

WHO IS THE PREFECT? A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE PROFESSIONALIZATION AND POLITICIZATION OF THE PREFECT IN ROMANIA AND POLAND IN 2021

Constantin Marius PROFIROIU
Ionuț Ciprian NEGOIȚĂ

Constantin Marius PROFIROIU

Professor, Ph.D., Faculty of Administration
and Public Management,
Bucharest University of Economic Studies,
Bucharest, Romania
Tel.: 0040-21-319.1900
E-mail: mprofiroiu@ase.ro

Ionuț Ciprian NEGOIȚĂ

Post-doctoral fellow, Research Institute
of the University of Bucharest,
University of Bucharest, Bucharest, Romania
Tel.: 0040-21-305.9730
E-mail: ciprian.negoita@icub.unibuc.ro

Abstract

This present research brings into focus the figure of the prefect and *wojewód* seen at the crossroads between career public servants representing the interests of the Government and political agents, appointed and dismissed at the whim of the Prime Minister. This paper approaches the issue of the holder of the prefect's office in Romania and Poland employing a prosopographic analysis and applies a Multiple Linear Regression (MLR) on select items in order to identify the general trend and particularities of their profiles. This institution was structured and articulated at the confluence of some administrative and political actions and integrated in the national institutional framework as a key actor, which continues to connect the institutional capacity of the state and the political capacity of the Government. Moving beyond the legal framework and institutional design of each country, we look at the profile – involving educational, professional and political affiliation – of the people actually appointed to this position in order to ascertain the weight of each of these factors when called to serve in office.

Keywords: prefect, political agent, prosopographic method, professionalization, multiple linear regression.

1. Introduction

The prefectural figure has, so far, failed to receive the attention it deserves in the scientific literature (Pollit and Bouckaert, 2011). However, there are general national and cross-national comparative studies related to the prefect (Eymeri-Douzans and Tanguy, 2021), which emphasize the stages of reform in the public administration (Drew, 2020), its specific role, competences and position within the institutional and legal design (Postelnicu, 2009; Berceanu, 2019). Some scholarly endeavors analyze the prefectural figure in reference to the temporality of governance (Majone, 1996; Pierson, 2004), while others observe the social dimension of the prefect, its role and origins (Bourdieu, 1989; Chagnollaud, 1991; Roger, 2002; Proftiroiu and Titirișcă, 2016). Apart from that, several studies argue that the prefect constitutes the formal discontinuity/continuity between the central and local government, corresponding with the effective territorial representation and its relation with the political centre (Meny, 1987, pp. 5–10; Ebel, 1999; Thuillier, 1999; Machelon, 2002). The prefect, therefore, is the institution which establishes a link between central and local government and administration (Ridley, 1973; Tobin, 1997; Treisman, 2007; Bouchard, 2015), drafting a set of center-periphery relations whose roles are constantly reconfigured. It holds together the political regime, which provides a set of formal and informal rules and procedures for the distribution of legitimate power among political actors (Ionașcu, 2012; Ionescu, 2012), and the state, offering a more permanent structure of domination based on a coercive territorial administrative apparatus (Fishman, 1990).

While these studies have analyzed the mechanisms of appointment and dismissal of the prefect by the Prime Minister, only tangentially have they reported on its socio-professional figure. They have highlighted the eligibility criteria for appointment, which are explicitly mentioned in the legal framework, without taking into account expertise and relevant experience as well as personal and political relations, which we consider relevant in the prefect's appointment to office and their chances of keeping said office.

In other words, all of these studies have focused only on the institutional capacity of the prefect, ignoring the person who exercises the mandate. Thus, a question still remains unasked: who is actually the person exercising the mandate of prefect?

There are no scientific studies available which have endeavored to determine the socio-professional profile of the prefect. That is why designing such a specific analysis will reveal the following aspects: type of education and degree achieved by the prefect prior to their appointment, the career path and its relevance in justifying the prefect's expertise in public administration, the importance of the activity and political affiliation before and after recruitment to the Prefects Corps, the grounds for recruitment that go beyond the minimum criteria that define the eligibility to exercise the position of prefect and, finally, the relationship between the professionalization and politicization of the prefect.

