

## Leadership Development in the Public Sector in Romania: Learning from European and North American Strategies



**Adina-Roxana MUNTEANU**

The National University of Science and Technology Politehnica Bucharest

**ABSTRACT:** In a rapidly changing professional landscape, the transition from technical roles to leadership positions presents a significant challenge for first-time managers, particularly in public administration. This article focuses on the critical role of leadership development in enabling first time managers in the public to successfully navigate new responsibilities. The article explores key European and national policies, including the European Skills Agenda, the National Strategy for Adult Education in Romania, and the Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan, which provide valuable context for understanding the development of leadership competencies. The paper also contrasts the leadership development strategies of Europe and North America, highlighting the EU's collaborative, policy-aligned approach compared to the more individualized one in North America. The findings underscore the importance of developing leadership competencies to ensure effective governance, particularly in the context of digital and green transitions, and suggest a sustainable framework for the success of future leaders in public administration.

**KEYWORDS:** Leadership Development, Professional Transition, Public administration, Competencies

### I. INTRODUCTION

In a professional world that is constantly changing, the transition from technical roles to leadership positions represents a significant challenge for first time managers. These changes are accompanied by complex adjustments to the necessary skills and responsibilities, with leadership competencies playing a key role in the success of this process. The purpose of this article is to explore strategies and policies that promote professional transition, and the development of leadership skills. The research hopes to provide a recommendation to policy makers in Romania, in line with the current EU strategies but also international best practices.

For a better understanding of professional transition processes and the challenges associated with adapting to leadership positions, it is necessary to clarify the key terms used in this paper. Leadership is defined as the ability to influence and guide a group towards achieving common goals, involving skills such as effective communication, strategic thinking, and the ability to manage change (Northouse, 2018). This concept plays a central role in the success of first-time managers, as adapting to the requirements of a leadership position depends largely on the development of these fundamental skills.

Professional transition is the process by which an individual moves from one professional role or position to another, requiring adaptation to new responsibilities, work environments and professional relationships (Schlossberg, 1981). In the case of first-time managers, this transition involves significant changes, both in terms of the nature of the activities and the level of responsibility.

First time managers are defined as professionals at the beginning of their managerial career within the public administration. Research indicates that professional transitions (specifically from a technical role to a managerial one) are among the most challenging periods in a professional's life, with success or failure during the initial months serving as strong predictors of overall performance in the role. Moreover, studies have found that 26% of first-time managers feel unprepared to lead others, and nearly 60% report not receiving any training when transitioning into their first leadership role (IMD, 2014; Center for Creative Leadership, 2024).

### II. METHODOLOGY

A multi-step approach combining a literature review with an analysis of relevant European and North American national strategies, policies, and leadership development programs was used for this article.

The primary aim was to identify key trends and practices in leadership development within the public sector, particularly focusing on first-time managers transitioning from technical roles to leadership positions. The research aimed to identify how these transitions are facilitated by policies and programs in different regions, with a special emphasis on Romania's alignment with European initiatives.

### Leadership Development in the Public Sector in Romania: Learning from European and North American Strategies

A secondary scope of the research involved a comparative analysis as to highlight different approaches to leadership development in public administration in Europe and North America, identifying both common practices and regional specifics.

While this research provides insights into leadership development strategies, there are some limitations. First, the focus is on the needs of the public sector leadership. Secondly, the study included only secondary data. Future studies could benefit from expanding by data collection methods to include a larger and more diverse sample of public sector employees.

### III. EUROPEAN STRATEGIES AND POLICIES FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

In the context of rapidly evolving economic, digital, and ecological transformations, leadership has emerged as a key competence in the public sector. This section critically examines European strategies and policies aimed at developing leadership skills among public sector employees, focusing on the European Skills Strategy (European Commission, 2020), the National Strategy for Adult Education in Romania (MMSS, 2023A), and the Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan (European Commission, 2013). These policies highlight the importance of leadership development as a tool for modernizing public administration and addressing the challenges posed by collaboration between organizations, institutions and leaders to respond to global challenges and facilitate the career development of first-time managers.

#### A. European Skills Agenda

The European Skills Agenda (European Commission, 2020) plays a central role in the EU's broader efforts to address the changing demands of the labor market. The agenda aims to upskill and reskill the workforce, promoting leadership development as a critical element in ensuring workforce adaptability and competitiveness (European Commission; n.d.A). A key focus of the agenda is the preparation of public sector leaders for the green and digital transitions, which require not only technical expertise but also strategic leadership and the ability to manage complex change processes.

However, while leadership is acknowledged within several actions of the European Skills Agenda, it is not the primary focus of the strategy. For instance, Action one The Pact for Skills calls for collective action, mobilizing businesses, social partners and other stakeholders to work together to provide quality training opportunities. The successful implementation of this pact requires strong leadership from all the actors involved to coordinate efforts and ensure effective investments in skills development.

Action three focuses on EU support for strategic national upskilling actions. National and regional authorities need to demonstrate leadership in the development and implementation of these strategies, mobilizing resources and coordinating relevant actors. The need for collaboration between Member States to develop modern and comprehensive national skills strategies is clearly stated.

Action six highlights the green and digital transition, which includes the development of green and digital skills, is essential to support the major transitions of the European economy. Industry and government leaders should guide the change process, ensuring that the workforce is prepared for the new requirements. Moreover, leaders need to develop skills to guide teams through the changes imposed by digitalization and the transition to a green economy. In this regard, the strategy focuses on transversal skills, including those related to strategic thinking, resilience and the ability to inspire teams in contexts of uncertainty.

