Authors' Contributions:

The authors contributed equally to this work.

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Article Info

Received: November 08 2025

Accepted: November 18 2025

How to cite this article:

Mitrache, D. M. (2025). From global standards to local realities. How SMEs and microenterprises benefit from corporate frameworks. *Revista de Științe Politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques*, no. 88, pp. 256-268.



ORIGINAL PAPER

Measures to reorganize the German secret services in Croatia in the autumn of 1944

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Abstract:

The evolution of events in the autumn of 1944, the defeat of German troops on all fronts, made new organizational measures necessary to cope with security problems. The situation in Croatia required drastic unification and discipline. In accordance with the Supreme Military Command and the SS High Command, all forces came under the command of the Military Abwehr (Abwehr Sub-regional Headquarters (AST) or the Intelligence Unit (Nahrichtentrupps), or, as the case may be, the Ie branch of the competent division (corps). S.D. relations with the Abwehr or Ie branch in other areas outside Croatia were not affected by this decree. This paper presents the main measures taken by the German military authorities in the fall of 1944.

Keywords: *Sicherheitspolizei (Gestapo, Feldpolizer, și Feldgendarmarie, Croatia, Agrram.*

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Introduction

The occupation of Yugoslavia in 1941 was a military operation by the Axis powers, also known as the “April War,” which began on April 6, 1941, after a coup d'état overthrew the pro-German government. The invasion, launched by Germany, Italy, Hungary, and Bulgaria, lasted 11 days, culminating in the surrender of the Yugoslav army on April 17. This event led to the dissolution of the Yugoslav state and the division of its territory among the Axis powers, including the creation of the Independent State of Croatia. In April 1941, the German army invaded Yugoslavia and then Greece. Klingenberg, a company commander in the Das Reich division, led his unit to the capital Belgrade, where a small advance guard accepted the city's surrender on April 13. Fritz Paul Heinrich Otto Klingenberg (December 17, 1912-March 23, 1945) was a German officer in the Waffen-SS who served in the SS Division *Das Reich* and was commander of the SS Division Götz von Berlichingen. He was best known for his role in the capture of the Yugoslav capital, Belgrade, for which he was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross. A few days later, Yugoslavia surrendered.

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In August 1943, there were over 30 enemy divisions on Yugoslav territory, as well as a large number of satellite and police formations of the Ustasha and Domobrani (military formations of the Croatian puppet state), the German Sicherheitsdienst, Chetniks, the Neditch militia, the Ljotitch militia, and others. The Croatian Internal Guard reached its maximum size at the end of 1943, when it had 130,000 men. The Wehrmacht and the forces of the Independent State of Croatia, controlled by the Ustaše, fortified a front in Syrmia, which held out during the winter of 1944-1945 to help evacuate Army Group E from the Balkans. The army of the Independent State of Croatia consisted at that time of eighteen divisions: 13 infantry divisions, two mountain divisions, two assault divisions, and one Croatian replacement division, each with its own organic artillery and other support units. There were also several armored units. From the beginning of 1945, the Croatian divisions were assigned to various German corps, and by March 1945, the Southern Front had 32,000 men from the Croatian Gendarmerie (Hrvatsko Oružništvo), organized into five volunteer police regiments plus 15 independent battalions, equipped with standard light infantry weapons, including mortars, ensured the security of the rear areas. (Colin D. Heaton, *Invasion of Yugoslavia: Waffen SS Captain Fritz Klingenberg and the Capture of Belgrade During World War II* By by [HistoryNet Staff](#)6/12/2006.)

In Croatia, there was no permanent representative of Amt VI CZ, but in practice this proved impossible, as Kormanio Nord of VI CZ was completely occupied with preparing its operations against Russia. In the course of its general efforts to build resistance movements, VI S then attempted to form a resistance network and R with part of a Kommando of Jagdverband Ost, under the leadership of a Stubaf. Dr. Pechau in the Heresgruppe Kurland area. All actions taken were Romanian attempts, because the psychological moment for such things had long since passed. I do not know to what extent VI S made use of the established depot of FAK II (Frontaufklärung II) in these efforts; I mention this only because it seems likely that they did. The special method of the Jagdverbaende was usually to base their activities on the armed operations Aufklärung and Kormando, in order to form centers of resistance in this way as well. I mention this because it is possible that operations of this kind were attempted by PECHAU in the Kurland area; their importance would have been only local, however. Here the preparation

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of the L network began at the right moment. The trusted Croats had been carefully prepared, but they were so influenced by the uncertain state of domestic politics in their country and the deterioration of morale that in the end – perhaps not out of ill will, but rather out of fear – they neglected their work, because the training traffic, which had been running normally until then, continued. The supply circle of Network I had expanded to the point of collapse. There were 2 Funkstellen. The amount of SOE funds is not now remembered but cannot have been very large.

(V) ORGANIZATIONS

Comd. HEIDRICH, BERLIN, Wilhelmsstrasse 109.

Before the war, there was a passageway connecting it to the current RSHA (Prinz Albrechtstrasse 9), the Gestapo headquarters. See Annexes 1 and 2 to SIR 800. At the outbreak of war, the SDHA was merged with the RSHA.

Commander (Ostuf) Dr. Alfred FILBERT, BERLIN GRUNEWALD, Telbriickstrasse. First house on the left coming from Hohenzollerndam. This office became Amt VI (Ausland) of the RSHA.

Personalities: GOTTSCH, KRAUS, NAUJOKS, WANECK, ZEISCHKA

Comd Dr. BEST, BERLIN SCHMARGENDORF, Berkaerstrasse 23-26, former Jewish dormitory. Guarded by an SS with an MG walking on the opposite side of the road (the building was still occupied in February 1944).

The RSHA department is responsible for security and espionage abroad. Divided into actions according to countries.

Personalities: KRAUS, NASSENSTEIN, BERGER, HERICH, BLUM

Commander Dr. BEST, BERLIN SCHMARGENDORF, Berkaerstrasse 23-26, former Jewish dormitory. Guarded by an SS with an MG walking on the opposite side of the road (the building was still occupied in February 1944).

The RSHA department deals with security and espionage abroad. Divided into actions according to countries.

Personalities: KRAUS, NASSENSTEIN, BERGER, HERICH, BLUM.

10. Commander BEISNNER. PW believes his name is Abtt. (TNA, KV3152, Kew Gardens). (TNA, KV3152, Kew Gardens, 1944: p. 9.)

11. Commander in 1939 Oberfuhrer STAHLECKER. He came under the authority of the SDHA. Since the establishment of the RSHA, the SD Oberabschnitte has been renamed SD Leitabschnitte.

Personalities: GOLDBACH.

12. Geheime Staatspolizeiamt-Gestapo Directorate.

13. Under the control of the GESTAPO.

14. Commander (Stubaf) GOTTSCH.

VIENNA. IX, Porssellangaso.

Formed in 1938 under the auspices of SD Amt III/3. Dissolved in 1939.

Notable figures: WANECK, ZEISCHKA, MOOR, GEISLER, Frl von DURKERSRODA, PW.

The evolution of events necessitates new adjustments. The orders currently in force will be canceled to the extent that they are consistent with the situation.

The following orders are recalled.

1. The situation in Croatia requires drastic unification and discipline. In accordance with the Supreme Military Command and the High Command of the SS, all SP peoples are under the command of the military Abwehr (sub-regional Abwehr NQ (AST), or the intelligence unit (Nachrichtstrupps), as appropriate) or, if applicable, the branch of the branch in other states are included in this unification.

The above decision will also lead to savings in manpower, which can be used more efficiently in other areas. The members of the Committee are made available to H.Q. Berlin for assignment to other sectors. The nominal lists of those who do so will be sent here immediately for forwarding to Berlin and Vienna.

Thus, after this reduction in personnel, only a few special SD units will remain, which will be left to the SD from other units, to be transferred to the Croatian police or a P.O.W. camp.

The above changes were made with the sovereignty of the Croatian state in mind, as in the political sphere, being the most important department of the independent state administration, they were the most sensitive.

Obviously, SD cannot completely abandon their investigations into the main political trends. However, these will be carried out by specially appointed officers, and not by the SD, to the extent

The considerable restrictions and reductions in SD activities discussed above must under no circumstances become apparent to the outside world, for reasons of security and prestige. With regard to external relations, the configuration must be maintained in its entirety. (TNA, KV3152, Kew Gardens, 1944: p. 11.)

3. As regards the head of the Sicherheitspolizei and SD for Croatia, SS Gruppenführer Konstantin Kammerhofer (Konstantin Kammerhofer (January 23, 1899 in Turnau; September 29, 1958 in Oberstdorf) was regional leader of the Styrian Heimatschutz in Austria during the interwar period, and during the National Socialist period he was SS group leader, police lieutenant general, and representative of Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler in the Independent State of Croatia. Kammerhofer was the son of a farmer and mill owner. After attending primary and secondary school, he graduated from business school. Kammerhofer enlisted in the Styrian Volunteer Riflemen in 1915 and took part in World War I in the Imperial and Royal Army from March 1917. Army from March 1917. He suffered a war wound on the Italian front, and Kammerhofer, who was decorated several times, rose to the rank of soldier. After the war ended, Kammerhofer spent a year as a prisoner of war in Italy. Kammerhofer was married in 1924 and had four children. He was a wine merchant by profession. Kammerhofer was already involved in the national gymnastics movement and in the Homeland Defense of Styria, where he was a local and district leader and, ultimately, one of the two provincial deputy leaders from 1930. Kammerhofer was involved in the Pfrimer Putsch in Styria in September 1931 but was acquitted in the subsequent treason trial. Kammerhofer belonged to the radical German nationalist and anti-Semitic group within the Styrian Homeland Defense around August Meyszner and Hanns Albin Rauter, who, like him, would later make careers in the Nazi state. Between 1932 and 1933, Kammerhofer succeeded Walter Pfrimer as regional leader of the Styrian Heimatschutz and, as such, played a key role in forming a “fighting community” with the National Socialists and, ultimately, in the merger of his organization with the Sturmabteilung (SA) of the NSDAP, which was illegal in Austria. Kammerhofer led the "Upper Styria" brigade as SA brigade leader from the end of 1933. Former Heimatschutz officials of all ranks were assigned the corresponding SA ranks and subsequently also played a key role in the July coup against the Dollfuss government.

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After the failure of the July 1934 Putsch, he fled Austria to the German Reich via Yugoslavia. Here he worked for the refugee aid organization in Berlin from January to March 1935 and later joined the SS (membership number 262,960). (TNA, KV3152, Kew Gardens, 1944: p. 10.)

After the Anschluss of Austria in March 1938, he joined the NSDAP in May 1938 (membership number 6,165,228). From 1938, he was also a member of the Reichstag (11th electoral term) and a councilor in Vienna. Kammerhofer received the commemorative medal for 9 November 1923, known in Nazi parlance as the "Blood Order." From at least 1936 until 1941, he was SS leader in the cities of Essen, Bochum, and Vienna. At the end of January 1941, Kammerhofer was promoted to SS-Brigadeführer; in this position, he was responsible for the Flemish SS in Brussels from June 1941 to March 1942. From 1942 to 1943, he was head of the SS and police in the "Asserbeidschan" group, which he himself had founded in Hindenburg.

In July 1942, Kammerhofer was promoted to SS group leader and police lieutenant general, and from March 1943 to 1945, Kammerhofer acted as "representative of the Reichsführer SS", analogous to a senior SS and police chief in the Independent State of Croatia. After Heinrich Himmler personally intervened with Ante Pavelic, Kammerhofer was able to act almost unhindered in Croatia. One of Kammerhofer's tasks was to establish mixed German-Croatian police units to combat the partisans and the Cetnik movement, which were subordinate to his high command. This meant that Kammerhofer and the SS had a significant part of the state executive in their hands. The growing influence of the SS in Croatia led to strong tensions between Kammerhofer and the Ustasha regime, the Foreign Ministry, and the German envoy in Zagreb, Siegfried Kasche. Kammerhofer ordered ruthless actions in the fight against the partisans. For example, after an assassination attempt in which a high-ranking SS and police official was killed, he ordered the burning of all houses near the scene of the crime and the execution of over 100 people. In early July 1943, Kammerhofer was promoted to SS group leader and lieutenant general of police. Shortly after the end of the war, Kammerhofer was taken prisoner by the Allies near Salzburg on May 11, 1945, and was interrogated in Nuremberg in 1947. He was then extradited to Austria and tried in Graz. However, Kammerhofer managed to escape and hide as a construction worker in Hanover. The exact dates are unknown. On September 29, 1958, Kammerhofer was found dead in a guesthouse in Oberstdorf.) Kammerhofer's biographies often mistakenly cite Hanover, his last known place of residence, as the place of his death. Its headquarters, as well as all essential police and SD headquarters, remained outside Agram, in the province. However, for external purposes, in order to deceive the enemy, the image had to be maintained as if Agram, being the capital, contained important German police and SS stations, with important commanders and station chiefs. (<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/ss-and-police>.) Apart from this, however, the experience gained in Warsaw was fully utilized, and through strong and special protective measures, care was taken to ensure that the events that took place in Warsaw would not be repeated in Agram.

To this end, specially trained, powerful, motorized combat groups of the SS and Ordnungspolizei, partially equipped with state-of-the-art equipment, were in the process of being halved – for security reasons and as far as we know, these preparations were not discovered by the enemy, and for security reasons, this task force will only act in case of a serious emergency and will not take part in the general guerrilla war against the partisans beforehand.

