Digitalization of the Public Administration in Romania Compared with that Existing within the Member States of the European Union

Rodica Pripoaie[1], George Cristian Schin[2]

Abstract: This study explores an important issue regarding the state of digitization of public administration in Romania compared to its level at the European level. In this paper, we analyze the level of digitization of public administration services in Romania, which aims at improving the interaction between the state and citizens, in the sense of increasing the quality of the offered services following the dynamics of society. Also, digitization aims at simplifying citizens' lives, facilitating the interaction between them and public administration institutions, but also increasing citizens' trust in the administration, which will ultimately lead to the economic development of communities and increase living standards. We have also analyzed the degree of digitization of Romania compared to other European states, a level reflected by a series of indicators used at the European level. We found that there is a direct link between the level of digitization and the development of a country. That is precisely why Romania should be concerned with accelerating the digitization process of public administration and reducing the existing gap in this field compared to other European states.

Keywords: public administration; digitization; digitized public services; DESI

1. Introduction

The level of digitization of public and fiscal administration at the European level is tracked and quantified by the European Union, with the help of the DESI index (Digital Economy and Society Index).

This index offers governments and citizens the opportunity to know the level of digitization of public services in a certain EU member state, and based on these rankings, government officials can develop strategies to reduce the digital gap compared to more advanced countries in this field. Also, based on this index, the level of e-government in a certain state can be assessed to increase the efficiency and transparency of public services and reduce bureaucracy.

---

[1] Associate Professor, PhD, "Dunarea de Jos" University of Galati, Romania, Corresponding author: rodica.pripoaie@ugal.ro.
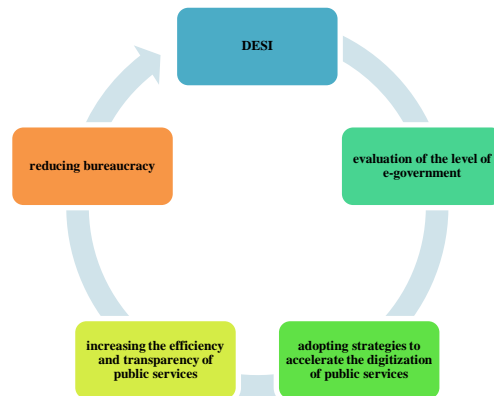[2] Professor, PhD, "Dunarea de Jos" University of Galati, Romania, E-mail: george.schin@ugal.ro.

Figure 1. Accelerating the digitization of public services based on the analysis of the DESI Index
Source: The authors

The statistical data provided by the *Eurostat* database on the DESI level have an annual frequency and measure the level of digitization of an EU member country, based on the analysis of digitization within four main areas, which are grouped as follows:

1. digital skills of human capital;

2. the level of connectivity in that country;

3. the degree of integration of digital technology in the economy of the EU member state;

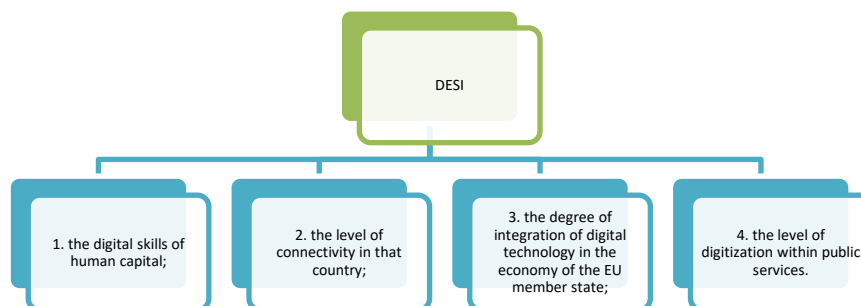4. the level of digitization within public services.

Figure 2. The domains quantified by the DESI index from the point of view of digitization
Source: The authors

2. Digitization of the European Public Administration

In the post-pandemic context generated by the COVID-19 pandemic, it emerged the need to accelerate the digitization of public administration in Romania, as it also happened at the European and international levels.