Regarding the improvement of the enabling environment for unlocking private and public investment in skills development, Action 12 aims to create an enabling environment for said investment. Policymakers and private sector leaders need to work together to boost investment and ensure the efficient allocation of resources. Cooperation between sectors (education, business, public administration) is essential for the success of training initiatives. Leaders are called upon to facilitate partnerships and mobilize resources to implement solutions tailored to regional and local needs.

Leadership is an essential aspect in this strategy reflected in several dimensions: the development of leadership skills for digital and green transformation, the promotion of collaborative leadership, leadership in lifelong learning (European Commission, 2020). These aspects demonstrate that leadership is a fundamental component for the success of the European Skills Strategy, being an important factor contributing to the achievement of objectives related to competitiveness, social inclusion and sustainability. Despite these positive aspects, there is a gap in addressing the specific nature of leadership development within the European Skills Strategy. The strategy, while focusing on workforce skills, could benefit from a more explicit emphasis on leadership development tailored to the public sector, especially given the increasing complexity of governance and public service delivery.

#### B. National Strategy for Adult Education in Romania

Romania's National Strategy for Adult Education 2024-2027 (MMSS, 2023B) aligns with the broader goals of the European Skills Agenda by promoting lifelong learning and workforce adaptability. A key objective of this strategy is to increase the participation of adults in lifelong learning, with a focus on transversal skills such as leadership. The strategy aims to equip workers, including public sector employees, with the necessary skills to thrive in a dynamic labor market.

The National Strategy for Adult Training promotes the development of an accessible vocational training system adapted to the requirements of the labor market, thus supporting career advancement (MMSS, 2023B). The main objective of the National Strategy is to double the participation rate of adults in lifelong learning from 5.9% to 12% by the end of 2027 (MMSS, 2023A). It aims to

## Leadership Development in the Public Sector in Romania: Learning from European and North American Strategies

increase employability for jobseekers and provide qualified staff for employers. The strategy proposes measures to facilitate adults' access to training and lifelong learning programs, adapted to the changing requirements of the labor market.

Regarding leadership, the strategy stresses the importance of developing transversal skills, including leadership skills, to ensure adaptability and competitiveness in the labor market. Although the document does not dedicate specific sections exclusively to leadership, it is mentioned in the context of several actions and initiatives. Thus, leadership is an essential part of the development of transversal skills, partnerships and collaborations, promoting the culture of continuous learning, adapting to the digital and green transitions and monitoring and evaluation.

As leadership is recognized as a transversal skill, actions in this regard aim to promote training programs that include the development of leadership, critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The implementation of the strategy requires collaboration between public and private institutions and civil society. Thus, by developing partnerships and collaborations between educational, administrative and business environments, it would be aimed at encouraging leaders from various sectors to actively participate in the development and implementation of adult training programs. The successful implementation of the strategy depends on continuous monitoring and evaluation. Beyond setting objectives, allocating resources and commitment to achieving them, involving leaders in monitoring and evaluation processes to ensure the achievement of the strategy's objectives.

Creating an environment that supports lifelong learning is essential, that is why organizational leaders are encouraged to support and facilitate employee participation in continuing education programs, regardless of the field. However, there are also areas, for example the digital and green transition, that require attention as they require new skills. In this regard, new training programs are needed that include leadership skills necessary to manage the changes associated with these transitions.

Overall, the strategy's treatment of leadership development is somewhat general. While leadership is integrated as a transversal skill, there is little emphasis on the distinct leadership needs of public administration compared to other sectors. The emphasis on digital and green transitions is an important step, yet Romania's approach would benefit from more focused leadership training programs that explicitly address the strategic needs of public sector managers.

Moreover, there is room to explore how the strategy's goals can be more closely aligned with the specific challenges that public sector managers face. A more targeted approach in developing leadership competencies could increase the strategy's effectiveness in preparing leaders capable of addressing the sector's evolving needs.

### *C. Entrepreneurship Action Plan 2020*

The Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan (European Commission, 2013) stresses the importance of entrepreneurial leadership in driving economic growth and innovation. While primarily focused on fostering entrepreneurship, the plan acknowledges the role of leadership competencies in public sector reforms. One of the key objectives is to integrate entrepreneurial skills into education systems, with the aim of nurturing a new generation of leaders equipped to respond to economic and technological changes.

The leadership aspects mentioned in the plan are entrepreneurial education and the development of leadership skills. Entrepreneurial education is seen as a solution for developing a spirit of initiative and leadership from an early age. Moreover, educational programs should include management courses, leadership training, and the development of communication skills.

The plan recognizes that entrepreneurs and leaders need to possess transversal skills, such as strategic thinking, quick decision-making and adaptability adapt to change. Moreover, leadership is seen as an essential skill for the success of entrepreneurs.

Measures proposed in the Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan are integrating entrepreneurship into education, developing continuous training programs and supporting mentoring. Integrating entrepreneurship into education involves promoting entrepreneurship as a subject at all levels of education, from primary school to university, but also collaborating with the business environment to provide students with practical experiences and examples of entrepreneurial success. The development of continuing education programs refers to the creation of professional training programs for updating managerial skills and adapting these programs to new technological and economic trends. Finally, supporting mentoring aims to create mentoring networks to support young entrepreneurs and leaders in training and ensuring the transfer of knowledge from experienced leaders to new generations.

The Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan provides a basis for leadership development in the entrepreneurial context, with a focus on education, continuous training and mentoring. The integration of entrepreneurial education into leadership development frameworks is particularly important for Romania, where innovation and public sector reform are closely tied. The plan emphasizes the need for managers to possess transversal skills, including strategic thinking, decision-making, and adaptability, all of which are critical for public administration leaders. However, like the European Skills Agenda, the plan could benefit from greater specificity regarding how these competencies should be developed in the public sector, especially considering the unique challenges faced by public administration leaders.