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The SD leaders believed that if the necessary vigilance was maintained, there was no cause for concern. For reasons closely related to the above, it might even be desirable for the communist forces in Agram and the surrounding area to attempt uprisings of this kind.

4. The units in Banja Luka, Sibenik, and Zadar are disbanded in accordance with paragraph 1. Similarly, the units in Bjelovar, Bihac, and Bos. Gradiska are no longer operational. Correspondence with the units there will cease accordingly.

5. With regard to policy, the following provisions must be observed:

In the case of all Croatian Ustasa units and other units, the policy is that prisoners, including officers and commissars, are to be treated severely. Anyone who takes action against the life of a prisoner has forfeited his own life.

In addition, German policy, which will be enforced with all possible vigor, is that reprisals by Croats should invariably and erroneously be regarded as taking place on German orders.

Subject: S.E. Command (Supreme Balkan Command).

Previous communication decrees issued by this command.

On this subject: dated 10.11.44, ref. as above.

Regarding the verbal discussion between the Hauptsturmführer and the commander of the operational unit, it is hereby announced that the measure ordered by the above decree is canceled due to the transfer of most of the General Staff.

The impression is given, in an appropriate manner, that no change has been made. Unit signs, requests for requisitioned space, etc. Therefore, the attacks would not be successful from a military point of view, as they have an extremely unfavorable effect on communication in the minds of the inhabitants.

Opened by the commander or acting commander.

Subject: Organization and policy.

1. As agreed at the 1944 conference, the departure from the city of the local police chief, Agram, and the Croatian police chief has been agreed verbally. Visits to Agram for discussions with Croatian commanders, etc., will give the impression that the previous situation is still in force.

2. The SS chief's headquarters will move in a few days to the location that has already been indicated. Among all the new local garrisons near Agram, courier facilities will be found capable of being established without difficulty. Separate instructions for there and when the appropriate opportunity arises, that visits to Agram for discussions with Croatian commanders, etc., will give the impression that the previous situation is still in effect.

2. The SS chief's headquarters will move in a few days to the location that has already been indicated. Among all the new local garrisons near Agram, courier facilities will be found capable of being established without difficulty. Separate instructions for there and when the appropriate opportunity arises, that the HQ of the SS Chief is in the city of Agram itself. (TNA, KV3152, Kew Gardens, 1944: p. 12.)

The precautionary measures announced in circular 1.10.44.-1 Org. 207/44 Top Secret Para 3, regarding protective measures for a state of emergency in Agram, have since been extended to our garrisons. If possible (but in this regard, the utmost caution must be exercised in any measures taken), communist uprisings in Agram are even desirable for reasons already known.

VIENNA. IX, Porssellangaso.

Formed in 1938 under the aegis of the SD Amt III/3. Dissolved in 1939.

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Personalities: WANECK, ZEISCHKA, MOOR, GEISLER, Frl von DURKERSRODA, PW. Among the SS officers who were active in Croatia, we mention: Edmund Veessenmayer (November 12, 1904, Bad Kissingen – December 24, 1977, in Darmstadt) was a German politician, officer (SS-Brigadeführer) and war criminal. He significantly contributed to the Holocaust in Hungary and Croatia. He was a subordinate of Ernst Kaltenbrunner and Joachim von Ribbentrop, and collaborated with Adolf Eichmann. Veessenmayer was the son of Professor Franz Xaver Veessenmayer from Oberstaufen in Kempten (Allgäu). From 1923 to 1926, he studied political science in Munich, then worked as a lecturer at the Technical University of Munich and the University of Economics in Berlin. Veessenmayer joined the Nazi Party (NSDAP) in 1932 and the SS in 1934. He joined influential business circles, making many friends in high places. From March 1940, he was entrusted with planning the movement of (neutral) Irish people against Great Britain. At the beginning of 1941, he was attached to the German diplomatic staff in Zagreb (Croatia). He played an important role in the persecution and murder of Croatian and Serbian Jews. On March 19, 1944, he became the Reich's plenipotentiary in Hungary after the German occupation, the "authorized representative of the Greater German Reich" in Hungary. In a telegram dated June 13, 1944, he reported to the Foreign Ministry: "the transport of Jews from the Carpathian Mountains and Transylvania ... with a total of 289,357 Jews in 92 complete trains of 45 cars." On June 15, 1944, Veessenmayer informed Ribbentrop in a telegram that approximately 340,000 Jews had been delivered to the Reich. He also announced that, after the final solution of the Jewish question, the number of deported Hungarian Jews would reach 900,000. Edmund Veessenmayer, born on November 12, 1904, in Bad Kissingen, Brigadeführer in the Waffen SS, died on December 24, 1977.

In the 1949 trial, he received a 20-year prison sentence for crimes against humanity, slavery, and membership in a criminal organization. This was reduced to 10 years in 1951. He was released on December 16 of the same year, after serving almost 6 months for each crime he was responsible for.

Later life. After his release, he lived with his wife at Geroldstrasse 43 in Münchener Westend, his financial situation being precarious at the time. Shortly after his release, he divorced his wife Mary Veessenmayer and moved to Hamburg. The divorce was formalized by the Landesgericht Hamburg on July 22, 1953. They had no children. His wife kept his name until her death and lived in Munich, earning her living by managing a pension.

Between 1952 and 1955, Veessenmayer worked as a representative for an agricultural machinery manufacturer in Iran. However, the business was not doing very well, and Veessenmayer was trying to find a better situation. At the end of his life, he lived in Darmstadt, at Rosenhöhweg 25. In 1977, Veessenmayer fell ill and died on December 24 in a hospital in Darmstadt due to heart failure. (ARNOLD SUPPAN: 2019.)

German intelligence officers Abwehrstelle are mentioned

26.Hstuf HELM. German agent 35 years old, 170 cm tall.

Joachim Karl Paul Nikolaus Deumling = Born on January 25, 1910. Head of Unit IV D 2 (General Government Affairs in the Reich) within the Reich Main Security Office (RSHA) and head of Einsatzkommando 10b as SS-Obersturmbannführer und Oberregierungsrat [March 1943-January 1945] in Croatia; After the war, he worked for the British Army in the Rhine, but the British blacklisted him for security reasons in 1951; he became an intelligence advisor to Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser. Arrested on June 26, 1967, in the RSHA trial; released in December 1968. Investigated in 1969 for

complicity in the murder of at least 3,823 people [the investigation did not lead to indictment and trial]. Died on April 2, 2007.

Wilhelm Höttl Born on March 19, 1915. Head of RSHA counterintelligence for Central and Southeastern Europe; second in command after Himmler's representative in Hungary. "Höttl was released from detention in December 1947, and the US Army refused to extradite him to the Austrian people's courts, which at that time were taking action against Nazi perpetrators. In March 1948, he contacted the CIC and later became head of two espionage operations, namely "MOUNT VERNON" and "MONTGOMERY". He died on June 27, 1999. Arrogant. 1940 attached to the German Embassy in BELGRADE as police attaché. 1943 attached to the German Embassy in ZAGREB as police attaché.

Odilo Globocnik Senior commander of the SS and police in the Adriatic region; head of Operation Reinhard as SSPF Lublin (Poland).

Wilhelm Fuchs – Born September 1, 1898. SS-Oberführer and police colonel; commander of Einsatzgruppe Serbia and Befehlsmandat der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD (BdS) (Serbia) April 1941-January 1942; Commander of the Security Police and SD in Lithuania; commander of Einsatzkommando 3 (USSR), September 1943-May 1944; commander of Einsatzgruppe A and BdS (Ostland) in Riga until October 1944; commander of Einsatzgruppe E (Croatia). Hanged for war crimes on January 24, 1947, in Belgrade.

Marko Jesper Matošević Croatian. Commander and supervisor of the provinces of Livac-Zapolje, Usora-Soli, and Posavje. Tasked with defending food supply lines against Yugoslav partisan paramilitaries and suppressing the communist rebellion, former spy. Presumed to have emigrated to Argentina at the end of the war in 1945 or to have defected to Bleiburg, Austria.

Wilhelm Traub Born on April 2, 1910. Gebietskommissar, "Navahrudak"; SS and police leader, "Quarnero." Died in captivity in Yugoslavia on February 18, 1946.

By the end of March 1945, it was clear to the Croatian army command that, although the front remained intact, it would ultimately be defeated due to a sheer lack of ammunition. For this reason, the decision was made to retreat to Austria and surrender to British forces advancing north from Italy. The German army was in the process of disintegrating, and the supply system was in ruins.

Bihać was liberated by partisans on the same day that the general offensive was launched. (ARNOLD SUPPAN : 2019.

The 4th Army, under the command of Petar Drapšin, broke through the defenses of the 15th SS Cossack Cavalry Corps. By April 20, Drapšin had liberated Lika and the Croatian coast, including the islands, and reached the old Yugoslav border with Italy. On May 1, after capturing the Italian territories of Rijeka and Istria from the German LXXXXVII Corps, the Yugoslav 4th Army outpaced the Western Allies by one day to Trieste. (TNA, KV3152, Kew Gardens, 1944: p. 12.)

OSS activity in Croatia in the fall of 1944 and spring of 1945

Among the Allied intelligence services that the SD faced in Croatia, the American OSS stands out. Intrigued by Tito's partisans. (Wilhelm Flicke, 1953.) Hayden accompanied a group of them in the summer of 1944 deep into Croatia and, in an episode 20 miles from the Hungarian border, he joined them in the summer of 1944 and decided in the summer of 1944 to see some action inside the country and he himself infiltrated deep into Croatia in the summer of 1944 to see them in action and on a mission, 20 miles from the Hungarian border, almost 200 miles inside the country, to rescue downed Allied

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airmen. He was impressed by their dedication to the mission for Yugoslavia and their support for American OSS agents, whom they contrasted with the British "imperialists." "It is impossible," Hayden later told a group of OSS trainees, "to work with the partisans and not be completely moved by their determination and sacrifice."

Some members of the OSS believed that Hayden, Benson, Thompson, and Tofte, the supply team for Operation Audrey, had become too close to Tito's communist partisans and had lost their objectivity. Most of the team members were withdrawn from the mission in early 1944, and Tofte himself was sent back to the United States, officially for insubordination. Donovan personally liked Tofte and considered his operation to have been quite successful.

The OSS's efforts in Yugoslavia were successful in that the support given to the Resistance helped keep many German divisions there and off the main Allied fronts and also helped save thousands of downed Allied airmen and aircrews. However, given the political decisions taken by the Big Three, Churchill, Stalin, and Roosevelt, the proportion of support was increasingly and overwhelmingly given to Tito's partisans rather than Michailović's Chetniks. In the summer of 1944, Tito's partisans went on the offensive again, both against the weakened Chetniks and against the Germans. The OSS reestablished contact and support for Mihailović that summer, mainly through a new unit created to help rescue downed airmen. By the end of the war, approximately 2,000 downed pilots had been rescued and evacuated through areas controlled by Chetniks or partisans in Yugoslavia. Some members of the OSS believed that Hayden, Benson, Thompson, and Tofte, the supply team for Operation Audrey, had gotten too close to Tito's communist partisans and were most of these pilots were Americans shot down during US Air Force air raids from Italy against heavily defended Axis oil fields and refineries in Ploiești, Romania. Most were members of B-24 Liberator bomber crews, but some were pilots of the fighter planes that escorted them. Otto Feher, a member of the OG, recalled that the Resistance had brought in a Tuskegee airman, the first black pilot he had ever seen, who had managed to escape capture by the Germans for several weeks. Another 1,000 airmen had been rescued by the OSS SO in the rest of the Mediterranean theater of operations, for a total of 3,000 qualified Allied airmen rescued to fly again. Allied support for guerrilla operations during the war, first for the Chetniks and then for the Partisans included equipping tens of thousands of guerrilla fighters. They kept 35 Axis divisions in check, including 15 divisions of the German army that could otherwise have been deployed in Italy, France, or on the Eastern Front. But Allied favoritism toward the partisans and, in particular direct assistance from the Red Army in the fall of 1944 helped Tito create a communist state in postwar Yugoslavia. Similarly, although a small OSS mission collaborated with rival communist and non-communist resistance movements in the small neighboring country of Albania, mainly to rescue survivors from downed American planes, it was the communists who came to dominate the country in the postwar period. (TNA, KV3152, Kew Gardens, 1944: p. 15.)

Final operations

However, despite the German surrender, sporadic fighting still took place in Yugoslavia. On May 7, Zagreb was evacuated, on May 9, Maribor and Ljubljana were captured by partisans, and Löhr, the supreme commander of Army Group E, was forced to sign the total surrender of the forces under his command at Topolšica, near Velenje, Slovenia, on Wednesday, May 9, 1945. Only Croats and other anti-partisan forces remained.

Between May 10 and 15, Yugoslav partisans continued to encounter resistance from Croats and other anti-partisan forces in the rest of Croatia and Slovenia. The Croatian Internal Guard, the Slovenian Internal Guard, and other anti-partisan forces attempted to retreat to Austria. The Battle of Odžak was the last battle of World War II in Europe. Representatives of the Independent State of Croatia attempted to negotiate a surrender to the British under the terms of the Geneva Convention, to which they had acceded in 1943, being recognized by it as "belligerents," but were ignored. (TNA, KV3152, Kew Gardens, 1944: p. 16.)