Although, at the European level, most of the member states were in a better position than Romania in the DESI Ranking, nevertheless the European Commission adopted in March 2021, a strategy that has as its main objective for the current period, the one that was named *The Digital Decade*.
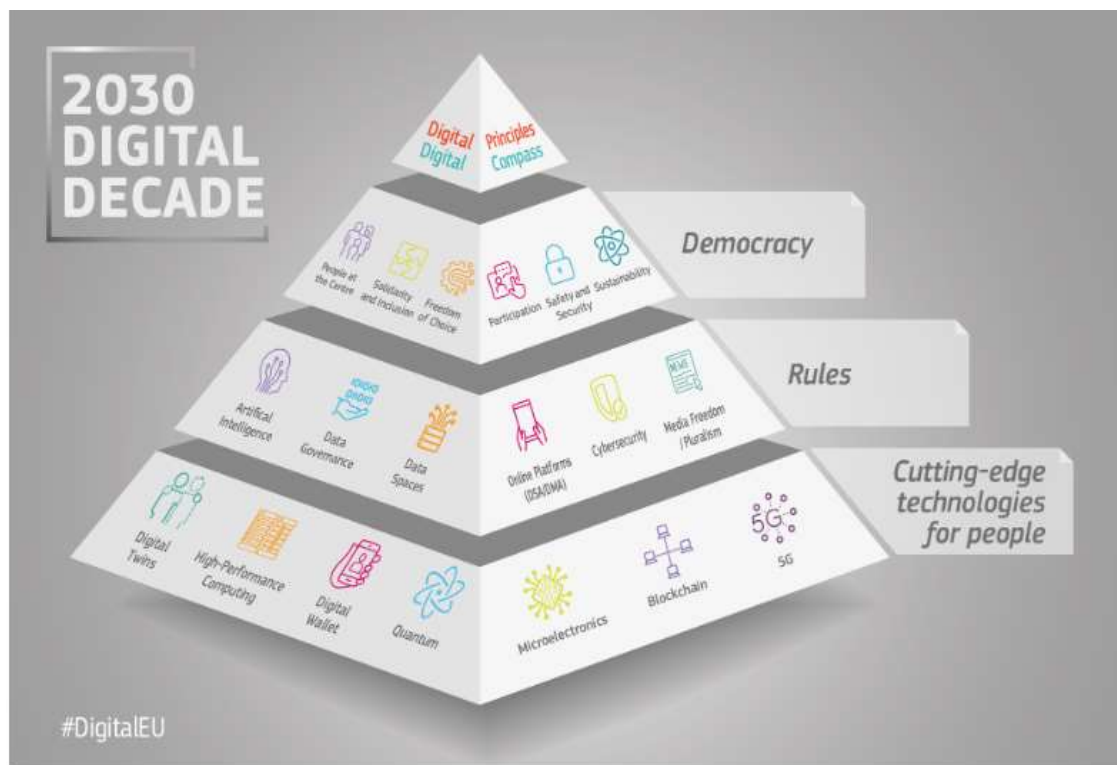

Figure 3. The Digital Decade 2030
Source: https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/ro/policies/europes-digital-decade

Digital Compass was established, which aims at creating a digital ecosystem, which has at the center of its concerns people and their prosperity, both as citizens and within companies. This document on European digital transformation has been named as such based on the analogy of a compass, as it has four main objectives, namely:
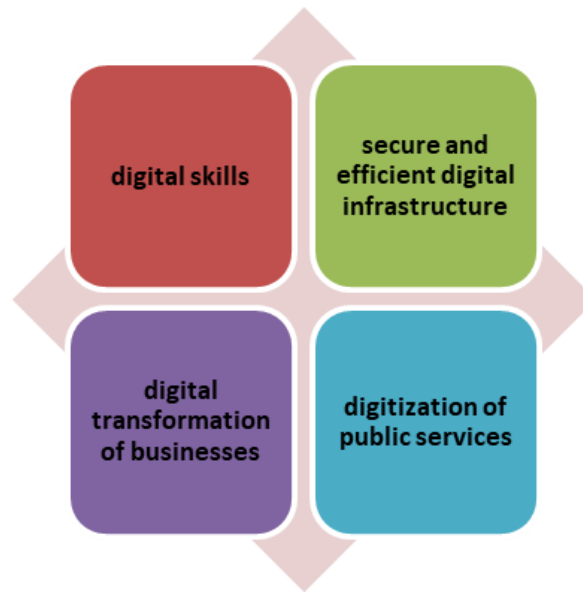
Figure 4. Digital compass targets
Source: The authors