The above criteria are relevant in expanding the image of the holder of the prefect's office beyond the legislative prerequisites they need to check, which disregard other elements relevant to the way in which the prefect acquires and exercises legitimacy at the local level. The 'past' and the 'present' in the prefect's biography illustrate the main trends

(of recruitment to office) through which the stages of institutional reform were adapted and personalized (Dragoman, 2011), as a result of personal and political relations between the Prime Minister and the people appointed and revoked from the position of prefect. The relationship between the professionalization and politicization of the prefect gives us a complete overview of the stages of reform and modernization of the public administration. The Prefecture's leadership has become, *de facto*, an indicator of the efficiency and legitimacy of the institution at local level. Administrative reforms have occasionally been molded by the educational, professional and political profile of the prefect, while at other times they have molded the latter.

Taking into consideration all of these dimensions, this article seeks to analyze who actually is the person mandated to the role of prefect in present times in Romania and Poland. There are two main reasons for this endeavor: first of all, it creates a specific pattern regarding the dynamics of professionalization of prefects, helping us anticipate the future profile/typology of future office holders while the political configuration is maintained, improving, thus, the transparency of this institution for citizens and civil society in general. Second of all, it substantially contributes to the development of subsequent research in this particular field, which today is limited either to general administrative career path (Eymeri-Douzans, 2001; Eymeri-Douzans and Tanguy, 2021), to routines, procedures and recruitment, which are useful in identifying possible traces of the autonomization and construction of the career (Merton, 1973; Abbott, 1988) or downright absent.

2. Research design

The main hypothesis captures the politicization of the prefect as a result of the right of the Prime Minister to discretionarily appoint prefects, within the rather broad confines of the law and the political negotiations regarding the political configuration of the country. The disproportionately high importance of the nominee's political activity to the detriment of their educational or professional achievements almost guarantees that the appointment is based on the nominee's relation to the Prime Minister and the political formation which negotiates and backs their appointment to office. The appointment of prefects to office is thus carried out on the basis of affiliation and political activity, as well as that of loyalty, friendly relations with and belonging to the political entourage of the Prime Minister. Political activity thus constitutes the independent variable which defines the profile of the prefect in Romania and Poland in 2021, which is why the prefect's political career is no longer an emanation of the public administration, becoming *de facto* a political mission.

The secondary hypothesis highlights different stages of the depersonalization and deprofessionalization of the prefect, depending on the internal context of reform specific to each country. The prefect's educational and professional paths thus become dependent variables that complement and customize the prefect's profile in Romania and Poland. On the one hand, the failed experiences of administrative reform in Romania have significantly reduced the relevance of the educational and professional path, which is why the prefect's profile is articulated exclusively on the basis of political activity.

The frequent changes in the composition of the parliamentary majority and implicitly of the Government are reflected on the low level of stability in office of the prefect. An eloquent example of this practice in Romania is the recent reshuffling of a large number of prefects following a change in the political configuration of the ruling majority, with the ousting of all prefects who were backed by the party which left the coalition (September 9, 2021). On the other hand, in Poland, the linear trajectory of public administration reform, together with a high level of political stability, stresses the importance of professionalizing the leadership of the Prefect's institution.

In terms of case-selection and analysis, Romania and Poland are (mostly) similar (Posner, 2004) in many regards when discussing the prefecture and its role. According to categories advanced by Peters (2008), in both countries the prefect and the wojewód have comparable traditions (Sartori, 1970) in the state territorial administration. However, their role, functions and (political) representation have suffered some changes in the last three decades, since the fall of Communism. Nonetheless, in terms of prefectural figure, the nodal point of this study, until recently the profile of the prefect was constructed differently in the two countries.