War crimes and atrocities. The Ustaše regime in Croatia (mostly Croats, but also Muslims and others) committed genocide against Serbs, Jews, Roma, and anti-fascist Croats. The Chetniks (mostly Serbs, but also Montenegrins and others) pursued genocide against Muslims, Croats, and pro-Partisan Serbs, while the Italian occupation authorities instigated ethnic cleansing (Italianization) against Slovenes and Croats. The Wehrmacht carried out mass executions of civilians in retaliation for resistance activity (e.g., the Kragujevac massacre and the Kraljevo massacre). The SS Division "Prinz Eugen" massacred large numbers of civilians and prisoners of war. Hungarian occupation troops massacred civilians (mostly Serbs and Jews) during a major raid in southern Bačka, under the pretext of suppressing resistance activities. The Ustaše, a Croatian ultra-nationalist and fascist movement that operated between 1929 and 1945 and was led by Ante Pavelić, took control of the newly formed Independent State of Croatia (NDH), established by the Germans after the invasion of Yugoslavia the Ustaše sought an ethnically pure Croatian state by exterminating Serbs, Jews, and Roma from its territory. Their main target was the Serbs, who numbered about two million. The first massacre of Serbs took place on April 28, 1941, in the village of Gudovac, where nearly 200 Serbs were rounded up and executed.

Ustasha militia units razed entire villages, often torturing men and raping women. Approximately one in six Serbs living in the NDH were victims of massacres, meaning that almost every Serb in this region had a family member who was killed in the war, especially by the Ustasha.

The Ustasha also set up camps throughout the NDH. Some of these were used to detain political opponents and those considered enemies of the state, others were transit and relocation camps for the deportation and transfer of populations, while others were used for mass murder. The largest camp was the Jasenovac concentration camp, which was a complex of five subcamps located about 100 km southeast of Zagreb. The camp was notorious for its barbaric and cruel killing practices, as described by witness testimonies. By the end of 1941, along with Serbs and Roma, the NDH authorities had imprisoned most of the country's Jews in camps such as Jadovno, Krušćica, Loborgrad, Đakovo, Tenja, and Jasenovac. Almost the entire Roma population of the NDH was also killed by the Ustashas. (Croatia and "Ethnic Cleansing" Akiko Shimizo). In Croatia, the Commission for the Identification of War and Post-War Victims of World War II was active from 1991 until the seventh government of the republic, led by Prime Minister Iвица Račan, ended the commission's work in 2002. All sides engaged in the widespread shooting of hostages, but the largest number of hostages were shot by the Germans in Serbia between 1941 and 1944. (www.ssoar.info, Balkan Holocausts? Serbian and Croatian victim centred propaganda and the war in Yugoslavia, MacDonald, David Bruce.)

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Conclusions

The events of autumn 1944 and the defeat of German troops on all fronts necessitated the adoption of new organizational measures to address security issues. The situation in Croatia required drastic unification and discipline. In accordance with the Supreme Military Command and the SS High Command, all forces were placed under the command of the Military Abwehr (Subregional Headquarters of the Abwehr (AST) or Intelligence Unit (Nachrichtentrupps) or, where appropriate, the Ie branch of the competent division (corps).

The SD headquarters, as well as all essential police and SD headquarters, remained outside Agram, in the province.

For external purposes, in order to deceive the enemy, the image had to be maintained as if Agram, being the capital, contained important German police and SS stations, with important commanders and station chiefs.

The experience gained in Warsaw was fully utilized, and through strong and special protective measures, care was taken to ensure that the events that took place in Warsaw would not be repeated in Agram. To this end, specially trained, powerful combat groups, motorized by the SS and Ordnungspolizei, partially equipped with state-of-the-art equipment, were in the process of being halved – for security reasons and as far as we know, these preparations were not discovered by the enemy, and for security reasons, this task force would only act in case of a serious emergency and would not take part in the general guerrilla war against the partisans beforehand.

By the end of March 1945, it was clear to the Croatian army command that, although the front had remained intact, it would ultimately be defeated due to a sheer lack of ammunition. For this reason, the decision was made to retreat to Austria and surrender to British forces advancing north from Italy. The German army was in the process of disintegrating, and the supply system was in ruins. Among the allied secret services that the SD faced in Croatia, the American OSS stands out. Most of the team members were withdrawn from the mission in early 1944. Donovan considered the operation to have been quite successful.

The Ustaše regime in Croatia (mostly Croats, but also Muslims and others) committed genocide against Serbs, Jews, Roma, and anti-fascist Croats. The Ustaše also set up camps throughout the NDH. The largest camp was the Jasenovac concentration camp, which was a complex of five subcamps located about 100 km southeast of Zagreb. The camp was notorious for its barbaric and cruel killing practices, as described by witness testimonies. By the end of 1941, the NDH authorities had imprisoned most of the country's Jews in camps such as Jadovno, Kruščica, Loborgrad, Đakovo, Tenja, and Jasenovac. Almost the entire Roma population of the NDH was also killed by the Ustashas.

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Article Info

Received: November 08 2025

Accepted: November 18 2025

How to cite this article:

Zidaru, M., Lascu, S. (2025). Measures to reorganize the German secret services in Croatia in the autumn of 1944. *Revista de Științe Politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques*, no. 88, pp. 269-280.



ORIGINAL PAPER

Gender Equality in Research: A Sociological Analysis of European Statistics and Public Policies

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Abstract:

This article explores gender equality within the research field through a sociological analysis. Drawing upon structural functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism, the study investigates the phenomena of the glass ceiling and the leaky pipeline, focusing on the persistence of gender disparities in European academia. Statistical data from sources like the European Institute for Gender Equality and the European Commission highlight ongoing disparities, despite increased female participation in higher education. The article also evaluates the effectiveness of current public policies and offers insights into sociological mechanisms perpetuating gender inequality.

Keywords: *gender equality, sociology, academia, structural functionalism, conflict theory, symbolic interactionism, glass ceiling, leaky pipeline*

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1. Introduction

Despite significant advancements in gender equality observed over the past several decades, profound disparities persist within the academic environment, especially in positions demanding high research output and occupying senior administrative leadership roles. Although women's presence has notably increased at junior and entry-level academic positions, the progression into senior ranks remains markedly disproportionate, emphasizing the endurance of structural barriers and implicit biases that impede career advancement. These obstacles result in what sociologists frequently describe as the "glass ceiling," a metaphorical yet pervasive barrier that prevents qualified women from ascending to top hierarchical positions within institutions (Eagly and Carli, 2007). Structural functionalist perspectives explain this persistence by referring to traditional socialization processes that allocate different societal roles to men and women, thus perpetuating conventional expectations regarding gender capabilities and career paths (Parsons and Bales, 1955). Conversely, conflict theory suggests that ongoing gender inequalities in academia are the manifestations of deeper power imbalances and resource allocation conflicts, where "men traditionally maintain positions of authority and access to influential networks", creating systemic disadvantages for women researchers (Connell, 2006: 112-118). Moreover, symbolic interactionism elucidates how subtle forms of discrimination, such as unconscious bias and gender stereotyping, systematically disadvantage women, shaping interactions and evaluations in a manner unfavorable to female academics, particularly in highly competitive contexts such as grant allocations and academic promotions (Moss-Racusin et al., 2012: 16475). Empirical data further reinforce these theoretical propositions, illustrating phenomena such as the "leaky pipeline," characterized by the disproportionate attrition of women at critical transitional points within their academic career trajectory, often exacerbated by institutional insensitivity towards maternity and caregiving responsibilities (European Commission, 2022; Rosa and Clavero, 2022). Consequently, this article aims to analyze the intricate dynamics of gender disparities in academia, employing these central sociological theories to illuminate how structural conditions and deeply ingrained cultural perceptions collectively contribute to sustained gender inequality within the research and higher education sectors.

2. Theoretical Framework

The most important sociological frameworks which offer valuable perspectives on gender inequality are the structural functionalism, the conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism. These frameworks help explain why, despite decades of policy initiatives and increasing female participation in higher education, women remain significantly underrepresented in senior academic and research leadership roles across Europe. As the European Commission notes *"women make up 49.4% of PhD graduates in the EU-27, but only 26.5% of full professors and 24% of heads of institutions"* (European Commission, 2024: 18), demonstrating that structural change has not kept pace with educational progress.

2.1. Structural Functionalism

Structural functionalism suggests that "gender roles serve specific societal functions, promoting stability by clearly delineating roles within institutions, including academia" (Eagly and Carli, 2007). However, this perspective has limitations in

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explaining ongoing inequalities as it often overlooks the dynamics of power and exclusion inherent in these roles. Structural functionalism interprets society as a system composed of interdependent parts that function together to maintain stability and order (Parsons, 1951). Within this framework, gender roles are historically understood as functional divisions of labor, where men are associated with productive, public roles and women with reproductive, domestic responsibilities. This perspective assumes that such divisions contribute to social equilibrium. In academia, these assumptions have implicitly shaped institutional structures, recruitment practices, and expectations regarding career trajectories.

As a result, traditional academic norms—such as uninterrupted career progression, long working hours, and geographical mobility—reflect what Acker describes as the *“ideal worker model inherently based on male life patterns”* (Acker, 1990: 149). From a functionalist perspective, educational institutions historically assigned men the role of intellectual producers and decision-makers, while women were expected to engage in teaching, caregiving, or supportive administrative tasks. Even today, *“women continue to be overrepresented in teaching-focused positions and underrepresented in research-intensive and leadership roles”* (European Commission, 2024: 33). Although structural functionalism helps explain how these divisions originated, critics argue that it insufficiently addresses how such roles become rigid and reproduce inequality over time.

Contemporary sociologists reinterpret functionalism to understand persistent institutional inertia. For example, despite policies promoting maternity leave and flexible schedules, academic cultures still reward constant availability and mobility—conditions that disproportionately disadvantage women. According to the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), *“over 42% of women researchers in Europe report that caregiving responsibilities have negatively affected their research output and career opportunities”* (EIGE, 2024: 21). Functionalist thinking can therefore help explain the resistance to institutional change, as established gender roles are perceived as traditional and thus normalized.

However, modern functionalist critiques emphasize that what once functioned to maintain social cohesion may now produce dysfunctions. Merton’s concept of *dysfunctions* is particularly relevant: academic systems that exclude or marginalize women create inefficiencies, limit innovation, and reduce the overall quality of scientific output (Merton, 1968). Evidence supports this claim—research teams with higher gender diversity *“produce more innovative and higher-impact scientific results”* (Elsevier, 2023: 44). Therefore, a revised functionalist approach advocates reconfiguring academic institutions to align with contemporary societal values—namely equality, diversity, and inclusion. This includes restructuring evaluation criteria to recognize parental leave, implementing gender-sensitive hiring practices, and promoting work-life balance policies. As Bleijenbergh states, *“institutions must move from gender-neutral to gender-responsive practices, acknowledging that equal treatment does not always yield equal outcomes”* (Bleijenbergh, 2022: 58).

2.2. Conflict Theory

Conflict theory (Karl Marx and, later, Sylvia Walby and Raewyn Connell) interprets academic institutions as arenas of power where resources, prestige, and influence are unequally distributed (Connell, 2006). Rather than viewing inequality as functional or natural, conflict theorists argue that gender disparities in academia result

from structural power imbalances that enable men to maintain dominance over institutional resources, leadership roles, and decision-making processes. This perspective is evident in persistent gender gaps in research funding, promotions, and representation at the highest levels of academic governance. As the European Research Council notes, *"women submitted 30% of grant applications but received only 22% of awarded grants in 2023"*, demonstrating inequitable access to critical resources (ERC, 2024: 15).

A central concept in feminist conflict theory is patriarchy—defined by Walby as a *"system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women"* (Walby, 1990: 20). In academic institutions, patriarchal norms operate both formally and informally. Formal mechanisms include hiring committees, evaluation procedures, and tenure requirements that prioritize uninterrupted productivity and long-term mobility. Informal mechanisms include exclusion from elite networks, mentorship inequality, and implicit bias in peer review processes. In a paper from 2012, the authors provide powerful empirical evidence that *"identical CVs were rated as significantly more competent and hireable when bearing a male name compared to a female name"* (Moss-Racusin et al., 2012: 16475).

Conflict theory also explains how men benefit from accumulated academic capital—reputational and social advantages that increase access to grants, conferences, editorial boards, and collaborations. These cumulative advantages lead to what Merton (1968) termed the *"Matthew effect,"* where established scholars (predominantly male) receive disproportionately greater recognition for their work, while women's contributions remain undervalued or invisible. This results in a cycle where *"women are more likely to occupy precarious academic positions and less likely to secure professorships or institutional leadership roles"* (European Commission, 2024: 22).

From a macro-sociological viewpoint, conflict theory emphasizes that gender inequality is sustained by resistance to structural change. Initiatives like Gender Equality Plans (GEPs), although required under Horizon Europe funding rules since 2022, often face institutional pushback, limited budgets, or tokenistic implementation. As O'Connor argues, *"universities frequently adopt gender equality policies for compliance rather than transformation, prioritizing reputation over systemic change"* (O'Connor, 2023: 41). In addition, conflict theory highlights intersectionality—how gender intersects with race, class, disability, and ethnicity to produce layered exclusions. For example, *"only 2.7% of full professors in the EU are women belonging to ethnic minority groups"* (EIGE, 2024: 30), indicating that power operates along multiple axes of inequality.