To sum up, while these strategies (European Skills Strategy, the National Strategy for Adult Education in Romania, and the Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan) present a broad framework for leadership development, they tend to treat leadership as a component of a larger skills development agenda rather than as a central, standalone focus. These documents emphasize the need for collaboration, adaptability, and lifelong learning, yet fail to provide detailed, sector-specific guidance on how leadership skills should be cultivated within the public administration context.

## Leadership Development in the Public Sector in Romania: Learning from European and North American Strategies

In particular, the European Skills Agenda and the National Strategy for Adult Education in Romania would benefit from more explicit attention to leadership development in the public sector. Given the increasing complexity of public governance, leadership training should address not only the technical aspects of public administration but also the interpersonal and strategic competencies required to manage diverse teams and navigate multifaceted challenges.

Additionally, while the Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan highlights the importance of entrepreneurial leadership, its application to public sector leadership remains underdeveloped. Public administration leaders often face unique challenges, such as political constraints and public accountability, which are not typically encountered by private sector entrepreneurs. Therefore, a more nuanced approach to leadership development is necessary to account for the specific needs and challenges faced by public administration leaders.

### IV. DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP SKILLS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN EU AND NORTH AMERICA

The European Union recognizes the importance of developing leadership skills in public administration and has implemented strategies and policies to support this. Several programs and policies have been initiated at EU level, including ComPact (European Commission, 2023), the Technical Support Instrument (TSI) (European Commission, 2021A) and the Principles of Public Administration (SIGMA, 2023). In this section, we shall discuss leadership training programs both European and North American.

#### A. *Enhancing the European Administrative Space (ComPact)*

The Commission Communication 'Enhancing the European Administrative Space (ComPact) since 2023, highlights the need to modernize public administrations in the Member States, stressing the importance of leadership skills for effective and transparent governance (European Commission, n.d.B). ComPact promotes the convergence of administrative practices based on common values and principles, encouraging investment in the training of public sector leaders.

The launch of ComPact by the European Commission on 23 October 2023 (Loy, 2023), involves a set of concrete actions but is not based on a specific piece of legislation, building on the Commission's general competences in promoting good governance in the Member States.

ComPact is aimed at all EU Member States, encouraging the modernization of public administration at national level. The objectives of ComPact are related to the modernization of public administrations to respond effectively to the needs of citizens and businesses, the strengthening of transnational collaboration between public administrations and the promotion of convergent administrative practices based on common values and principles.

The Commission implements ComPact actions through the Technical Support Instrument (European Commission, n.d.B) and other available EU funds, such as the Digital Europe Programme (European Commission, n.d.C), and works with all Member States and stakeholders to ensure their use. No exact costs are specified, however the potential savings for citizens and businesses are estimated at billions of euros annually for EU citizens and businesses (Loy, 2023) as they aim to cut red tape and increase transparency.

ComPact does not have a pre-established completion deadline, being a continuous administrative modernization initiative seen as an important factor for increasing competitiveness throughout the EU (De Keersmaecker & Close, 2023). On the impact and results of ComPact, the Commission will present a report on the implementation in line with the reporting requirements of the TSI.

#### B. *Technical Support Instrument (TSI)*

Managed by the Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support, TSI provides technical assistance to Member States in implementing reforms, including in the field of public administration (European Commission, n.d.B). This tool supports the development of leadership skills through training programs and exchange of good practices, contributing to the modernization of public administrations.

TSI was established on February 19<sup>th</sup> 2021, following the 2017-2020 Structural Reform Support Programme (SRSP) (European Commission, 2021B). The legal basis is Regulation (EU) 2021/240 of the European Parliament and of the Council of February 10<sup>th</sup> 2021 (European Commission, 2021A). The TSI covers the period 2021-2027, in line with the EU's multiannual financial framework.

TSI objectives refer to supporting Member States in designing and implementing growth-enhancing and inclusive reforms. Strengthening institutional and administrative capacity at national, regional and local level and facilitating the green and digital transition. Total budget of €864 million for the period 2021-2027 is split in approximately €115 million annually (European Commission, 2021B). Technical support does not require national co-financing, all 27 EU Member States can apply for support through TSIs.

By 2022, the Commission had supported more than 1,400 projects in all Member States, while 225 projects were approved under the TSI (De Keersmaecker & Favalli, 2022). These initiatives reflect the EU's commitment to invest in the development of leadership skills in public administration, promoting effective and citizen-oriented governance.

#### C. *Principles of Public Administration*

The Principles of Public Administration, developed by SIGMA (Support for Improvement in Governance and Management) in collaboration with the OECD and the European Union, provide a framework for good governance in public administrations



## Leadership Development in the Public Sector in Romania: Learning from European and North American Strategies

(SIGMA, 2023). The 2023 edition highlights the importance of leadership competencies in the public sector, stressing the role of leadership in public administration reform, the development of leadership competencies in public service, the accountability and transparency of leaders, and the promotion of innovation and continuous improvement through the culture of innovation and continuous learning (SIGMA, 2023).

The principles emphasize the need for clear and effective leadership for the successful implementation of public administration reforms. Leaders need to set strategic directions and ensure proper coordination of reform initiatives. Moreover, leaders are responsible for developing and maintaining mechanisms that facilitate the effective implementation of reforms, ensuring that they are financially and humanly sustainable.

The development of leadership skills in the public service is important from the point of view of human resource management. The principles emphasize the importance of merit-based recruitment and promotion, as well as the continuous professional development of civil servants. This includes leadership training to ensure competent and effective public administration. In addition, the implementation of performance evaluation systems that recognize and reward leadership skills contributes to the creation of an organizational culture oriented towards excellence and innovation.