On the one hand, in Romania in 1990, the prefect was integrated in the institutional framework of the state as an agent of the central government, appointed and dismissed by the executive. Law no. 5/1990 defined prefectures as 'local bodies of state administration with general competence'. The prefectures were thus established to manage 'problems regarding the economic and social development of administrative-territorial units'. Important changes were introduced through Law no. 340/2004, with the prefect being defined as 'the representative of the Government at the local level'. Appointed by the Government at the proposal of the Ministry of Interior and Administrative Reform, the prefect fulfilled the role of guarantor of the observance of the law and public order at the local level. As of January 1, 2006, the prefect was included in the category of senior civil servants, dismissible only in the event of an unfounded refusal of his mobility in office. Also, the prefect was not in relations of subordination to the local councils, mayoralities, county councils and their presidents. *De jure*, for the prefects in office on December 31, 2005, as well as for those who were to hold the position of prefect after January 1, 2006, passing the attestation examination on the post became a condition of eligibility for the exercise of their mandate. *De facto*, the practice of appointment by secondment (of a temporary nature) prevailed, in the event that the competition for attestation on the post was no longer organized at national level. For this reason, the duration of the prefect's mandate was not defined in the domestic legislation, the dismissal from office becoming a prerogative that the Prime Minister could use at any time, without motivating the changes made to the leadership of the Prefectures. According to the curriculum approved by the Minister of Administration and Interior, at least once every three years, the prefect had the obligation to perform professional training stages at the National Institute of Administration or at higher education institutions in the country or abroad. In order to be appointed as prefect, based on Law no. 340/2004, it was necessary to meet one of the following eligibility criteria: (1) graduation of training and improvement programs in public administration, organized by the

National Institute of Administration or other specialized institutions, in the country or abroad; (2) acquisition of the scientific title of Doctor of Legal or Administrative Sciences; (3) exercising at least a full parliamentary mandate. By way of exception, people who were to follow the professional training programs within a maximum of one year from the date of issuance of the decision on appointment to the position of prefect could be appointed.

In 2006, on the eve of European integration, according to the Government Decision no. 460/2006 the prefect was formally re-casted into an agent of state's governance, guaranteeing the continuity and stability of policies in support of the reshuffle of governmental majorities.

The instability was accentuated by the lack of overlap and correlation between the period of exercising the prefect's mandate and the duration of the government's mandate, highlighted also in the Substantiation Note of the Government Emergency Ordinance (GEO) no. 4 of January 27, 2021. In order to clarify the role of the prefect as a local representative of a public authority that has a political structure, the Government opted through GEO no. 4/2021 to confer on the prefect the position of public dignity, in which case he has the right to be a member of a political party. In order to ensure stability at institutional level the position of secretary general of the prefect's institution was included in the category of high civil servants. This regulation was considered by the executive to be 'an additional guarantee regarding the impartial performance of the duties of the prefect'.

In other words, examining this brief evolution, we can agree that the prefect was a product of the administrative system and civil service. The career path was organized according to professional destiny and marked by different professional sequences and markets (Eymery-Douzans and Tanguy 2021, pp. 150–151). Through GEO no. 4/2021 the profile of the prefect as well as its career path was once again redesigned into a position of public dignity. Therefore, the prefect has the right to be a member of a political party, highlighting the tendency of the Romanian government to use state resources for partisan purposes and actions, creating a dependant relationship between governmental authorities and local political actors (Gallagher, 2005; Dragoș and Neamțu 2007; Gherghina, 2014). Briefly, this shifted the logic of the prefectural figure from career to mission.