3. The Digitization of Public Administration in Romania

At the time of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Romania was at the negative top regarding the DESI index, in the sense that it was in 26th place out of 28 and it was not just a conjunctural, punctual situation, because in the previous years Romania was also in the penultimate place in the DESI top. This fact was caused by a complex situation regarding the existence of some factors, such as:
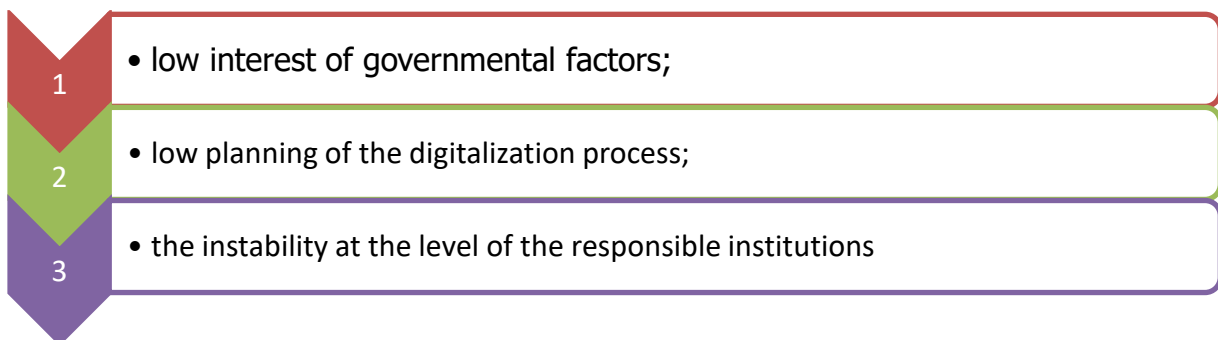

1 • low interest of governmental factors;

2 • low planning of the digitalization process;

3 • the instability at the level of the responsible institutions

Figure 5. The determining factors for Romania's position in the negative top of DESI

Source: The authors

Starting from 2020, the digitization process has intensified in Romania because of the establishment of an Authority for the Digitization of Romania, which has as its main objective the coordination of the process of digital transformation of the Romanian economy and society to reduce the gap between more advanced countries digitally developed.
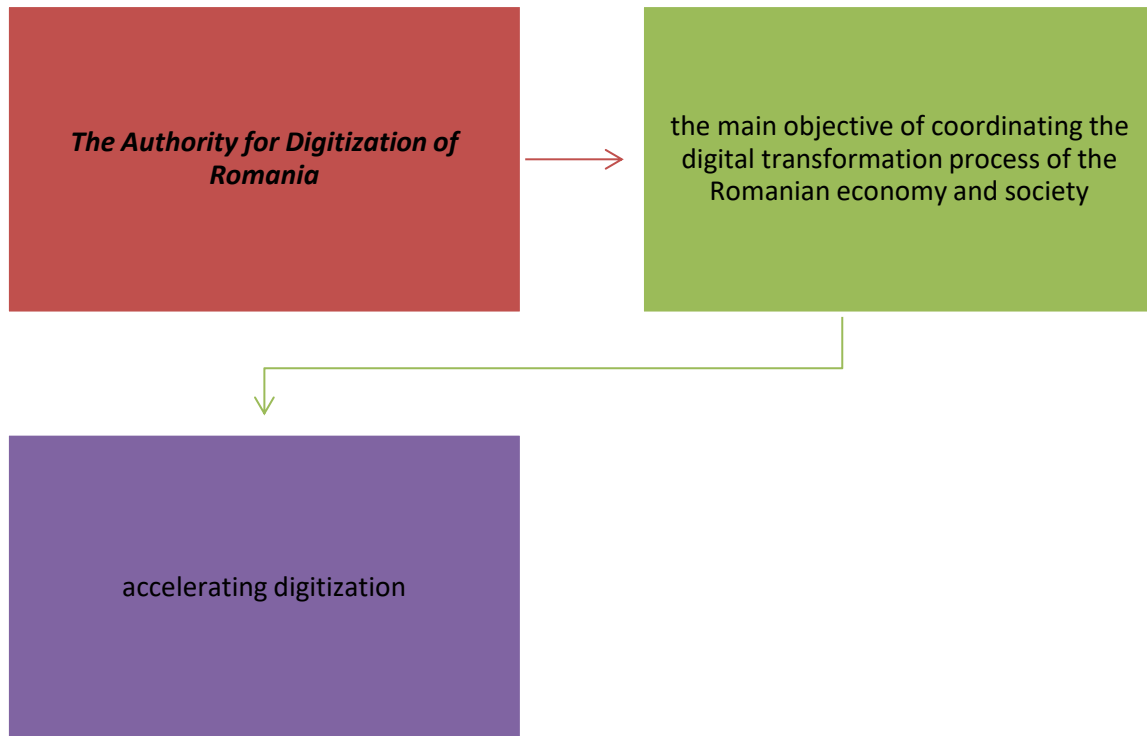
Figure 6. The Authority for Digitization of Romania
Source: The authors