The accountability and transparency of leaders in public administration is needed to clearly delineate responsibilities and access to information. Leaders in public administration must have well-defined lines of accountability, ensuring that their decisions and actions are transparent and subject to democratic control. Building trust in public institutions is linked to promoting transparency by providing public information and facilitating citizens' access to it.

The promotion of innovation and continuous improvement through a culture of innovation and continuous learning are also mentioned in the principles. Leaders are encouraged to foster a culture of innovation in public administration by supporting the uptake of new technologies and practices that improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public services. Innovation is based on training, so investing in the continuous development of leadership skills ensures the adaptability of public administration to emerging challenges and changes in society.

The Principles of Public Administration highlight the fact that strong and effective leadership is fundamental for a high-performance public administration, capable of responding to the needs of citizens and implementing successful public policies.

### ***D. National Leadership Training Programs***

Leadership training programs play a pivotal role in the development of public administration leaders worldwide. Both European and North American countries have developed various programs to cultivate the leadership skills necessary for managing complex public sector challenges. These programs differ significantly in their approach, with Europe emphasizing collaborative frameworks and North America focusing more on individual leadership development through high-profile fellowships. This section provides a deeper analysis of North American leadership training programs and offers a direct comparison with European models (Romania, France, Spain, Italy) to better understand their implications for Romania.

#### ***1) European Programs***

At the national level, European Union Member States have implemented several publicly funded programs aimed at developing leadership skills among civil servants. These programs are typically designed to address the challenges of modernization in public administration, with a strong emphasis on digital skills, innovation, and strategic leadership.

In Romania the National Agency of Civil Servants (ANFP, n.d) runs leadership training programs focused on developing advanced digital competencies and leadership skills to support the ongoing transformation in public administration. The ANFP's Leadership and Talent Management programs are particularly valuable in the context of digital and green transitions, equipping civil servants with the necessary skills to navigate these challenges. Similarly, countries like France, Spain, and Italy have government-funded initiatives to train public sector leaders. The National Institute of Public Service in France, the Instituto Nacional de Administración Pública in Spain, and the Scuola Nazionale dell'Amministrazione in Italy offer programs that emphasize leadership, management, and innovation in the public sector.

The National Institute of Public Service (Institut National du Service Public, n.d.) provides advanced training for civil servants, with a strong emphasis on developing leadership and management skills. Its initial and in-service training program is funded by the state and aims to prepare leaders capable of responding to the contemporary challenges of public administration.

National Institute of Public Administration (Instituto Nacional de Administración Pública, n.d.) conducts training programs for civil servants, focusing on the development of leadership, management, and innovation skills. These trainings are financed from the public budget and aim to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Spanish public administration.

The National School of Administration (Scuola Nazionale dell'Amministrazione, n.d.) offers training programs for Italian civil servants, focused on developing leadership, management and public policy skills. Funded by the government, these programs aim to train leaders capable of effectively managing public administration and promoting innovation in the public sector.

The European School of Administration (European Commission, n.d.D) offers training programs for employees of EU institutions and agencies, focused on the development of leadership skills, training for newcomers and certification for the transition

## Leadership Development in the Public Sector in Romania: Learning from European and North American Strategies

between functions. It also manages the Erasmus program for public administration, facilitating study visits for young civil servants from EU countries.

The mission of the European School of Administration is to provide high-quality learning opportunities designed to meet the needs of the European Union (EU) institutions and their staff. It plays a key role in the professional development of European officials, helping to strengthen the skills needed for efficient and efficient administration. The school offers a diverse range of learning opportunities, tailored to the specific needs of EU staff. These include leadership skills development programs, training courses for newcomers, professional certification, the Erasmus Programme for Public Administration, aimed at young civil servants from EU countries, offering short study visits to deepen their knowledge of EU issues. Employees of the EU institutions and agencies benefit from these learning programs. The offer supports professional development, giving participants the opportunity to improve their skills and realize their potential within European organizations. These initiatives help to increase efficiency and promote high standards in EU public administration.

These European programs focus on collaborative leadership, aiming to foster teamwork, coordination, and cross-sectoral cooperation. This emphasis on collaboration is essential in the EU context, where leaders must navigate complex political landscapes and work across national borders to address regional and global challenges. The European model prioritizes shared leadership responsibilities, as seen in the European School of Administration, which offers leadership development courses for EU officials. This collective approach aligns well with the EU's broader goals of sustainability, inclusivity, and social cohesion.

### 2) North American Programs

In contrast, North American leadership programs tend to have a more individualized focus, emphasizing personal leadership development and preparing individuals for high-level roles in government. These programs are highly competitive, offering participants extensive hands-on experience and mentorship, which is pivotal for shaping leaders capable of making strategic decisions under pressure. In the following paragraphs, we will briefly present the White House Fellows, Presidential Management Fellows, Presidential Innovation Fellows and the White House Leadership Development Program.

One of the most renowned programs in the United States is the White House Fellows Program (White House, 2024), which offers young professionals the opportunity to work directly with senior government officials. This program is designed to develop strategic thinking, crisis management, and interagency coordination. Participants gain firsthand experience in federal governance, which provides them with an in-depth understanding of public policy and decision-making processes. Fellows are tasked with navigating complex governmental challenges, often working on high-stakes projects that require quick decision-making and crisis management—skills that are essential for leadership in the public sector.

The White House Fellows program, initiated in 1964, provides young leaders with the opportunity to work alongside high-ranking government officials, contributing to their professional development and deep understanding of government processes. The program has two main objectives, namely, to develop leadership skills through practical experience within the federal administration and to promote understanding of public policies and high-level decision-making processes. Annually, approximately 11-19 participants from various fields are selected. The program lasts for one year and participants receive a salary and benefits corresponding to their position in the administration.