On the other hand, the *wojewód* in Poland was regulated by the new Constitution of 1997 and Powiat Self-Government Act of June 5, 1998. In these legal changes the institution acquired the vocation to supervise the activity of decentralized public services and to administrate the government policies in the territory. The current legal framework reflects the result of three stages of public administration reform, in which the emphasis was on the desire to decentralize and democratize public authorities at the local level (Swianiewicz, 2003). After being nominated by the Prime Minister, the *wojewód* issue orders to control the legality, economy and reliability/efficiency of the performance of tasks in the field of government administration by local public administration bodies. Following the decentralization process, the voivode simultaneously exercises a double role between which there are no subordinate relations: (1) governor of the local authorities, being the central figure in the institutional architecture at the level of the Voivode; (2) representative of the government in the territory (Swianiewicz, 2003).

The prefect played an instrumental role in the process of setting and consolidating the territorial capacity of the central government (Sora, 2007, 2011; Györke, 2010). It was a key player in the patronage policies of party building within a state whose administrative apparatus had undergone successive institutional rationalizations (Hitchins, 2014; Sora, 2011; Shefter, 1994; Skowronek, 1982; Barbu and Preda, 2006).

In both countries, the prefect clearly illustrates center-periphery relations. The legacy of communist centralization, which carried on in post-communism (Gallagher, 2005; Mungiu-Pippidi and Meurs, 2010; Preda and Soare, 2008), together with shallow or incomplete institutional reforms (Dragoman, 2011) and the administrative fragmentation of the territory (Dragoș and Neamțu, 2007), prevented the coalescence of a strong local opposition to the center. Subsequently, the social, political and institutional dynamics of post communism favored the emergence of powerful characters of local politics, who were able to control the territorial distribution of resources and obtain political support for the center (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2003; Mungiu-Pippidi and Meurs, 2010).

The originality and novelty of this research stems from the use of the prosopographical method (Verboven, Carlier and Dumolyn, 2007; Ankoud, 2020; Lundin, Ellersgaard and Larsen, 2020) analyzing the biographies of the prefects followed by Multiple Linear Regression (MLR) identifying the general trend and the specific particularities of the prefect's profile in Romania and Poland, which, in the end, will give us a specific representation on the main criteria for recruitment as prefect in the two countries.

Thus, drawing the socio-professional profile of the prefect in Romania and Poland represents a fertile ground for identifying the strategies of professionalization (training and professional experience), for evaluating the degree of professional autonomy or dependency of the prefect and finally evaluating the impact of the transformation of the prefect from a political agent into a public servant and back again into a political agent.

We follow the path laid out by Sartori (1987) in seeing the institution of prefect in the center of all the processes that provide the operational and operative framework for any democratic regime. This institution was built upon the distinctions between state and regime, state and society, central and local government. Furthermore, it plays a central role at the intersection of democracy, represented by political society, civil society, rule of law, state apparatus, economic order (Linz and Stepan, 1996) and power, whether it be constituent, regulatory, distributive or redistributive (Lowi, 2009). It was designed following specific rules, which characterize its role, powers, and instruments in the institutional, territorial and functional framework of governance (Profiroiu and Titirișcă, 2016; Offe, 1996). As a profession or *craft*, the prefect is the product of a coherent and stable set of values, representations, rules of conduct, and know-how that are essential for this institution to achieve its goals (Abbott, 1988; Eymeri-Douzans, 2001, 2021). Lastly, the prefect is the end result of a variety of practices and customs rooted in the political, social and cultural diversity of counties or regions. These practices and customs are themselves formed through the exercise of the profession by actual holders (Briquet, 1994; Lagroye, 1994).

3. Methodology

In order to identify the main trends regarding the articulation of the prefect's profile in Romania and Poland, we will use the prosopographic method (Verboven, Carlier and Dumolyn, 2007; Ankoud, 2020; Lundin, Ellersgaard and Larsen, 2020). We chose this method to systematize the relevant characteristics in the biography of the holders of the prefect's post. The aim was to identify the existence of recruitment criteria that are mentioned in the legislation applicable to the Prefect's institution. Simultaneously, we refer to the practice of political decision-makers who have the prerogative of appointing a person as prefect.