4. Results and Discussions

One of Romania's weak points in the DESI ranking is represented by the very low digital skills of its citizens, and a strong point is represented by the *Connectivity indicator.* In the DESI ranking for 2022, Romania is still in last place among the 27 EU states, which shows that although important steps have been taken in the digitalization field, even greater and more concerted efforts are still needed to reduce the existing differences compared to the other countries that are much more developed from a digital point of view, such as Estonia, Finland, or Denmark. Although Estonia is only in the 7th place in the DESI list, it is considered the country that offers the most digitized public services, and shortly its citizens will also be able to vote in elections from their mobile phones, in addition to all other digitized public services such as those for issuing digital identity cards, the electronic medical service, etc.
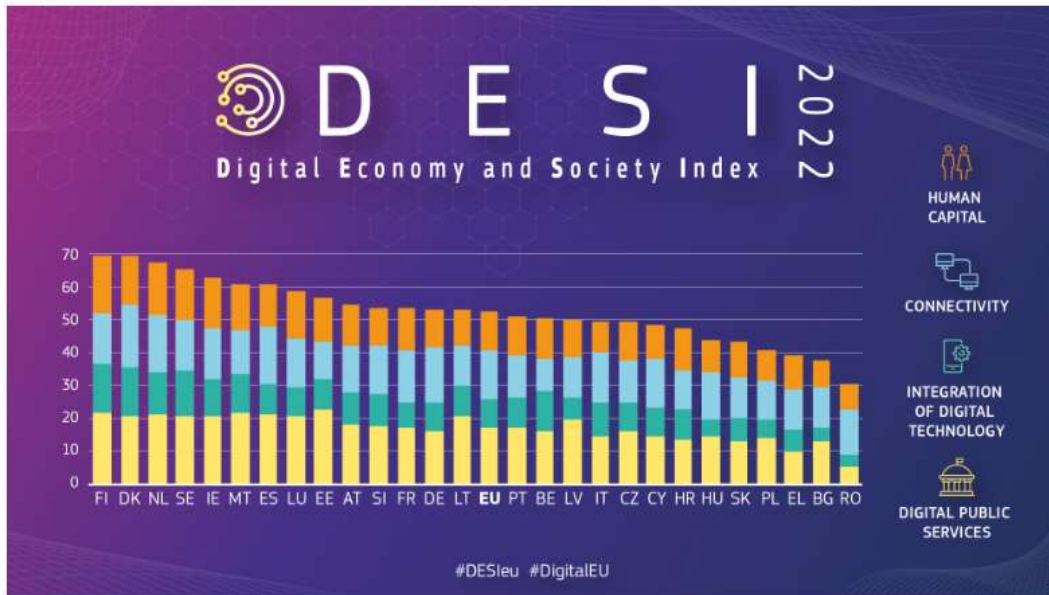
Figure 7. DESI ranking for 2022
Source: https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/desi

The digital transformation of public institutions in Romania aims at offering fast and high-quality digital public services but also considers the security of the personal data of citizens and companies.