2.3. Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism focuses on micro-level interactions and the construction of gender roles through daily interactions and institutional cultures. This approach helps explain how stereotypes and biases are perpetuated within academic settings, influencing career trajectories, evaluation processes, and networking opportunities for women researchers (Rosa and Clavero, 2022). Unlike structural functionalism or conflict theory, which focus on macro-level institutions and power structures, symbolic interactionism emphasizes the *"socially constructed nature of gender and the ways in which individuals reproduce or resist inequality through daily interactions"* (Blumer, 1969: 12). In academic settings, this means that inequality is not only embedded in policies or institutional hierarchies, but also in language, communication patterns, peer evaluations, and expectations of competence.

One of the core mechanisms through which inequality is reproduced is

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stereotyping. Research shows that women scholars are often seen as less authoritative, less objective, or less suited for leadership compared to men. As Moss-Racusin et al. highlight “*science faculty members rated male applicants as significantly more competent and hireable than identical female applicants*” (Moss-Racusin et al., 2012: 16476). These biases, though often unconscious, shape decisions about hiring, promotions, conference invitations, authorship order, and mentorship. Symbolic interactionists argue that these interactions communicate who is seen as a “real scientist,” reinforcing gendered expectations.

Another key concept is *labeling and self-fulfilling prophecy*, which we can explain in the following way: when women internalize negative expectations—such as being perceived as less competent in STEM fields—they may experience stereotype threat, which undermines performance and confidence. As Steele explains, “*awareness of being negatively stereotyped can itself impair academic performance, regardless of actual ability*” (Steele, 2010: 45). Women in academia often report needing to demonstrate higher levels of competence than men to be taken seriously, a phenomenon described as the “prove-it-again bias” (Williams, 2021). Symbolic interactionists also focus on the meaning of institutional rituals and symbols—such as titles, academic gowns, conference hierarchies, and office allocation—which subtly communicate status and belonging. When “*most conference keynote speakers, editorial board members, and Nobel laureates are men*” (European Commission, 2024: 28), this sends a symbolic message about who is considered a legitimate authority in academia.

3. The Glass Ceiling and Leaky Pipeline Phenomena

The “glass ceiling” and “leaky pipeline” metaphors describe barriers to women's progression in academia. Women outnumber men in undergraduate and graduate programs, yet disproportionately exit academia before attaining senior positions (European Research Council, 2022). Factors contributing to the glass ceiling effect include maternity and family responsibilities, unconscious bias, gender stereotypes, and discriminatory evaluation practices, such as lower grant application scores for women (European Research Council, 2022).

The concepts of the *glass ceiling* and the *leaky pipeline* are two of the most powerful metaphors used to describe gender inequality in academia and research. The *glass ceiling* refers to the invisible but persistent barriers that prevent women from reaching top academic and managerial positions, despite equal qualifications and demonstrated competence. The *leaky pipeline* describes the progressive loss of women along the academic career trajectory—from undergraduate studies to full professorships—due to systemic, cultural, and institutional factors (European Commission, 2024). Together, these metaphors capture both the structural rigidity and cultural inertia that sustain gender disparities in European higher education and research systems.

Despite decades of progress, statistical evidence shows that the glass ceiling remains firmly in place. According to *She Figures 2024*, “*women represent 49.4% of PhD graduates in the EU-27 but only 26.5% of full professors and 24% of heads of institutions*” (European Commission, 2024: 18). The *Glass Ceiling Index (GCI)*, a composite indicator used by the European Institute for Gender Equality, continues to show that men are more than twice as likely to reach top academic positions as women (EIGE, 2024). This suggests that even when women enter academia in equal numbers, institutional cultures, evaluation criteria, and work-life balance challenges systematically hinder their progression. Several factors contribute to this persistent inequality. **Unconscious bias** in hiring and promotion

processes remains widespread. Moss-Racusin et al. demonstrated that “*faculty members rated identical CVs as more competent when they carried a male name*” (Moss-Racusin et al, 2012: 16475). **Work-life balance pressures**, particularly related to motherhood, have also been identified as major contributors to attrition. As Elsevier’s *Gender Report 2023* shows, “*female researchers publish fewer papers during the child-rearing years and are less likely to return to the same publication rate afterward*” (Elsevier, 2023: 46). Academic structures that reward continuous productivity and international mobility often fail to accommodate caregiving responsibilities, leading many women to opt out or stagnate in mid-career positions.

The *leaky pipeline* phenomenon further reveals that women’s exit from academia is not simply a matter of personal choice but rather a reflection of institutional barriers. For instance, “*women account for 53% of PhD graduates but only 33% of researchers in the EU*” (Eurostat, 2024). Attrition rates are particularly high during the transition from postdoctoral positions to permanent academic roles, a phase characterized by short-term contracts, high competition, and limited job security. In STEM fields, the losses are even greater, with “*women representing less than 30% of researchers and only 17% of full professors in engineering and technology*” (European Research Council, 2024: 22).

3. Gender Disparities: Statistical Overview

Statistical analyses demonstrate stark gender disparities in European academia. Data from “*She Figures 2022*” indicates persistent underrepresentation of women in higher academic ranks despite nearly equal gender participation rates at entry-level academic positions. Women constitute only 15% of rectors in universities within the European University Association (European Institute for Gender Equality [EIGE], 2022).

A comprehensive understanding of gender inequality in academia requires an examination of up-to-date statistical data that illustrates the persistence of structural disparities across European research systems. Recent reports, including *She Figures 2024*, Eurostat (2024), the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE, 2024), and UNESCO (2023), provide detailed insights into gender gaps across educational attainment, research careers, leadership roles, pay equity, and research funding.

At the entry level, progress toward gender parity appears promising. According to the European Commission, “*women represented 54% of all tertiary graduates and 49.4% of doctoral graduates in the EU-27 in 2023*” (European Commission, 2024: 15). However, the data reveals a sharp decline in women’s representation as academic careers advance—a phenomenon commonly referred to as the “*scissors diagram*.” For example, “*only 33% of researchers in higher education and 26.5% of full professors are women*” (European Commission, 2024: 19). This indicates that while women enter academia in significant numbers, structural barriers prevent them from progressing to senior academic roles.

Leadership positions remain particularly male-dominated. Statistics from EIGE reveal that “*only 24% of rectors or university presidents in European universities are women*” (EIGE, 2024, p. 27). In national academies of sciences, the gender gap is even wider, with “*less than 15% of academy members being women*” (UNESCO, 2023; 41). Moreover, the *Glass Ceiling Index (GCI)*—which measures the likelihood of women reaching top academic positions compared to men—remains above 1.5 in most EU countries, indicating persistent inequality (European Commission, 2024).

Funding disparities further exacerbate these inequalities. The European Research Council (ERC) reports that “*women accounted for 30% of grant applicants but received only 21–23% of awarded grants between 2021 and 2023*” (ERC, 2024: 12). Additionally,

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women-led research projects receive, on average, smaller budgets and lower evaluation scores than those led by men (Elsevier, 2023: 44). These funding gaps contribute to a cumulative disadvantage effect, affecting publication output, international mobility, and institutional recognition.

According to Eurostat, “women researchers earn on average 13% less than their male counterparts in EU higher education institutions” (Eurostat, 2024). In some Eastern European countries, this gap exceeds 20%. The disparity is partly due to horizontal segregation (women concentrated in lower-paid disciplines such as education and social sciences) and vertical segregation (underrepresentation in senior and well-paid leadership roles). Furthermore, work-life balance issues disproportionately affect women. Data from the European Institute for Gender Equality shows that “41% of female researchers report career interruptions due to childcare or eldercare responsibilities, compared to 12% of male researchers” (EIGE, 2024: 33). These interruptions reduce publication productivity and delay promotions, reinforcing the leaky pipeline phenomenon.

Table 1: Gender disparities in EU

Indicator	Women (%)	Men (%)
Tertiary (Bachelor + Master) graduates (EU-27)	54%	46%
PhD graduates (EU-27, 2023)	49.4%	50.6%
Researchers in higher education	33%	67%
Full Professors / Grade A positions	26.5%	73.5%
Heads of universities / rectors	24%	76%
Members of National Academies of Science	14–15%	85–86%
ERC (European Research Council) grant success rate	21–23% women	77–79% men
Average gender pay gap among researchers	Women earn 13% less	–
Career interruptions due to caregiving (EU researchers)	41% of women	12% of men
Women in STEM research fields	30%	70%
Women in SSH (Social Sciences & Humanities)	55%	45%

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4. Disciplinary Variations

In 2021, women represented 47% of PhD graduates in the EU-27, yet these figures decrease significantly at higher academic ranks in STEM disciplines (Guo et al., 2024). According to *She Figures 2024*, “women represented 55% of graduates in SSH but only 32% in STEM doctoral programmes across the EU-27” (European Commission, 2024: 21). This horizontal segregation begins early in education, influenced by cultural stereotypes that associate scientific competence with masculinity and caregiving or social

roles with femininity (Eccles, 2023). Symbolic bias and workplace culture play essential roles. Women in STEM frequently report experiences of isolation, gender stereotyping, and a lack of mentorship. As one study notes, “*women in laboratories often feel like guests rather than equal contributors to scientific innovation*” (Guo et al., 2024: 9). In contrast, social sciences and humanities disciplines tend to provide more flexible career trajectories and greater acceptance of interdisciplinary or gender-focused research.

5. Public Policies in the EU

The European Union has introduced various public policies and collaborative platforms aimed at promoting gender equality in research. Initiatives such as the Scientific Women's Academic Network support women's career advancement through mentoring, networking, and policy advocacy (European Commission, 2024). However, the effectiveness of these policies varies significantly across EU member states, reflecting cultural, economic, and institutional differences. Also, Over the past two decades, the European Union has progressively institutionalized gender equality as a core principle within the European Research Area (ERA). The policy shift became particularly explicit with the European Commission's Horizon 2020 Framework, which identified gender equality as a cross-cutting priority. This commitment was strengthened under *Horizon Europe (2021–2027)*, where, for the first time, universities and research institutions are required to have a **Gender Equality Plan (GEP)** in place to be eligible for EU funding. As stated by the European Commission, “*from 2022, the existence of a Gender Equality Plan is an eligibility criterion for participation in Horizon Europe*” (European Commission, 2024: 7). These plans must include measures for work-life balance, gender-sensitive recruitment, monitoring, and training on unconscious bias. At the strategic level, the **European Research Area Policy Agenda (2022–2024)** introduced Action 5: “*Promote gender equality and foster inclusiveness in R&I,*” emphasizing intersectionality, sexual harassment prevention, and gender budgeting. The European Institute for Gender Equality supports these initiatives by offering benchmarking tools and the **Gender Equality Index**, which revealed that “*the domain of knowledge, including research and innovation, remains one of the lowest-performing areas in terms of gender equality, scoring only 64.9 out of 100 in 2024*” (EIGE, 2024: 15).

Conclusion

The theoretical perspectives applied throughout this article—structural functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism—demonstrate that gender inequality is multidimensional. Despite policy advancements and increased awareness, gender disparities in European academia persist due to structural, cultural, and institutional factors. Sociological theories provide a nuanced understanding of these dynamics, suggesting that sustained efforts in policy reform, institutional culture change, and structural adjustments are essential for achieving genuine gender equality in research. Addressing gender inequality in academia requires comprehensive policy approaches informed by sociological insights. Structural functionalism emphasizes the need for institutional reforms promoting equitable role distribution, whereas conflict theory underlines the importance of addressing power imbalances and resource allocation inequities. Symbolic interactionism highlights the necessity of challenging pervasive stereotypes and promoting inclusive institutional cultures. Finally, we must appreciate that European policies such as Horizon Europe's Gender Equality Plans, the ERA Policy Agenda, and the Helsinki Call for Action mark critical steps towards institutional reform.

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However, without cultural change, strong enforcement, and accountability mechanisms, these policies risk remaining declarative rather than transformative. Genuine progress requires rethinking academic excellence to include diversity, work-life balance, and recognition of caregiving responsibilities. It also demands intersectional sensitivity, acknowledging that migrant women, ethnic minority women, and women with disabilities face even more severe barriers.

Authors' Contributions:

The authors contributed equally to this work.

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Article Info

Received: November 01 2025

Accepted: November 20 2025

**Gender Equality in Research:
A Sociological Analysis of European Statistics and Public Policies**

How to cite this article:

Motoi, G., Popescu, A.-M. (2025). Gender Equality in Research: A Sociological Analysis of European Statistics and Public Policies. *Revista de Științe Politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques*, no. 88, pp. 281-291.



ORIGINAL PAPER

Understanding Continuous Professional Development Needs among Teachers in Vocational and Technical Education: Evidence from a Sociological Study

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Abstract:

The continuous professional development of teachers represents a central dimension of contemporary educational policy, particularly in contexts marked by rapid curricular transformations, technological change, and increasing pedagogical complexity. In vocational and lower-secondary education, where teachers must simultaneously address diverse student needs and align instruction with labour market expectations, identifying real training needs becomes essential for improving educational quality. This study explores the professional development needs of teachers from two vocational high schools and one urban lower-secondary school in Dolj County, aiming to construct a nuanced portrait of their perceptions, challenges, and motivations regarding continuous training. Grounded in theories of reflective practice and organizational change, the research investigates how teachers evaluate their previous participation in training, the obstacles they encounter, and the conditions that can enhance engagement in innovative learning opportunities. By integrating theoretical foundations with empirical inquiry, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of teachers' professional learning dynamics.