White House Fellows 2025-2026 will begin in August 2025 and end in August 2026. All applicants must be citizens of the United States and have completed at least a bachelor's degree. Except for active military personnel, federal government employees are not eligible to apply. Selection criteria include: a track record of outstanding professional achievement in the early stage of one's career, evidence of leadership skills and potential for further development, a demonstrated commitment to public service and skills necessary to succeed at the highest levels of the federal government, and the ability to work effectively as part of a team.

The Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) program further reinforces the emphasis on developing strategic leadership (Presidential Management Fellows, n.d.). Designed for recent graduates, the PMF program focuses on cultivating policy-making skills and preparing participants for future leadership roles in the federal government. Like the White House Fellows Program, the PMF focuses on individual competencies, such as decision-making and problem-solving, with participants assigned to leadership roles across various government agencies.

Launched in 1977, the PMF program recruits recent graduate graduates to develop a base of future government leaders. The objectives of the program refer to attracting young talents in public service and developing leadership and management skills in the public sector (Presidential Management Fellows, n.d.). The program runs for a period of two years. Annually, more than 500 participants are selected, with a selection rate of about 10%. Participants are employed at the GS-9 level of the federal salary grid and receive appropriate salary and benefits.

The Presidential Innovation Fellows (PIF) program is another example of leadership development in North America (Presidential Innovation Fellows, n.d.). This initiative brings private-sector innovators into federal agencies to work on projects that drive innovation and address critical public sector challenges. This program develops competencies in technological leadership and innovation management, skills that are increasingly important in the context of the digital transformation of public administration.

The Presidential Innovation Fellows was initiated in 2012. The PIF program brings private sector innovators into federal agencies to address major challenges and drive innovation. The objectives of the program are to apply technological expertise to improve

## Leadership Development in the Public Sector in Romania: Learning from European and North American Strategies

public services and promote innovation in the public sector. Each stage of the one-year program includes between 20 and 35 participants. Participants receive a competitive salary, funded by the host agencies.

Established in 2014, the White House Leadership Development Program aims to cultivate enterprise leadership skills among high-potential career GS-15 federal employees (White House Fellows, n.d.). The program offers participants the opportunity to work on cross-agency priority challenges, trying to enhance inter-agency coordination and develop strategic leadership competencies. Each fellowship runs for one year, with the number of participants varying annually. The costs associated with the program are covered by the participating agencies.

In Canada there are several programs dedicated to developing leadership competencies in public administration. These initiatives aim to train leaders capable of effectively managing public policies and providing quality services to citizens. The Action Canada Fellowship Program is a public policy leadership program designed to enhance the understanding of the country and public policy options by emerging leaders (Action Canada, n.d.). The curriculum focuses on three main pillars: Canada, leadership, and public policy. The program is supported by Action Canada, an independent, non-political, non-profit, and charitable organization based in Ontario, Canada, led by graduates of the Action Canada Alumni program.

In 2017, Action Canada and the Public Policy Forum joined forces to expand Canada's largest accelerator of new leaders. Together, they offer the Action Canada Fellowship program, a 10-month leadership program that aims to enhance emerging leaders' understanding of the country and public policy options for the future. Since its inception, the Fellowship program has achieved this goal by bringing together exceptional young Canadians whose talents, experiences, and perspectives represent our country's diverse mosaic and connecting them through shared experiences from across Canada.

The objectives of the Action Canada Fellowship are to develop leadership skills through hands-on experiences and seminar discussions, and to improve understanding of Canadian government processes and public policy. The number of participants varies annually, selected from various fields. The program runs for ten months. Specific information on costs is not publicly available.

### 3) *Comparison between European and North American Models*

While both European and North American leadership programs aim to develop competencies that are essential for effective governance, the approaches they take differ significantly. The European model places a strong emphasis on collaborative leadership. European programs are designed to foster a culture of shared responsibility and coordination, reflecting the need for leaders who can navigate the complexities of working within and between national boundaries in a union of diverse countries. The EU's approach to leadership development, as seen in programs like ComPact and the European Skills Agenda, emphasizes collective action, collaboration, and long-term sustainability in the face of regional and global challenges.

In contrast, the North American model tends to focus more on individual leadership development. Programs such as the White House Fellows and Presidential Management Fellows prioritize personal leadership skills, preparing individuals for senior roles through immersive, hands-on experiences that emphasize decision-making under pressure and the ability to manage complex governmental challenges. These programs are less concerned with collaboration across institutions and borders, instead focusing on developing leaders who can act decisively and independently within their organizational structures.

The challenge lies in balancing these two models. While collaborative leadership, as emphasized in European programs, is essential for navigating the complexities of public administration in a multinational and diverse context, there is also a need for leaders who can make decisive, independent decisions in high-pressure situations. Drawing from both models could provide a more holistic approach to leadership development that equips public sector leaders with the ability to collaborate while also developing the strategic thinking and crisis management skills necessary for effective governance.

For Romania, there is a clear opportunity to integrate aspects from both the European and North American models. The country's public administration system could benefit from leadership development programs that emphasize both collaboration and individual competency development. By combining the EU's emphasis on collaborative frameworks with the North American focus on strategic leadership, Romania could cultivate leaders who can manage both local challenges and engaging in broader EU and global initiatives.

Furthermore, Romania could learn from North America's approach to mentor-driven programs, such as the Presidential Management Fellows, by incorporating mentorship as a key component in the leadership development of its civil servants. Establishing mentoring networks could help bridge the gap between the technical expertise of young professionals and the leadership skills required for senior roles in public administration.