In Romania, the e-Government Strategy in Romania was adopted, which represents the medium-term vision regarding Romania's digital transformation. The National Strategy regarding the Digital Agenda for Romania - 2020 can be consulted on the website: https://gov.ro/ro/print?modul=sedinte&link=strategia-nationala-privind-agenda-digitala-pentru-romania-2020.

Accelerating the digitization of the Romanian public administration can be done by acting simultaneously in *four strategic axes*, which ensure the creation of a "digital ecosystem capable of functioning, innovating and transferring innovative digital services and products for the benefit of society and the economy"[1].

Also, to support the financing necessary for the digitization of the Romanian economy, a distinct pillar aimed at Digital Transformation was established through the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, i.e. Pillar II, Component C7 which contains 4 reforms and 19 investments worth 1, 884.96 million euros. The reforms aim at the creation of a government cloud, but also at ensuring its cyber security and the development of digital skills for civil servants, but also through digital education for pupils, students, and citizens.

Thus, through this pillar within the PNRR, 30 applications for government digital services will be achieved, at least 60 public health institutions will be digitized and 200 public health institutions will benefit from IT systems and digital infrastructure, but also a nationalization of digital e-government

---

[1] https://financialintelligence.ro/cercetarea-inovarea-si-digitalizarea-in-programul-deguvernare-vezi-viziunea-pe-termen-mediu-privind-transformarea-digitala-a-romaniai/.

services in the field of labor and social protection, and approx. 8.5 million citizens who will have the electronic identity card, 30, 000 civil servants trained to acquire advanced digital skills, 100, 000 people will benefit from digital skills training, etc."[1]

5. Conclusions

DESI 2023 dashboard for the Digital Decade can be accessed https://digital-decade-desi.digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/datasets/desi/charts and unfortunately, we note that even in 2023 Romania is last at the indicator of e-Government users, Digital public services for citizens and business.
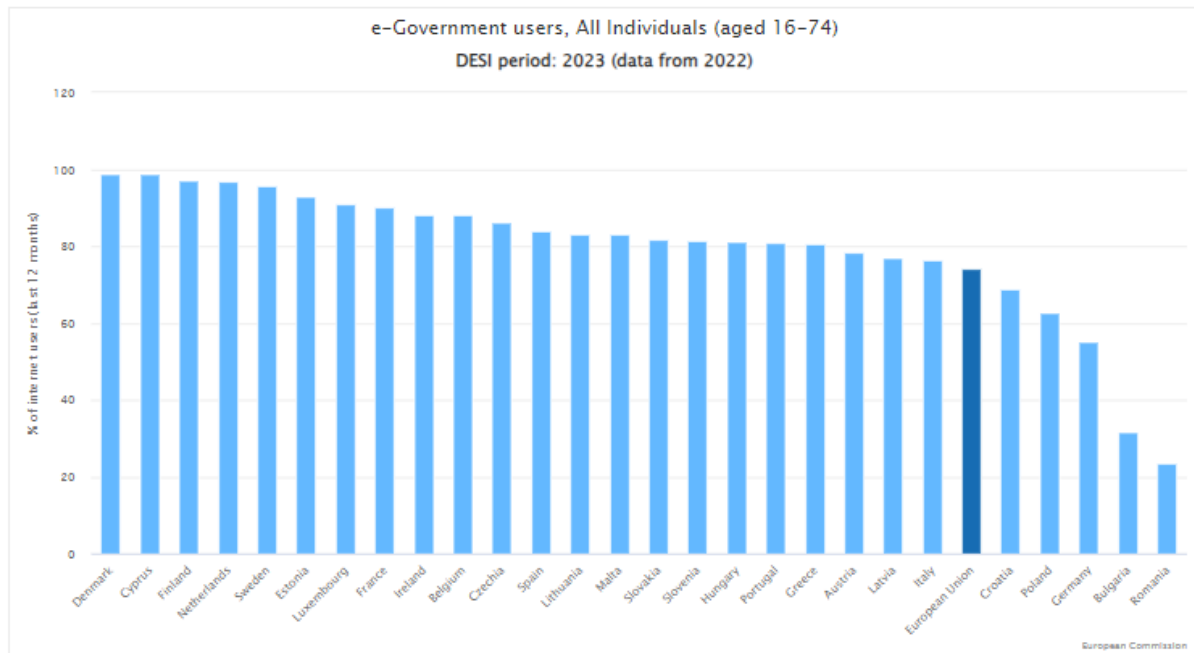