Keywords: *Professional Development, Teachers' Training Needs, Vocational and Technical Education; Reflective Practice; Educational Change.*

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1. Theoretical framework

Teachers' professional development represents an important element in ensuring educational quality (Popescu and Motoi, 2022), as continuous learning enhances instructional practices and supports adaptation to systemic change, a perspective aligned with Schön's concept of the "reflective practitioner," which emphasizes the need for ongoing self-assessment and experiential learning (Schön, 1983: 49–52). Schön's framework is particularly relevant for teachers working within vocational and technical education, where the pace of technological, curricular, and labour market change requires constant updating of professional competencies and adaptive instructional behaviour.

Complementing this view is Fullan's (2007) theory of educational change, which situates teacher learning within a broader organizational and systemic dynamic, arguing that professional development cannot be conceptualized solely at the individual level but must be understood as an interactive process shaped by institutional cultures, school leadership, available resources, and national educational policies (Fullan, 2007: 68–72). From this perspective, teachers' expressed needs for continuous training reflect both personal aspirations for professional growth and systemic pressures emerging from curricular reforms, digitalization of education, and increasing demands for inclusive pedagogical practices. At the same time, the theoretical model proposed by Guskey (2002) provides another essential lens, suggesting that teachers' willingness to engage in professional development is strongly influenced by their perceptions of the relevance, applicability, and immediate utility of training programs; according to this model, meaningful changes in instructional practice occur only when teachers perceive clear benefits for student learning, when training is aligned with their instructional realities, and when institutional structures support the implementation of newly acquired skills (Guskey, 2002: 383–387).

A broader understanding of teachers' continuous professional development must also consider how educational policies and governance frameworks shape organizational practices, a perspective consistent with Olimid's comparative analysis of EU-level educational programmes and institutional dynamics (Olimid, 2018: 789–797). Also, a deeper understanding of teachers' professional development needs also requires examining how organizational dynamics shape individual behaviour and decision-making, a perspective consistent with analyses of power, truth, and identity within rational organizational structures (Hirghiduș & Anghel, 2009). These theoretical insights are particularly pertinent in the context of the present study, which investigates the continuous training needs of teachers from three vocational high schools in Dolj County, Romania.

2. Methodological aspects

The present research, designed with a descriptive and exploratory character, aims to identify and analyze the continuous professional development needs of teachers working in two vocational and technical high schools and in one urban lower-secondary school in Dolj County, pursuing the broader objective of constructing a comprehensive and nuanced portrait of teachers' real professional development needs, as they intersect with the challenges of contemporary education and with the socio-demographic and professional characteristics of the teaching staff; within this framework, the study pursued several specific objectives, namely examining teachers' participation in continuous training programs and identifying the thematic areas they prefer, highlighting their perceptions of the usefulness of previous training activities and of the domains in which

they feel the greatest needs, identifying the obstacles that limit access to continuous training and the factors that could encourage participation in innovative programs, and investigating teachers' preferences regarding the organization, duration, and scheduling of future training activities.

The research employed the sociological survey method, using a structured questionnaire administered both online and in printed form, when necessary, the instrument comprising closed-ended questions—either single-answer or multiple-choice—as well as Likert-type scale questions (1–5) designed to capture teachers' perceptions and attitudes with greater precision. The target population included teachers active in technological high schools.

The questionnaire comprised several thematic sections: socio-demographic and professional profile, previous participation in training programs, perceived usefulness and emerging needs, obstacles and enabling conditions for future training, as well as suggestions regarding organizational formats and motivational factors. Data were collected between June and August 2025 under conditions ensuring voluntary participation and confidentiality, in accordance with ethical standards, and were subsequently processed and analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, including frequencies and percentages, which were presented in tables and graphs to facilitate interpretation.

3. Results

The analysis of teachers' participation in continuous professional development over the past three years reveals several significant trends that highlight both individual motivations and institutional dynamics.

Table 1. Participation in Continuous Professional Development Programs in the Last Three Years

Response	% of total respondents
Yes	85.2
No	14.8

The distribution of responses regarding teachers' participation in continuous professional development programs clearly illustrates a strong orientation toward professional growth, with 85.2% of respondents stating that they have taken part in such activities in the past three years. Considering the specific context of technological high schools—where labour market requirements change rapidly and the subjects taught often involve technical or technologically evolving content—continuous training becomes not merely a formal obligation, but a practical necessity for maintaining professional relevance. Teachers in these institutions are frequently required to adapt not only to new technologies, but also to new categories of students, alternative working methods, and the expectations of educational partners (including economic actors), which means that professional development is often perceived as a tool of professional survival within an ever-changing educational environment.

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Table 2. Domains With the Highest Need for Training
(max. 3 options; percentages of total respondents)

Response	% of total respondents
Digital teaching	53.0
Modern assessment strategies	61.2
Classroom and conflict management	56.8
Inclusion/SEN	48.6
Socio-emotional competencies	45.4
School counselling and guidance	33.9
Non-formal education and extracurricular projects	30.1
Instructional design and curriculum	48.1
Individualized learning and content adaptation	66.1
Innovative teaching techniques and communication adapted to vulnerable groups	70.5
Other	4.9

Note: Percentages reported for N = 84 respondents; multiple-answer question.

The analysis of the responses regarding the domains perceived as having the greatest need for professional development reveals a complex picture, constructed on the basis of a multiple-response item—a methodological aspect of particular relevance, as it allows respondents to indicate several areas of interest simultaneously, thereby reflecting the plurality and overlap of real needs emerging from educational practice. This feature of the question requires that percentages be reported in relation to the total sample rather than to an exclusive distribution, a choice that offers a more accurate representation of the diversity of strategies teachers consider to be priorities. The pattern of prioritized training areas aligns with Fullan’s (2007) theory of educational change, which argues that teachers’ development needs intensify when institutional expectations and classroom realities become increasingly complex.

Within this interpretative context, the data clearly highlight the substantial share of the option “*Innovative teaching techniques and communication adapted to vulnerable groups*,” selected by 70.5% of respondents—a result that can be sociologically interpreted as a clear signal concerning the dominant direction of current professional concerns. Teachers in the urban educational environment of Dolj County appear to be keenly aware that the effectiveness of contemporary schooling depends largely on the capacity to integrate innovative teaching methods and to develop differentiated communication competencies suited to the cultural, social, and emotional diversity of student groups, particularly those in vulnerable situations.

At the same time, the option “*Individualized learning and content adaptation*,” selected by 66.1% of teachers, outlines a complementary profile that further nuances the structure of the responses, suggesting that teachers perceive the personalization of the instructional process—tailored to the cognitive and emotional particularities of each student—as essential. In addition, the domain “*Modern assessment strategies*,” indicated by 61.2% of respondents, completes this overall picture by showing an acute

need to reform assessment practices through the adoption of tools and methods aligned with new educational paradigms centered on competencies and individual progress.

Table 3. Obstacles to Participation in Training
(multiple options; percentages of total respondents)

Response	% of total respondents
Lack of time	73.2
High costs	48.1
Lack of relevant training opportunities nearby	30.6
Lack of institutional support	25.7
Other	8.2

Note: Percentages reported for N = 84 respondents; multiple-response question.

Starting from the distribution of teachers' responses regarding the obstacles encountered in participating in continuous professional development programs, the sociological interpretation reveals several trends and correlations that merit deeper analysis. Viewed through the perspective of organizational sociology, these barriers reflect what Lipsky (1980) described as the constraints faced by "street-level bureaucrats," whose limited time and resources shape their capacity to participate in professional learning.

It is important to emphasize that this item allowed respondents to select multiple options, a feature that provides a more accurate depiction of the complexity of perceived barriers, as the percentages—reported to the total number of respondents (N = 84)—capture the overlap and interdependence of limiting factors.

First, the overwhelming prevalence of the option "*Lack of time*," selected by 73.2% of teachers, indicates that the main barrier to participation in training is temporal in nature. From a sociological perspective, this reality may be associated with work overload and the high volume of professional and administrative tasks characteristic of the urban educational context, where teachers juggle teaching, assessment, involvement in extracurricular projects, and bureaucratic responsibilities. The lack of time thus becomes a symptom of an organizational culture marked by pressure on personal resources and the absence of efficient workload-reduction mechanisms that would enable genuine participation in training activities. Secondly, "*High costs*," indicated by 48.1% of respondents, signal the economic dimension of inequalities in access to professional development. Even in an urban setting, where training opportunities are more diverse than in rural areas, limited individual financial resources and the absence of institutional subsidies constitute significant restrictive factors. This finding highlights the need for educational policies to include mechanisms for public or institutional funding of training programs so that professional development does not depend on teachers' personal economic means. The third-ranked obstacle, "*Lack of relevant training opportunities nearby*" (30.6%), points to a structural problem of geographical accessibility and curricular relevance. Even within the urban area of Dolj County, there are situations in which available training programs fail to align with teachers' real needs or are not sufficiently accessible logistically, discouraging participation. This barrier is complemented by "*Lack of institutional support*" (25.7%), which reveals another dimension of the organizational context: the absence of clear and proactive internal policies encouraging professional development, whether through workload reductions,

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logistical facilitation, or symbolic support from school leadership.

Table 4. Preferred Form of Training

Response	% of total respondents
Face-to-face courses (in-class)	29.5
Synchronous online courses (live)	25.7
Asynchronous online courses (platform-based)	19.7
Practical workshops	18.0
Good-practice exchanges / study visits	7.1

Note: Percentages reported for N = 84 respondents; single-response question.

The results concerning teachers' preferred format for participating in continuous professional development programs provide a valuable perspective on how urban educators in Dolj County wish to engage in professional learning activities, revealing preferences that reflect both the long-standing educational tradition and the more recent trends toward digitalization. As this was a single-response question, the data allow for a clear hierarchy of the expressed options and highlight the dominant orientations. The highest share corresponds to "face-to-face courses (in-class)," selected by 29.5% of respondents, indicating that, despite the evident advantages of digital environments, direct interaction, unmediated contact with trainers, and informal exchanges of ideas remain essential for a significant proportion of teachers. This format is often perceived as highly valuable due to its capacity to offer immediate feedback and to foster a collaborative learning climate.

**Table 5. Expectations From Training Programs
(coded categories; multiple responses)**

Response	% of total respondents
Immediate applicability in the classroom	64.5
Access to resources and lesson models	52.5
Mentoring/coaching	45.4
Recognized certification	42.1
Professional networking	28.4

Note: Percentages reported for N = 84 respondents; multiple-response question.

The data show that the most prominent expectation is "*immediate applicability in the classroom*" reported by 64.5% of respondents, highlighting the pressing need for training programs to be pragmatic, practice-oriented, and directly transferable to everyday teaching activities. Teachers are no longer seeking only the accumulation of theoretical knowledge; instead, they expect concrete solutions, examples of good practice, and tools that enable effective and innovative instructional interventions at the classroom level. In a similar vein, "*access to resources and lesson models*" selected by 52.5%, reinforces this trend by suggesting that continuous professional development is valued particularly when it provides tangible support: teaching materials, planning templates, sample instructional scenarios, and adaptable digital resources. This expectation reflects teachers' desire to save time and to rely on validated methodological support rather than rebuilding materials individually. At the same time, "*mentoring and coaching*" indicated by 45.4%, points to an openness toward more personalized and collaborative forms of professional learning,

in which direct interaction with an expert or an experienced colleague facilitates sustained instructional development. This need aligns with the broader transformation of school organizational culture, which increasingly values learning within professional communities and reciprocal support among teachers. Moreover, “*recognized certification*” selected by 42.1%, shows that beyond intrinsic motivations for professional growth, pragmatic career-related considerations—such as earning credits or accumulating points for promotion—also play a significant role. Finally, although “*professional networking*” was chosen by a smaller share of respondents (28.4%), it remains meaningful, reflecting teachers’ interest in building professional connections, exchanging ideas, and participating in communities of practice—an essential component of a modern, interconnected educational environment.

Table 6. Intention to Participate in Training Programs
(in the next 24 months)

Response	% of total respondents
Yes, I intend to participate	73.8
No, I do not intend to participate	13.7
Unsure / I do not know yet	12.5

Note: Percentages reported for N = 84 respondents.

Over the next 24 months, teachers’ intention to participate in professional development programs is notably high, according to the collected data: 73.8% of respondents state that they plan to attend a training course on one of the previously identified topics, 13.7% indicate that they do not intend to participate, and 12.6% remain uncertain. These results illustrate a substantial interest in continuous professional development and highlight a tangible demand for training opportunities that are both relevant and flexible. The strong orientation toward future participation suggests that teachers increasingly perceive professional development as essential for adapting to curricular changes, enhancing instructional practices, and meeting the diverse needs of contemporary learners. At the same time, the presence of a hesitant group underscores the importance of institutional support, accessible formats, and well-structured programs to encourage engagement from all teachers.

Table 7. To what extent do you believe that participating in a training course on innovative teaching techniques would improve your work with students from vulnerable groups?