## V. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Based on the analysis of leadership development programs in Europe and North America, several actionable policy recommendations and practical implications for Romania's public sector can be proposed to enhance the effectiveness of leadership development, particularly in the context of digital and green transitions.

First recommendation is to strengthen leadership development programs in Romania based on the develop sector-specific leadership programs which incorporate digital and green competencies while the second recommendation refers to the policy alignment with European and global trends and to strengthen public-private sector collaboration. These recommendations aim to

## Leadership Development in the Public Sector in Romania: Learning from European and North American Strategies

strengthen Romania's public administration by ensuring that leaders possess the necessary competencies to navigate emerging challenges effectively.

First recommendation, strengthening leadership development programs in Romania based on the develop sector-specific leadership programs which incorporate digital and green competencies into training should be supported by a secondary actions referring to mentorship and networking. While Romania's National Strategy for Adult Education emphasizes transversal skills, it is crucial to tailor leadership development programs specifically to the needs of the public sector.

Given the rapid advancement of digital technologies and the need for sustainability, Romania's leadership training programs should integrate competencies related to digital transformation and the green economy. Leaders in public administration need to be prepared to guide their organizations through the adoption of new technologies, digitalization, and sustainability initiatives. Training programs should focus on developing strategic thinking to lead digital transformations, as well as policy innovation to foster green transitions. This will help Romania's public sector leaders make informed decisions that align with EU sustainability goals.

Studies focusing on digital leadership in the public sector (Nuryadin et. al, 2023) provide us with much nuances regarding implementation. For the current argument, we present some examples of sector-specific leadership programs that mention digital and green competencies:

- France replaced the historic ENA with INSP to modernize the senior civil service. The "Leadership and Management: Transforming Public Administrations" course includes modules on digital transformation, ecological transition, and human-centered innovation (INSP, n.d.). It prepares public managers to lead in uncertain environments and fosters strategic thinking in digital and green contexts.
- The case of Oman, presented by Al-Mahrezi et al. (2021), explicitly outlines a digital government competency framework for public sector managers. This framework defines the necessary competencies for leading digital transformation, such as: digital literacy, ICT strategy development, change management and leadership and innovation. The study emphasizes the importance of equipping public managers with the right digital competencies to lead transformation efforts and improve digital service delivery in Oman's public administration.
- The Ministry of Finance and the Finnish Institute of Public Management developed eOppiva Digital Learning Environment between 2017 and 2019 as a digital service package aimed at enhancing the knowledge and skills of all central government personnel (Ministry of Finance, n.d.). This initiative was part of a broader project on e-learning within central government, focusing on developing new methodologies rather than merely implementing a new ICT system. The service commenced in 2018, providing a centralized platform for both organization-specific and government-wide online training, ranging from short informational videos to comprehensive training packages.
- Canada's Executive Leadership Development Program integrates climate leadership and digital governance as core themes (Canada School of Public Service, 2022). Leaders are trained to guide their departments in achieving sustainable development goals and navigating artificial intelligence or digital ethics challenges.

Additionally to the first recommendation we mention a key aspect of North American leadership programs, such as the Presidential Management Fellows, the emphasis on mentorship. Romania could benefit from establishing mentorship networks that connect emerging leaders with experienced mentors in public administration. This would facilitate knowledge transfer, leadership skill development, and guidance on navigating complex public policy issues. Additionally, fostering cross-sectoral collaboration through professional networks would help public sector leaders share the best practices and create innovative solutions to common challenges.

The second recommendation refers to the policy alignment with European and global trends and to strengthening public-private sector collaboration. Romania should align its national leadership development policies with the EU's European Skills Agenda and the ComPAct initiative. This alignment will ensure that Romania's public administration leaders are prepared to meet the challenges of the digital and green transitions, as well as contribute to regional and global governance initiatives.

Romania should actively participate in EU-funded programs that support leadership development in public administration and work closely with other EU member states to share knowledge and resources.

We present below examples from Spain, Estonia and Germany to highlight initiative policy alignment and public-private collaboration. Spain conducted a national competency mapping exercise to design its leadership school. It aligned with the EU's Skills Agenda and had strong links to private sector innovation labs, fostering collaboration and real-time policy experimentation (Instituto Nacional de Administración Pública, 2024).

In Estonia a public collaboration with the banking sector was instrumental in rolling out national e-ID systems and supported digital literacy through training programs like *Tiger Leap* and *Look@World* (Kattel and Mergel, 2019). This public-private partnership helped foster a digitally competent population and indirectly supported leadership development by building technical familiarity and trust in digital tools among civil servants and citizens.



## Leadership Development in the Public Sector in Romania: Learning from European and North American Strategies

In Germany, the Federal Academy of Public Administration (BAkÖV) provides cross-sector seminars involving leaders from government, business, and academia (BAkÖV, n.d.). Topics include sustainability, digital change, and agile governance, aligned with EU goals. The country also uses inter-ministerial innovation labs that include private-sector experts.

Moreover, Romania can improve leadership development by encouraging public-private sector collaboration, particularly in developing leadership skills for innovation and sustainability. The Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan stresses the importance of entrepreneurial skills for leadership. Romania could benefit from engaging with the private sector to develop joint leadership programs, particularly in areas such as digital transformation and sustainable public policy. Encouraging collaboration between the public and private sectors will help foster a more dynamic and adaptable leadership culture.

Public administration leaders face unique challenges, including political oversight, public accountability, and complex stakeholder management. Therefore, Romania should develop programs that focus on the strategic management of public resources, stakeholder engagement, and navigating the complexities of public governance. Additionally, integrating crisis management and resilience building into these programs will ensure that leaders are well-equipped to manage the unpredictability of both domestic and global challenges.