Figure 8. DESI 2023 for Digitalization of public services/e-Government users
Source: https://digital-decade-desi.digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/datasets/desi/charts/desi-indicators?indicator=desi_4a1&breakdown=ind_total&period=desi_2023 & country=AT, BE, BG, HR, CY, CZ, DK, EE, EU, FI, FR, DE, EL, HU, IE, IT, LV, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SK, SI, ES, SE&unit=pc_ind_ilt12
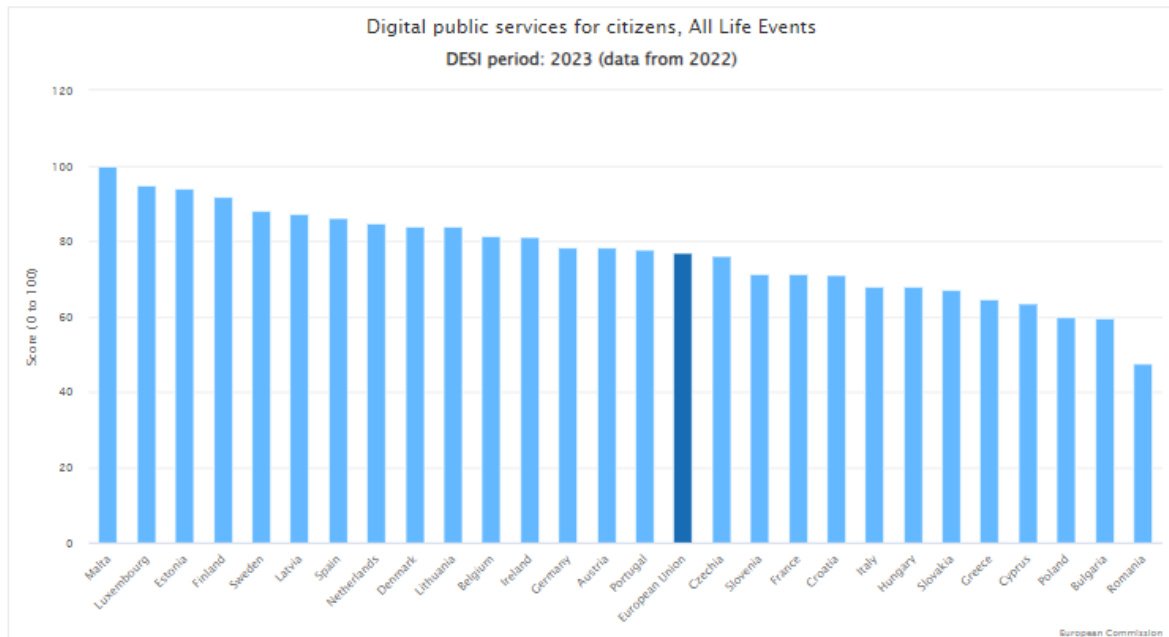
---

[1] PNRR.