Response	% of total respondents
1 – Not useful at all	2.7
2 – Slightly useful	6.6
3 – Moderately useful	20.2
4 – Very useful	35.0
5 – Extremely useful	35.5

Note: Percentages reported for N = 84 respondents.

The results of this item reveal a highly positive perception regarding the potential impact of innovative teaching training on work with vulnerable students: 70.5% of

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respondents consider such a course to be very useful or extremely useful, indicating a strong awareness of the need for adapted and inclusive methodologies. Only 9.3% perceive the usefulness as low or non-existent, while 20.2% rate it as moderately useful. This distribution confirms the existence of strong demand for training programs focused on innovative instructional practices, especially those aimed at supporting students at risk of school exclusion. Furthermore, the results underscore the opportunity—and indeed the necessity—of integrating practical modules, applied strategies, and relevant case studies into training offers to enhance teachers' ability to respond effectively to the complex challenges faced by vulnerable learners.

Authors' Contributions:

The authors contributed equally to this work.

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Article Info

Received: November 01 2025

Accepted: November 21 2025

How to cite this article:

Popescu, A.-M., Motoi, G. (2025). Understanding Continuous Professional Development Needs among Teachers in Vocational and Technical Education: Evidence from a Sociological Study. *Revista de Științe Politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques*, no. 88, pp. 192-300.



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CEPOS Previous Events. Photo gallery CEPOS Events

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<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Center-of-Post-Communist-Political-Studies-CEPOS/485957361454074>

REGISTRATION FEES CEPOS CONFERENCE 2026

Registration fees will be paid exclusively ONLINE. All details at:
<http://cepos.eu/upcoming>

Organizing details (Conference location/ organizing details e.g. meals, coffee breaks/ mode of presentation of the papers to be announced in due time)

The registration fee covers:

- * Conference attendance to all common sessions, individual and special panels
- * Conference materials (including the Book of Abstracts of the Conference)
- * Conference program 2026 for all registered participants
- * Certificate of attendance for CEPOS Conference 2026 (offered at the end of the CEPOS Conference 2026)
- * Certificate of attendance for CEPOS International Associated Research Workshop 2026 (free for registered participants attending the workshop). Main topics of the panel:
 - *Policy indexation* of international journals in international databases and services;
 - *Open access* policy of the international journals;
 - *Data and statistics* within an international indexed conference;
 - Use of *online applications* for social sciences research;
 - Methods and *themes of research* provided by CEPOS (2021-2025);
 - *Publication* in an international indexed journal;
 - *Indexing and statistics* for social sciences journals in international databases;
 - *Academic profile* in international databases;
 - RSP Manuscript Submission Guidelines;
 - Publication, editing support and *citation metrics* for social sciences journals.
- * 15 minutes Oral presentation / Poster Presentation for every author and presenter
- * Publication of the Conference Papers in the International Indexed Journal Revista de Stiinte Politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques.

Previous publication of the 2012-2025 Conference papers is available at:
<http://cis01.central.ucv.ro/revistadestiintepolitice/acces.php>

CERTIFICATES OF ATTENDANCE

Certificates of attendance will be offered at the end of the conference.

INTERNATIONAL INDEXING OF REVISTA DE ȘTIINȚE POLITICE. REVUE DES SCIENCES POLITIQUES. Revista de Științe Politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques is an International Indexed Journal by:

ERIH PLUS

ProQuest

EBSCO

CEEOL

KVK

Gale Cengage Learning

Index Copernicus

Georgetown University Library

Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB

Journal Seek

Latest international indexing updates 2025 (March 2025) of the *Revista de Științe Politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques* (selective list 2019-2025)

Universität Zürich Journal Database, Switzerland

Zurich Open Repository and Archive

<https://www.jdb.uzh.ch/id/eprint/21535/>

Royal Danish Library, Denmark

https://soeg.kb.dk/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=alma99123026492405763&context=L&vid=45KBDK_KGL:KGL&lang=en&search_scope=MyInst_and_CI&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&tab=Everything&query=any,contains,1584-224x&offset=0

Swisscovery, Swiss Library Service Platform (SLSP) Switzerland

https://swisscovery.slsp.ch/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=alma991170234587405501&context=L&vid=41SLSP_NETWORK:VU1_UNION&lang=de&search_scope=DN_and_CI&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&tab=41SLSP_NETWORK&query=any,contains,1584-224x&offset=0

Science On University Achievement Information System by University of Lodz, Poland

<https://son.uni.lodz.pl/.../ULbfee0e874c6a41c4a00d516e09.../>

Le réseau vaudois Renouveau Sciences et Patrimoines, Switzerland

https://renouvaud1.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=alma991021158885602852&context=L&vid=41BCULAUSA_LIB:VU2&lang=fr&search_scope=SP_1ibraries_and_CDI&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&tab=Everything&query=any,contains,1584-224x&offset=0

Rebiun Catálogo de la Red de Bibliotecas Universitarias y Científicas, Spain

<https://rebiun.baratz.es/.../b2FpOmNlbGVicmF0aW9uOmVzLmJh...>

KOBV Kooperativer Bibliotheksverbund Berlin Brandenburg, Germany

<https://portal.kobv.de/simpleSearch.do?index=internal&plv=2&sortCrit=score&sortOrder=desc&hitsPerPage=&query=1584-224x&formsearch=%E2%9C%93#resultlistForm>

CEPOS NEW CALL FOR PAPERS 2026

Katalog der Teilbibliothek Diakonie, Gesundheit und Soziales der Hochschule
Hannover, Germany
<https://opac.tib.eu/DB=4.5/LNG=DU/SID=f438f44d-1/CMD...>

EP Library Catalogue – European Parliament Library Catalogue
https://europarl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=alma991001117790704886&context=L&vid=32EPA_INST:32EPA_V1&lang=en&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&tab=Everything&query=sub,exact,Europe%20de%20l%27Est%20--%20Politique%20et%20gouvernement,AND&mode=advanced&offset=0

Ghent University Library
<https://lib.ugent.be/en/catalog/ejn01:1000000000726583>

Universidad Carlos III de Madrid Research Portal
<https://researchportal.uc3m.es/display/rev184334>

J-Gate Social Science & Humanities Indexed Journal List
<https://www.kitsw.ac.in/Library/2022/JSSH%20Journal%20List.pdf>

<https://europub.co.uk/journals/revista-de-stiinte-politice-revue-des-sciences-politiques-J-11661>

Universiteits Bibliotheek Gent
<https://lib.ugent.be/catalog/ejn01:1000000000726583>

Publons
<https://publons.com/journal/540040/revista-de-stiinte-politice/>

Universidad Carlos III de Madrid
<https://researchportal.uc3m.es/display/rev184334>

Weill Cornell Medicine Qatar
https://primo.qatar-weill.cornell.edu/discovery/fulldisplay?vid=974WCMCIQ_INST:VU1&docid=alma991000575074006691&lang=en&context=L&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine

Reseau Mirabel
<https://reseau-mirabel.info/revue/3046/Revista-de-Stiinte-Politice>

Bond Library University
https://librarysearch.bond.edu.au/discovery/fulldisplay?vid=61BOND_INST%3ABOND&docid=alma9930197890502381&lang=en&context=SP

Ghent university library
<https://lib.ugent.be/catalog/ejn01:1000000000726583>

The Royal Library and Copenhagen University Library Service

CEPOS NEW CALL FOR PAPERS 2026

https://e-tidsskrifter.kb.dk/resolve?umlaut.locale=da&url_ver=Z39.88-2004&url_ctx_fmt=info%3Aofi%2Ffmt%3Akev%3Amtx%3Actx&ctx_ver=Z39.88-2004&ctx_tim=2020-04-11T21%3A23%3A41%2B02%3A00&ctx_id=&ctx_enc=info%3Aofi%2Fenc%3AUTF-8&rft.issn=1584-224X&rft.search_val=1584-224X&rft_val_fmt=info%3Aofi%2Ffmt%3Akev%3Amtx%3Ajournal&rfr_id=info%3Asid%2Fsfxit.com%3Acitation

Glasgow Caledonian University
https://discover.gcu.ac.uk/discovery/openurl?institution=44GLCU_INST&vid=44GLCU_INST:44GLCU_VU2&?u.ignore_date_coverage=true&rft.mms_id=991002471123103836

Open University Library Malaysia
<http://library.oum.edu.my/oumlib/content/catalog/778733>

Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, United States
<https://searchworks.stanford.edu/?q=469823489>

Cornell University Library, Ithaca, United States
https://newcatalog.library.cornell.edu/catalog?search_field=publisher+number%2Fother+identifier&q=469823489

University of Michigan Library,
<https://search.lib.umich.edu/catalog/?&library=All+libraries&query=isbn%3A469823489>

Pepperdine Libraries, Malibu, United States
https://pepperdine.worldcat.org/search?qt=wc_org_pepperdine&q=no:469823489

University of Victoria Libraries , Victoria, Canada
<http://uvic.summon.serialssolutions.com/#!/search?ho=t&fvf=ContentType,Journal%20Article,f&l=en&q=1584-224X>
 Academic Journals database
<http://journaldatabase.info/journal/issn1584-224X>

University of Zurich Database
<https://www.jdb.uzh.ch/id/eprint/21535/>

California Institute of Technology - Caltech Library
<https://www.library.caltech.edu/eds/detail?db=poh&an=98646324&isbn=1584224X>

Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin
http://kvk.bibliothek.kit.edu/view-title/index.php?katalog=STABI_BERLIN&url=http%3A%2F%2Fstabikat.de%2FDB%3D1%2FCHARSET%3DISO-8859-1%2FIMPLAND%3DY%2FLLNG%3DDU%2FSRT%3DYOP%2FTTL%3D1%2FSID%3D8dda05f3-1%2FSET%3D1%2FSHW%3FFRST%3D1&signature=eBtSKEx2BuW-HASpUsCT39FB3vQpIm6cGAaiCH-kz44&showCoverImg=1

CEPOS NEW CALL FOR PAPERS 2026

Union Catalogue of Belgian Libraries

http://kvk.bibliothek.kit.edu/view-title/index.php?katalog=VERBUND_BELGIEN&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.unicat.be%2FuniCat%3Ffunc%3Dsearch%26query%3Dsysid%3A7330250&signature=DxcVFWjMO1W4HpEAWW_ERyKR4oiGWXLGFinWk8fNU&showCoverImg=1

The National Library of Israel

http://merhav.nli.org.il/primo-explore/fulldisplay?vid=ULI&docid=NNL-Journals003477656&context=L&lang=en_US

Verbundkatalog GBV

http://kvk.bibliothek.kit.edu/view-
title/index.php?katalog=GBV&url=http%3A%2F%2Fgso.gbv.de%2FDB%3D2.1%2FCH
ARSET%3DUTF-
8%2FIMPLAND%3DY%2FLLNG%3DDU%2FSRT%3DYOP%2FTTL%3D1%2FCOOK
IE%3DD2.1%2CE900d94f2-
d%2C10%2CB9000%2B%2B%2B%2B%2B%2B%2CSY%2CA%2CH6-11%2C%2C16-
17%2C%2C21%2C%2C30%2C%2C50%2C%2C60-61%2C%2C73-
75%2C%2C77%2C%2C88-
90%2CNKVK%2BWEBZUGANG%2CR129.13.130.211%2CFN%2FSET%3D1%2FPP
NSET%3FPNP%3D590280090&signature=Omwa_NLtwvdaOmmyeo7SUOCEYuDRGt
oZqGXIK-vTY1o&showCoverImg=1

COPAC, registered trademark of The University of Manchester

<https://copac.jisc.ac.uk/search?&isn=1584-224x>

ACPN Catalogo Italiano dei Periodici, Università di Bologna

<https://acnpsearch.unibo.it/journal/2601620>

Bibliothèque Nationale de Luxembourg

<https://a-z.lu/primo->

explore/fulldisplay?vid=BIBNET&docid=SFX LOCAL1000000000726583&context=L

National Library of Sweden

<http://libris.kb.se/bib/11702473>

Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University

http://sfx.lib.byu.edu/sfxlcl3?url_ver=Z39.88-

2004&url ctx fmt=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:ctx&ctx enc=info:ofi/enc:UTF-

8&ctx ver=Z39.88-

2004&rft_id=info:sid/sfxit.com:azlist&sfx.ignore_date_threshold=1&rft.object_id=100000000726583&rft.object_portfolio_id=&svc.holdings=yes&svc.fulltext=yes

Catalogue of Hamburg Libraries

<https://beluga.sub.uni->

hamburg.de/vufind/Search/Results?submit=Suchen&library=GBV_ILN_22&lookfor=1584-224x

Edith Cowan Australia

CEPOS NEW CALL FOR PAPERS 2026

<https://ecu.on.worldcat.org/search?databaseList=&queryString=1584-224X>

University College Cork, Ireland

<https://ucc.summon.serialssolutions.com/?q=1584-224X#!/search?ho=t&jt=Revista%20de%20Stiinte%20Politice&l=en-UK&q=>

York University Library, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

<https://www.library.yorku.ca/find/Record/muler82857>

The University of Chicago, USA

https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/sfx_1000000000726583

The University of Kansas KUMC Libraries Catalogue

<http://voyagercatalog.kumc.edu/Search/Results?lookfor=1584-224X&type=AllFields>

Journal Seek

<http://journalseek.net/cgi-bin/journalseek/journalsearch.cgi?field=issn&query=1584-224X>