## VI. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

In today's rapidly changing global landscape, the development of leadership competencies in public administration has become more critical than ever, especially in the face of challenges such as digital transformation, sustainability, and evolving governance structures. This article has analyzed leadership development strategies in Europe and North America, drawing important comparisons to understand their implications for Romania's public administration. The discussion below highlights key findings and conclusions, followed by practical recommendations for enhancing leadership development in Romania's public sector.

One of the key findings of this research is the recognition of leadership as an essential competence in the context of public administration, particularly as public sector leaders face new challenges arising from digital and green transitions. European policies, such as the European Skills Agenda and the ComPAct initiative, emphasize leadership as a cornerstone of public administration reforms. These strategies aim to modernize public administration through a collaborative approach, promoting transparency, inclusivity, and sustainability. However, while these initiatives acknowledge the importance of leadership, they often fail to provide sector-specific guidance for developing leadership competencies within the public sector, particularly in the face of Romania's unique challenges.

On the other hand, North American leadership programs such as the White House Fellows and Presidential Management Fellows have a more individualized focus. These programs emphasize personal leadership development, offering hands-on experience and mentorship to young professionals, thus preparing them for senior roles in government. North American leadership training tends to prioritize strategic decision-making, crisis management, and inter-agency coordination, essential skills for leadership in complex governmental environments. However, these programs lack the collaborative emphasis found in European strategies, focusing more on individual decision-making and action within organizations.

In conclusion, Romania's public sector is at a critical juncture, facing new challenges and opportunities as it navigates the complexities of digital transformation, sustainability, and evolving public administration structures. By strengthening leadership development programs, aligning them with European and global frameworks, and fostering a culture of mentorship and collaboration, Romania can build a robust leadership infrastructure capable of addressing the complexities of modern governance. The implementation of these recommendations will ensure that Romania's public sector leaders are not only capable of responding to current challenges but are also prepared to lead the country toward a more sustainable, prosperous future.

## REFERENCES

- 1) Action Canada. (n.d.). *About*. December 8, 2024, from <https://actioncanada.ca/about/#history>
- 2) Agenția Națională a Funcționarilor Publici (ANFP). (n.d.). *Formare profesională*. December 8, 2024, from <https://www.anfp.gov.ro/formare>
- 3) Al-Mahrezi, J., Abu Bakar, N. A., & Sjarif, N. (2021). *Digital Government Competency for Omani Public Sector Managers: A Conceptual Framework*. In *International Journal of Public Administration in the Digital Age*, 1009–1020. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-70713-2\\_90](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-70713-2_90)
- 4) Canada School of Public Service. (2022). *Executive leadership development programs*. Government of Canada. Retrieved from <https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/professional-development/executive-leadership-development-programs.html>
- 5) Center for Creative Leadership. (2024). *First-time managers must conquer these challenges*. Center for Creative Leadership. Retrieved March 24, 2025 <https://www.ccl.org/articles/leading-effectively-articles/first-time-managers-must-conquer-these-challenges/>
- 6) De Keersmaecker, S. and Favalli, V. (2022) *Comisia sprijină 225 de proiecte de reforme în statele membre pentru a îmbunătăți reziliența și a crea locuri de muncă*. Accesat la 8 decembrie 2024, de pe