Figure: 9. DESI 2023 for Digitalization of public services/ Digital public services for citizens
Source: https://digital-decade-desi.digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/datasets/desi/charts/desi-indicators?indicator=desi_4a2&breakdown=all_egov_le&period=desi_2023&country=AT, BE, BG, HR, CY, CZ, DK, EE, EU, FI, FR, DE, EL, HU, IE, IT, LV, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SK, SI, ES, SE&unit=egov_score
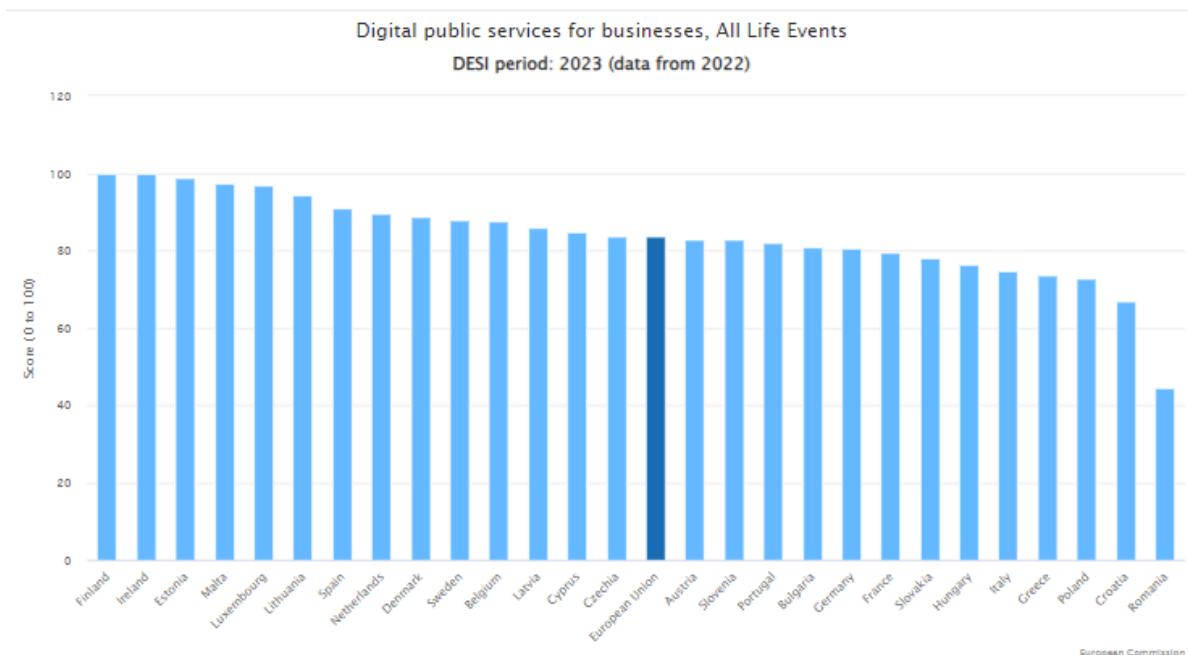

Figure 10. DESI 2023 for Digitalization of public services/ Digital public services for business
Source: https://digital-decade-desi.digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/datasets/desi/charts/desi-indicators?indicator=desi_4a3&breakdown=all_egov_le&period=desi_2023&country=AT, BE, BG, HR, CY, CZ, DK, EE, EU, FI, FR, DE, EL, HU, IE, IT, LV, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SK, SI, ES, SE&unit=egov_score

6. Acknowledgments

References

https://digital-decade-desi.digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/datasets/desi/charts/desi-indicators?indicator=desi_4a1&breakdown=ind_total&period=desi_2023 & country=AT, BE, BG, HR, CY, CZ, DK, EE, EU, FI, FR, DE, EL, HU, IE, IT, LV, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SK, SI, ES, SE&unit=pc_ind_ilt12.

https://digital-decade-desi.digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/datasets/desi/charts/desi-indicators?indicator=desi_4a3&breakdown=all_egov_le&period=desi_2023&country=AT, BE, BG, HR, CY, CZ, DK, EE, EU, FI, FR, DE, EL, HU, IE, IT, LV, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SK, SI, ES, SE&unit=egov_score.

https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/ro/policies/europes-digital-decade.

https://financialintelligence.ro/cercetarea-inovarea-si-digitalizarea-in-programul-deguvernare-vezi-viziunea-pe-termen-mediu-privind-transformarea-digitala-a-romaniai/.

https://gov.ro/ro/print?modul=sedinte&link=strategia-nationala-privind-agenda-digitala-pentru-romania-2020.