State Library New South Wales, Sidney, Australia,

<http://library.sl.nsw.gov.au/search~S1/?searchtype=i&searcharg=1584-224X&searchscope=1&SORT=D&extended=0&SUBMIT=Search&searchlimits=&searchorigarg=i1583-9583>

Electronic Journal Library

https://opac.giga-hamburg.de/ezb/detail.phtml?bibid=GIGA&colors=7&lang=en&flavour=classic&jour_id=111736

Open University Malaysia

<http://library.oum.edu.my/oumlib/content/catalog/778733>

Wayne State University Libraries

<http://elibrary.wayne.edu/record=4203588>

Kun Shan University Library

http://muse.lib.ksu.edu.tw:8080/1cate/?rft_val_fmt=publisher&pubid=ucvpress

Western Theological Seminar

https://col-westernsem.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=alma991001225541104770&context=L&vid=01COL_WTS:WTS&lang=en&searchscope=MyInstandCI&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&tab=Everything&query=any,contains,1584-224X&facet=rtype,include,journals&mode=Basic&offset=0

Swansea University Prifysgol Abertawe

http://whel-primo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primo_library/libweb/action/search.do?vid=44WHELF

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[_SWA_VU1&reset_config=true#.VSU9SPmsVSk](#)

Vanderbilt Library

https://catalog.library.vanderbilt.edu/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=alma991043322926803276&context=L&vid=01VAN_INST:vanui&lang=en&search_scope=MyInst_and_CI&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&tab=Everything&query=any,contains,1584-224X&offset=0

Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozial

https://www.wzb.eu/en/literature-data/search-find/e-journals?page=searchres.phtml&bibid=WZB&lang=en&jq_type1=IS&jq_term1=1584-224X&jq_bool2=AND&jq_type2=KS&jq_term2=&jq_bool3=AND&jq_type3=PU&jq_term3=&offset=-1&hits_per_page=50&Notations%5B%5D=all&selected_colors%5B%5D=1&selected_colors%5B%5D=2

Radboud University Nijmegen

[https://zaandam.hosting.ru.nl/oamarket-acc/score?OpenAccess=&InstitutionalDiscounts=&Title=&Issn=1584-224&Publisher=Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB \(Electronic Journals Library\)http://rzblx1.uni-regensburg.de/ezeit/detail.phtml?bibid=AAAAA&colors=7&lang=de&jour_id=111736](https://zaandam.hosting.ru.nl/oamarket-acc/score?OpenAccess=&InstitutionalDiscounts=&Title=&Issn=1584-224&Publisher=Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB (Electronic Journals Library)http://rzblx1.uni-regensburg.de/ezeit/detail.phtml?bibid=AAAAA&colors=7&lang=de&jour_id=111736)

The University of Hong Kong Libraries

https://julac.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primo-explore/search?query=any,contains,1584-224x&search_scope=My%20Institution&vid=HKU&facet=rtype,include,journals&mode=Basic&offset=0

Metropolitan University Prague, Czech Republic

<https://s-knihovna.mup.cz/katalog/eng/l.dll?h~=&DD=1&H1=&V1=o&P1=2&H2=&V2=o&P2=3&H3=&V3=z&P3=4&H4=1584-224x&V4=o&P4=33&H5=&V5=z&P5=25>

University of the West Library

<https://uwest.on.worldcat.org/search?queryString=1584-224x&clusterResults=off&stickyFacetsChecked=on#/oclc/875039367>

Elektronische Zeitschriften der Universität zu Köln

https://www.ub.uni-koeln.de/IPS?SERVICE=METASEARCH&SUBSERVICE=INITSEARCH&VIEW=USB:Simple&LOCATION=USB&SID=IPS3:2d1c5acebc65a3cdc057a9d6c64ce76e&SETCOOKIE=TRUE&COUNT=15&GWTIMEOUT=30&HIGHLIGHTING=on&HISTORY=SESSION&START=1&STREAMING=on&URLENCODING=TRUE&QUERY_aIAL=1584-224x&SERVICEGROUP1.SERVICE.SEARCH_EDS=on&SERVICEGROUP1.SERVICE.SEARCH_KUGJSON=on&SERVICEGROUP1.SERVICE.SEARCH_KUGUSWEB=on&SERVICEGROUP1.SERVICEGROUP.USB:Default=on

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EKP Pulications

https://ekp-invenio.physik.uni-karlsruhe.de/search?ln=en&sc=1&p=1584-224X&f=&action_search=Search&c=Experiments&c=Authorities

Valley City State University

https://odin-primo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primo-explore/search?query=any,contains,1584-224X&tab=tab1&search_scope=ndv_everything&sortby=rank&vid=ndv&lang=en_US&mode=advanced&offset=0displayMode%3Dfull&displayField=all&pcAvailabilityMode=true

Impact Factor Poland

<http://impactfactor.pl/czasopisma/21722-revista-de-stiinte-politice-revue-des-sciences-politiques>

Universite Laval

http://sfx.bibl.ulaval.ca:9003/sfx_local?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&url_ctx_fmt=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:ctx&ctx_enc=info:ofi/enc:UTF-8&ctx_ver=Z39.88-2004&rft_id=info:sid/sfxit.com:azlist&sfx.ignore_date_threshold=1&rft.object_id=100000000726583&rft.object_portfolio_id=&svc.fulltext=yes

Universität Passau

<https://infoguide.ub.uni-passau.de/InfoGuideClient.upasis/start.do?Query=10%3d%22BV035261002%22>

BSB Bayerische Staatsbibliothek

<https://opacplus.bsb-muenchen.de/metaopac/search?View=default&oclcno=502495838>

Deutsches Museum

<https://opac.deutsches-museum.de/TouchPoint/start.do?Query=1035%3d%22BV035261002%22IN%5b2%5d&View=ddm&Language=de>
Technische Hochschule Ingolstadt
[https://opac.ku.de/TouchPoint/start.do?Branch=3&Language=de&View=thi&Query=35=%22502495838%22+IN+\[2\]](https://opac.ku.de/TouchPoint/start.do?Branch=3&Language=de&View=thi&Query=35=%22502495838%22+IN+[2])

Hochschule Augsburg, Bibliothek

<https://infoguide.hs-augsburg.de/InfoGuideClient.fhasis/start.do?Query=10%3d%22BV035261002%22>

Hochschule Weihenstephan-Triesdorf, Zentralbibliothek

Freising, Germany

<https://ffwtp20.bib-bvb.de/TouchPoint/start.do?Query=1035%3d%22BV035261002%22IN%5b2%5d&View=ffw&Language=de>

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OTH- Ostbayerische Technische Hochschule Regensburg, Hochschulbibliothek
OTHBR, Regensburg, Germany
<https://www.regensburger-katalog.de/TouchPoint/start.do?Query=1035%3d%22BV035261002%22IN%5b2%5d&View=ubr&Language=de>

Staatliche Bibliothek Neuburg/Donau , SBND,
Neuburg/Donau, Germany
<https://opac.swnd.de/InfoGuideClient.sndsis/start.do?Query=10%3d%22BV035261002%22>

Universitätsbibliothek Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, Eichstätt, Germany
[https://opac.ku.de/TouchPoint/start.do?Branch=0&Language=de&View=uei&Query=35=%22502495838%22+IN+\[2\]](https://opac.ku.de/TouchPoint/start.do?Branch=0&Language=de&View=uei&Query=35=%22502495838%22+IN+[2])

Bibliothek der Humboldt-Universität Berlin, Universitätsbibliothek der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin
Berlin, Germany
https://hu-berlin.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primo-explore/search?institution=HUB_UB&vid=hub_ub&search_scope=default_scope&tab=default_tab&query=issn,exact,1584-224X

Hochschulbibliothek Ansbach, Ansbach, Germany
<https://fanoz3.bib-bvb.de/InfoGuideClient.fansis/start.do?Query=10%3d%22BV035261002%22>

Bibliothek der Europa-Universität Viadrina, Frankfurt (Oder)
Frankfurt/Oder, Germany
<https://opac.europa-uni.de/InfoGuideClient.euvsis/start.do?Query=10%3d%22BV035261002%22>

University of California Library Catalog
<https://catalog.library.ucla.edu/vwebv/search?searchCode1=GKEY&searchType=2&searchArg1=ucoclc469823489>

For more details about the past issues and international abstracting and indexing, please visit the journal website at the following address:
<http://cis01.central.ucv.ro/revistadestiintepolitice/acces.php>.

CONFERENCE INTERNATIONAL INDEXING OF THE PAST EDITIONS (2014-2025)

CEPOS Conference 2025

The **Fifteenth International Conference** After Communism. East and West under Scrutiny (Craiova, House of the University, 14-15 March 2025) was evaluated and accepted for indexing in 14 international databases, catalogues and NGO's databases:
Indexation links:

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<https://academic.oup.com/jcs/article-abstract/67/1/csaf001/7997508?redirectedFrom=PDF>
<https://scholarlymeet.com/events/ca73318d-42a7-4b5e-bcca-635e0aa1c46b>
<https://conferences365.com/conferences-in-romania>
<https://conferencewiki.com/conference-listing/MzA4>
<https://www.conferencelists.org/event/cepos-15th-international-conference-after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny/>
<https://www.sciencedz.net/en/conference/110381-cepos-15th-international-conference-after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny>
<https://conferencealerts.com/show-event?id=262202>
<https://conferencesdaily.com/cities/craiova>
<https://cepos.org/upcoming/>
<https://10times.com/after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny>
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/379144286_CENTER_OF_POST-COMMUNIST_POLITICAL_STUDIES_CEPOS_Book_of_abstracts_of_the_14th_International_Conference_After_Communist_East_and_West_under_Scrutiny_Craiova_Romania_15-16_March_2024
<https://conferencewiki.com/conference-detail/Cepos-15th-International-Conference-After-communism-East-and-West-under-scrutiny>
<https://www.conferencelists.org/romania/>
https://www.conferencesked.com/conference_details/10148/cepos-15th-international-conference-after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny
<https://conffinder.com/pagesconference/ConferencesListing?country=Romania>

CEPOS Conference 2024

The **Fourteenth International Conference** After Communism. East and West under Scrutiny (Craiova, House of the University, 15-16 March 2024) was evaluated and accepted for indexing in 11 international databases, catalogues and NGO's databases:
Indexation links:

CEEOL <https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=1195305>
ProQuest, Part of Clarivate
<https://www.proquest.com/docview/2863220849/CC02F21AE4DB44F1PQ/1?accountid=50247&sourcetype=Scholarly%20Journals>
Oxford Academic (Oxford University Press)
<https://doi.org/10.1093/jcs/csad066>
Oxford Journal of Church and State-Oxford Academic (Oxford University Press) (Vol. 65, nr 4/2023) în secțiunea Calendar of Events JCS (publicare 28 Noiembrie 2023)
Conference Alerts
<https://conferencealerts.com/show-event?id=254313>
Science DZ
<https://www.sciencedz.net/.../100575-14th-international...>
10 Times
<https://10times.com/after-communism-east-and-west-under...>
The Free Library
<https://www.thefreelibrary.com/CEPOS+NEW+CALL+FOR+PAPERS...>
Conference 365
<https://conferences365.com/.../14th-international...>
World University Directory

CEPOS NEW CALL FOR PAPERS 2026

<https://worlduniversitydirectory.com/edu/event/...>

Conferences daily

<https://conferencesdaily.com/eventdetails.php?id=1625192>

Gale Cengage Learning USA <https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA766112846...>

CEPOS Conference 2023

The **Thirteenth International Conference** After Communism. East and West under Scrutiny (Craiova, 17-18 March 2023) was evaluated and accepted for indexing in 5 international databases, catalogues and NGO's databases:

Oxford Church & State Journal:

<https://academic.oup.com/jcs/articleabstract/65/1/168/7044222?redirectedFrom=fulltext>

10 Times: <https://10times.com/after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny>

Conferencesite.eu:

<https://index.conferencesites.eu/conference/57510/13th-international-conference-after-communism-eastand-west-under-scrutiny>;

Schoolandcollegelistings

:<https://www.schoolandcollegelistings.com/RO/Craiova/485957361454074/Center-of-Post-Communist-Political-Studies-CEPOS>

Conferencealerts : <https://conferencealerts.com/showevent?id=247851>

CEPOS Conference 2022

The **Twelfth International Conference** After Communism. East and West under Scrutiny (Craiova, 18-19 March 2022) was evaluated and accepted for indexing in 6 international databases, catalogues and NGO's databases:

<https://www.conferenceflare.com/events/category/social-sciences-and-humanities/art-history/>

Vinculation International Diciembre 2021 newsletter n 99

https://issuu.com/fundacionargentina5/docs/diciembre_2021_fundaci_n_argentina-ai_ok?fr=sZjg2NjE5NTg3OTY

<https://www.schoolandcollegelistings.com/RO/Craiova/485957361454074/Center-of-Post-Communist-Political-Studies-CEPOS>

<https://10times.com/company/cepos>

<https://10times.com/after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny>

<https://conferencealerts.com/show-event?id=238529>

<https://www.sciencedz.net/conference/82995-cepos-international-conference-2022-after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny>

CEPOS Conference 2021

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The Eleventh International Conference After Communism. East and West under Scrutiny (Craiova, House of the University, 19-20 March 2021) was evaluated and accepted for indexing in 5 international databases, catalogues and NGO's databases:

<https://academic.oup.com/jcs/advance-articleabstract/doi/10.1093/jcs/csaa064/5941887?redirectedFrom=fulltext>

<https://conferencealerts.com/show-event?id=229654>

<https://www.sciencedz.net/en/conference/72628-11thinternational-conference-after-communism-east-and-west-underscrutiny>

<https://10times.com/after-communism-east-and-west-underscrutiny>

<https://worlduniversitydirectory.com/edu/event/?slib=11thinternational-conference-after-communism-east-and-west-underscrutiny-2>

CEPOS Conference 2020

The Tenth International Conference After Communism. East and West under Scrutiny (27-28 March 2020) was evaluated and accepted for indexing in 7 international databases, catalogues and NGO's databases:

Scichemistry

<http://scichemistry.org/ConferenceInfosByConferenceTopicId?conferenceTopicId=57>

Oxford Journals

<https://academic.oup.com/jcs/advance-articlepdf/doi/10.1093/jcs/csz078/30096829/csz078.pdf>

Conference alerts

<https://conferencealerts.com/show-event?id=215370>

<https://www.sciencedz.net/en/conference/57625-10thinternational-conference-after-communism-east-and-west-underscrutiny>

Intraders

<https://www.intraders.org>.

cdn.ampproject.org/v/s/www.intraders.org/news/romania/10th-international-conference-after-communism-east-and-westunderscrutiny/amp/?amp_js_v=a2&_gsa=1&usqp=mq331AQCKAE%3D#ah=15737604302246&referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com&_tf=De%20pe%20%251%24s&share=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.intraders.org%2Fnews%2F10th-internationalconference-after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny%2F

10 times

<https://10times.com/after-communism-east-and-west-underscrutiny>

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The conference alerts

<https://theconferencealerts.com/event/46428/10th-internationalconference-after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny>

Scirea

<https://www.scirea.org/ConferenceInfosByConferenceCountryId?conferenceCountryId=75>

CEPOS Conference 2019

The Ninth International Conference After Communism. East and West under Scrutiny (Craiova, House of the University, 29-30 March 2019) was evaluated and accepted for indexing in 6 international databases, catalogues and NGO's databases:

Oxford Academic Journal of Church & State <https://academic.oup.com/jcs/article-abstract/60/4/784/5106417?redirectedFrom=PDF>

10 Times

<https://10times.com/after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny>

Conference Alerts

<https://conferencealerts.com/show-event?id=205682>

Researchgate

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327905733_CEPOS_9TH_INTERNATIONAL_CONFERENCE_AFTER_COMMUNISM_EAST_AND_WEST_UNDER_SCRUTINY_2019?_iepl%5BviewId%5D=sjcOJrVCO8PTLapcfVciZQsb&_iepl%5Bcontexts%5D%5B0%5D=publicationCreationEOT&_iepl%5BtargetEntityId%5D=PB%3A327905733&_iepl%5BinteractionType%5D=publicationCTA

The Free Library

<https://www.thefreelibrary.com/9th+INTERNATIONAL+CONFERENCE+AFTER+COMMUNISM.+EAST+AND+WEST+UNDER...-a0542803701>

Science Dz.net

<https://www.sciencedz.net/conference/42812-9th-international-conference-after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny>

CEPOS Conference 2018

The Eighth International Conference After Communism. East and West under Scrutiny (Craiova, House of the University, 23-24 March 2018) was evaluated and accepted for indexing in 15 international databases, catalogues and NGO's databases:

Conference Alerts, <https://conferencealerts.com/show-event?id=186626>

Sciencesdz, <http://www.sciencedz.net/conference/29484-8th-international-conference-after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny>

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ManuscriptLink,
<https://manuscriptlink.com/cfp/detail?cfpId=AYAXKVAR46277063&type=event>

Maspolitiques, <http://www.maspolitiques.com/ar/index.php/en/1154-8th-international-conference-after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny>

Aconf, https://www.aconf.org/conf_112399.html

Call4paper, <https://call4paper.com/listByCity?type=event&city=3025&count=count>
Eventegg, <https://eventegg.com/cepos/>

10 times, <https://10times.com/after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny>
Biblioteca de Sociologie, <http://bibliotecadesociologie.ro/cfp-cepos-after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny-craiova-2018/>

Science Research Association <http://www.scirea.org/topiclisting?conferenceTopicId=5>
ResearcherBook <http://researcherbook.com/country/Romania>

Conference Search Net, <http://conferencesearch.net/en/29484-8th-international-conference-after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny>

SchoolandCollegeListings,
<https://www.schoolandcollegelisting.com/RO/Craiova/485957361454074/Center-of-Post-Communist-Political-Studies-CEPOS>

Vepub conference, <http://www.vepub.com/conferences-view/8th-International-Conference-After-Communism.-East-and-West-under-Scrutiny/bC9aUE5rcHN0ZmpkYU9nTHJzUkRmdz09/>

Geopolitika Hungary, <http://www.geopolitika.hu/event/8th-international-conference-after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny/>

CEPOS Conference 2017

The Seventh International Conference After Communism. East and West under Scrutiny (Craiova, House of the University, 24-25 March 2017) was evaluated and accepted for indexing in 10 international databases, catalogues and NGO's databases:

Ethic & International Affairs (Carnegie Council), Cambridge University Press-
<https://www.ethicsandinternationalaffairs.org/2016/upcoming-conferences-interest-2016-2017/>

ELSEVIER GLOBAL EVENTS

LIST <http://www.globaleventslist.elsevier.com/events/2017/03/7th-international-conference-after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny>

CONFERENCE ALERTS-<http://www.conferencealerts.com/show-event?id=171792>

10TIMES.COM-<http://10times.com/after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny>

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Hiway Conference Discovery System-<http://www.hicds.cn/meeting/detail/45826124>
Geopolitika (Hungary)-<http://www.geopolitika.hu/event/7th-international-conference-after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny/>

Academic.net-<http://www.academic.net/show-24-4103-1.html>

World University Directory-
<http://www.worlduniversitydirectory.com/conferencedetail.php?AgentID=2001769>

Science Research Association-
<http://www.scirea.org/conferenceinfo?conferenceId=35290>

Science Social Community-<https://www.science-community.org/ru/node/174892>

CEPOS Conference 2016

The Sixth International Conference After Communism. East and West under Scrutiny (Craiova, House of the University, 8-9 April 2016) was evaluated and accepted for indexing in the following international databases, catalogues and NGO's databases:

ELSEVIER GLOBAL EVENTS-
<http://www.globaleventslist.elsevier.com/events/2016/04/6th-international-conference-after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny/>
Oxford Journals – Oxford Journal of Church & State-
<http://jcs.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2016/02/06/jcs.csv121.extract>

Conference Alerts-<http://www.conferencealerts.com/country-listing?country=Romania>
Conferences-In - <http://conferences-in.com/conference/romania/2016/economics/6th-international-conference-after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny/>

Socmag.net - <http://www.socmag.net/?p=1562>

African Journal of Political Sciences-
http://www.maspolitiques.com/mas/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=450:-securiteee-&catid=2:2010-12-09-22-47-00&Itemid=4#.VjUI5PnhCUk

Researchgate-
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283151988_Call_for_Papers_6TH_International_Conference_After_Communist_East_and_West_under_Scrutiny_8-9_April_2016_Craiova_Romania

World Conference Alerts-
<http://www.worldconferencealerts.com/ConferenceDetail.php?EVENT=WLD1442>
Edu events-<http://eduevents.eu/listings/6th-international-conference-after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny/>

Esocsci.org-<http://www.esocsci.org/nz/events/list/>

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Sciencedz.net-<http://www.sciencedz.net/index.php?topic=events&page=53>
Science-community.org-<http://www.science-community.org/ru/node/164404/?did=070216>

CEPOS Conference 2015

The Fifth International Conference After Communism. East and West under Scrutiny (Craiova, House of the University, 24-25 April 2015) was evaluated and accepted for indexing in 15 international databases, catalogues and NGO's databases:

THE ATLANTIC COUNCIL OF CANADA, CANADA-
<http://natocouncil.ca/events/international-conferences/>

ELSEVIER GLOBAL EVENTS LIST-
<http://www.globaleventslist.elsevier.com/events/2015/04/fifth-international-conf>

GCONFERENCE.NET-
http://www.gconference.net/eng/conference_view.html?no=47485&catalog=1&cata=018&co_kind=&co_type=&pageno=1&conf_cata=01

CONFERENCE BIOXBIO-<http://conference.bioxbio.com/location/Romania>

10 TIMES-<http://10times.com/Romania>

CONFERENCE ALERTS-<http://www.conferencealerts.com/country-listing?country=Romania>

<http://www.iem.ro/orizont2020/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/lista-3-conferinte-internationale.pdf>
<http://sdil.ac.ir/index.aspx?pid=99&articleid=62893>

NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM-<http://www.nationalsymposium.com/communism.php>
SCIENCE DZ-<http://www.sciencedz.net/conference/6443-fifth-international-conference-after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny>

ARCHIVE COM-http://archive-com.com/com/c/conferencealerts.com/2014-12-01_5014609_70/Rome_15th_International_Academic_Conference_The_IISES/

CONFERENCE WORLD-<http://conferencesworld.com/higher-education/>
KNOW A CONFERENCE KNOW A CONFERENCE-
<http://knowaconference.com/social-work/>

International Journal on New Trends in Education and Their Implications (IJONTE) Turkey <http://www.ijonte.org/?pnum=15&>

Journal of Research in Education and Teaching Turkey-
<http://www.jret.org/?pnum=13&pt=Kongre+ve+Sempozyum>
CEPOS CONFERENCE 2015 is part of a "consolidated list of all international and

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Canadian conferences taking place pertaining to international relations, politics, trade, energy and sustainable development". For more details see <http://natocouncil.ca/events/international-conferences/>

CEPOS Conference 2014

The Fourth International Conference After Communism. East and West under Scrutiny, Craiova, 4-5 April 2014 was very well received by the national media and successfully indexed in more than 9 international databases, catalogues and NGO's databases such as: American Political Science Association, USA-<http://www.apsanet.org/conferences.cfm>

Journal of Church and State, Oxford-

<http://jcs.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2014/01/23/jcs.cst141.full.pdf+html>;

NATO Council of Canada (section events/ international conferences), Canada,

<http://atlantic-council.ca/events/international-conferences/>

International Society of Political Psychology, Columbus, USA-

http://www.ispp.org/uploads/attachments/April_2014.pdf

Academic Biographical Sketch, <http://academicprofile.org/SeminarConference.aspx>;

Conference alerts, <http://www.conferencealerts.com/show-event?id=121380>

Gesis Sowipor, Koln, Germany, <http://sowipor.gesis.org/>; Osteuropa-Netzwerk,

Universität Kassel, Germany, [http://its-vm508.its.uni-](http://its-vm508.its.uni-kassel.de/mediawiki/index.php/After_communism:_East_and_West_under_scrutiny:_Fourth_International_Conference)

[kassel.de/mediawiki/index.php/After_communism:_East_and_West_under_scrutiny:_Fourth_International_Conference](http://its-vm508.its.uni-kassel.de/mediawiki/index.php/After_communism:_East_and_West_under_scrutiny:_Fourth_International_Conference)

Ilustre Colegio Nacional de Doctores y Licenciados en Ciencias Politicas y Sociologia, futuro Consejo Nacional de Colegios Profesionales, Madrid,

<http://colpolsocmadrid.org/agenda/>.



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The abstract must provide the aims, objectives, methodology, results and main conclusions of the paper (please submit the papers by providing all these information in the abstract). It must be submitted in English and the length must not exceed 300 words. Use Times New Roman 10,5, Justify.

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Submit 5-6 keywords representative to the thematic approached in the paper. Use Times New Roman 10,5, Italic. After the keywords introduce three blank lines, before passing to the Article text.

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Reference citations within the text

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To cite one Article by the same author(s) in the same year use the letters a, b, c, etc., after the year. E.g.: (Olimid, 2009a:14) (Olimid, 2009b: 25-26).

References:

The references cited in the Article are listed at the end of the paper in alphabetical order of authors' names.

References of the same author are listed chronologically.

For books

Olimid, A. P. (2009a). *Viața politică și spirituală în România modernă. Un model românesc al relațiilor dintre Stat și Biserică*, Craiova: Aius Publishing.

Olimid, A. P. (2009b). *Politica românească după 1989*, Craiova: Aius Publishing.

For chapters in edited books

Goodin, R. E. (2011). The State of the Discipline, the Discipline of the State. In Goodin, R. E. (editor), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Science*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 19-39.

For journal Articles

Georgescu, C. M. (2013a). Qualitative Analysis on the Institutionalisation of the Ethics and Integrity Standard within the Romanian Public Administration. *Revista de Științe Politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques*, 37, 320-326.

Georgescu, C. M. (2013b). Patterns of Local Self-Government and Governance: A Comparative Analysis Regarding the Democratic Organization of Thirteen Central and Eastern European Administrations (I). *Revista de Științe Politice. Revue des Științe Politice*, 39, 49-58.

Tables and Figures

Tables and figures are introduced in the text. The title appears above each table.

E.g.: Table 1. The results of the parliamentary elections (May 2014)

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