- [https://romania.representation.ec.europa.eu/news/comisia-sprijina-225-de-proiecte-de-reforme-statele-membre-pentru-imbunatatire-rezilienta-crea-locuri-2022-03-09\\_ro](https://romania.representation.ec.europa.eu/news/comisia-sprijina-225-de-proiecte-de-reforme-statele-membre-pentru-imbunatatire-rezilienta-crea-locuri-2022-03-09_ro)
- 7) De Keersmaecker, S. and Laetitia Close, L. (2023). *O Europă care sprijină: Către o administrație publică modernă și eficientă*. December 8, 2024, from [https://romania.representation.ec.europa.eu/news/o-europa-care-sprijina-catre-o-administratie-publica-moderna-si-eficace-2023-10-25\\_ro](https://romania.representation.ec.europa.eu/news/o-europa-care-sprijina-catre-o-administratie-publica-moderna-si-eficace-2023-10-25_ro)
  - 8) European Commission (2013). *Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions*. Retrieved March 24, 2025, from <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52012DC0795>
  - 9) European Commission (2020). *European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience*. Retrieved December 8, 2024, from <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1223&langId=en>
  - 10) European Commission (n.d.A). *Skills for industry*. Retrieved December 8, 2024, from [https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/industry/strategy/skills-industry\\_en#:~:text=The%20European%20skills%20agenda%20adopted%20in%20July%202020,to%20equip%20to%20upskill%20and%20reskill%20the%20workforce.](https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/industry/strategy/skills-industry_en#:~:text=The%20European%20skills%20agenda%20adopted%20in%20July%202020,to%20equip%20to%20upskill%20and%20reskill%20the%20workforce.)
  - 11) European Commission (n.d.B). *Technical Support Instrument (TSI)*. Retrieved December 8, 2024, from [https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/find-funding/eu-funding-programmes/technical-support-instrument/technical-support-instrument-tsi\\_en?prefLang=ro](https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/find-funding/eu-funding-programmes/technical-support-instrument/technical-support-instrument-tsi_en?prefLang=ro)
  - 12) European Commission (n.d.C). *The Digital Europe Programme*. Retrieved December 8, 2024, from <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/activities/digital-programme>
  - 13) European Commission (n.d.D). *European School of Administration*. Retrieved December 8, 2024, from [https://commission.europa.eu/about/departments-and-executive-agencies/european-school-administration\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/about/departments-and-executive-agencies/european-school-administration_en)
  - 14) European Commission. (2021A). *EU technical support instrument (2021-2027)*. EUR-Lex. Retrieved December 8, 2024, from <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/eu-technical-support-instrument-2021-2027.html>
  - 15) European Commission. (2021B). *Questions and Answers on the Technical Support Instrument 2021-2027 (QANDA\_21\_746)*. Retrieved December 8, 2024, from [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/api/files/document/print/en/qanda\\_21\\_746/QANDA\\_21\\_746\\_EN.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/api/files/document/print/en/qanda_21_746/QANDA_21_746_EN.pdf)
  - 16) European Commission. (2023). *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Tackling the impact of rising energy prices on households and businesses*. Retrieved March 24, 2025, from <https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2023-10/2023.4890%20HT0423966ENN-final.pdf>
  - 17) Federal Academy of Public Administration [Bundesakademie für öffentliche Verwaltung] (BAkÖV). (n.d.) *Programmbereich Führung und Management*. Retrieved from <https://www.bakoev.bund.de>
  - 18) IMD. (2014). *Hit the ground running: Transitioning to new leadership roles*. IMD. Retrieved March 24, 2025, from <https://imd.widen.net/view/pdf/lstvb8ovgy/33-hit-the-ground-running-final-18-02-2014.pdf>
  - 19) INSP. (n.d.). *Leadership and management: Transforming public administrations*. Institut National du Service Public. Retrieved from <https://insp.gouv.fr/formation-continue/formations-courtes/programmes-internationaux-courts/leadership-and-management>
  - 20) Institut national du service public (INSP). (n.d.). *Leadership and management: Transforming public administrations*. Retrieved December 8, 2024, from <https://insp.gouv.fr/leadership-and-management-transforming-public-administrations>
  - 21) Instituto Nacional de Administración Pública (n.d.). *Escuela de Alta Dirección Pública del Estado*. Retrieved December 8, 2024, from <https://www.inap.es/escuela-de-alta-direccion-publica-del-estado>
  - 22) Instituto Nacional de Administración Pública. (2024). *Estrategia de aprendizaje del INAP 2022–2025*. Retrieved from <https://www.inap.es>
  - 23) Kattel, R., & Mergel, I. (2019). *Estonia's digital transformation: Mission mystique and the hiding hand*.
  - 24) Loy, A. (25 oct 2023). *Compact: Primul set cuprinzător de acțiuni al UE pentru modernizarea administrațiilor naționale ar putea duce la economii de miliarde de euro anual pentru cetățeni și companii*. Calea Europeană. Retrieved December 8, 2024, from <https://www.caleaeuropeana.ro/compact-primul-set-cuprinzator-de-actiuni-al-ue-pentru-modernizarea-administratiilor-naționale-ar-putea-duce-la-economii-de-miliarde-de-euro-anual-pentru-cetateni-si-companii/>
  - 25) Ministerul Muncii și Solidarității Sociale [Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity, Romania] (MMSS) (2023A). *Comunicat de presă: Strategia națională pentru formarea adulților 2024–2027*. [Press release: National Strategy for Adult Education 2024–2027] Retrieved December 8, 2024, from <https://mmuncii.ro/j33/index.php/ro/comunicare/comunicate-de-presa/7147-cp-strategia-nat-formare-adulti-29122023>
  - 26) Ministerul Muncii și Solidarității Sociale [Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity, Romania]. (MMSS) (2023B). *Strategia națională pentru formarea adulților 2024–2027 și Planul de acțiune* [National Strategy for Adult Education 2024–2027 and Action Plan]. Retrieved December 8, 2024, from

[https://mmuncii.ro/j33/images/Documente/MMSS/Strategia\\_nationala\\_formare\\_adulti\\_2024-2027\\_si\\_Plan\\_de\\_actiune.pdf](https://mmuncii.ro/j33/images/Documente/MMSS/Strategia_nationala_formare_adulti_2024-2027_si_Plan_de_actiune.pdf)

- 27) Ministry of Finance, Finland. (n.d.). *Education and training services*. <https://vm.fi/en/education-and-training-services>
- 28) Northouse, P. G. (2018). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (8th ed.). Sage publications.
- 29) Nuryadin, R., Sobandi, A., & Santoso, B. (2023). Digital leadership in the public sector-systematic literature review: Systematic literature review. *Jurnal Ilmu Administrasi: Media Pengembangan Ilmu dan Praktek Administrasi*, 20(1), 90-106.
- 30) Presidential Innovation Fellows. (n.d.). *Presidential Innovation Fellows*. Retrieved December 8, 2024, from <https://presidentialinnovationfellows.gov/>
- 31) Presidential Management Fellows. (n.d.). *Presidential Management Fellows Program*. Retrieved December 8, 2024, from <https://www.pmf.gov/>
- 32) Schlossberg, N. K. (1981). A model for analyzing human adaptation to transition. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 9(2), 2–18.
- 33) Scuola Nazionale dell'Amministrazione. (n.d.). *Attività: Corso-concorso*. Retrieved December 8, 2024, from <https://sna.gov.it/home/attivita/corso-concorso/>
- 34) SIGMA. (2023). *Principiile administrației publice: Ediția 2023*. Retrieved December 8, 2024, from <https://www.sigmaweb.org/publications/Principles-of-Public-Administration-2023-edition-ROM.pdf>
- 35) The White House. (2024, November 1). *2025-2026 White House Fellowship*. Retrieved March 24, 2025, from <https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2024/11/01/2025-2026-white-house-fellowship/>
- 36) The White House. (n.d.) *White House Leadership Development* Retrieved March 24, 2025, from Program <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/participate/whldp>



There is an Open Access article, distributed under the term of the Creative Commons Attribution – Non Commercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0)

(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits remixing, adapting and building upon the work for non-commercial use, provided the original work is properly cited.