Nonetheless, this study presents some methodological limitations. On the one hand, the size of the research sample is reduced and unequal between the two countries. For Poland, the research sample is composed of 16 prefects out of 16 voivodeships, while in Romania we analyzed 36 prefects out of 42 administrative-territorial units, following the vacancy of 6 office positions due to the governmental crisis. On the other hand, the low level of transparency has made completing the database difficult since some political information in the biography of prefects remained inaccessible. Thus, the prosopographic analysis on the political ascension of prefects was based on the quantitative data that we have processed.

The articulation of the prefect's profile in Romania and Poland, by making an institutional sociology, places our approach in the continuation of the research of Weber (1978), Pareto (1935) and Bourdieu (1986). Appointment to the position of prefect in the absence of a competition for attestation on the post emphasizes the importance of previous professional and political experience. In this situation, we can identify the criteria that prevail in the option of the right holder to make changes to the management of the prefect's institution. The recurrence of those criteria in relation to a homogeneous sample reveals the existence of a structured social network in relation to the factors articulating the decision-making process. Thus, the appointment to a certain position is carried out according to certain pre-defined patterns, which we can identify with the help of quantitative and qualitative analysis. We aim to identify the existence of a network of political influence that is exercised between the Prime Minister and the prefect, which influences the appointment and revocation of the leadership of the Prefect's institution.

As this is a pilot study, where we also test the validity of this particular avenue of research, we have decided to apply this method on the biography of the current office holders in Romania and Poland. It can therefore serve as a starting point for researchers who aim at expanding its scope by increasing its research sample size, both with regards to terms in office and countries under analysis. The two research samples are composed of 42 prefects from Romania and 16 prefects from Poland. We refer especially to the educational (item noted for the MLR analysis as x_1), professional (x_2), and political dimension (y), in order to evaluate and compare the level of professionalization and politicization of the management of the prefect's figure in the two samples. The study on a specific category of public administration determines a delimitation of the sample in relation to the territorial

arrangement of prefects, one representative of the Government in each of the 41 counties and the municipality of Bucharest in the case of Romania, respectively one responsible for supervising the governance at local level in the 16 regions of Poland.

In order to produce the biographical sheets of each prefect in office in Romania and Poland, we use the following items to create a systematic and unitary database: ‘education’, ‘professional experience’, and ‘political affiliation’. We chose these items considering the complexity and relevance of the indicators assigned for each item, evaluated on a scale from 1 to 5 in relation to the biography of each prefect.

The indicators used for the items related to the educational and professional path are related to the minimum conditions for recruitment to the position of prefect, explicitly mentioned in the domestic legislation of Romania and Poland. By evaluating the biography of the office holders in relation to these indicators, we capture the level of professionalization of the prefect in the two countries. In order to obtain a comprehensive overview, we have completed the analysis grid with indicators specific to political affiliation, with the help of which we deconstructed the informal criteria used by the right holders in recruiting the prefects in office (Thurstone, 1931; Likert, 1932; Runkel, 1962; Chelcea, 2007) drafting a continuous interval scale with 5 levels (value 1 – minimum score, value 5 – maximum score).

Table 1: The prosopographic framework for designing the prefect’s profile

Item	Indicator	Evaluation from 1 to 5
Education	Level of completed education (until the moment of exercising the position of prefect)	5 points for obtaining the PhD title; 4 points for unfinished doctoral studies; 3 points for higher education (Master); 2 points for higher education (Bachelor’s Degree); 1 point for high school studies;
	Field of graduated studies (until the moment of exercising the office of prefect)	5 points for studies in public administration, law, economics, political science, management; 4 points for studies in sociology, history, philosophy; 3 points for studying in other humanities disciplines; 2 points for studying in exact sciences; 1 point for studies in other fields.
	Holding the scientific title of Doctor of Legal or Administrative Sciences (until the moment of exercising the prefect’s office)	5 points for holding the scientific title of Doctor of Legal or Administrative Sciences abroad, at prestigious universities; 4 points for holding the scientific title of Doctor of Administrative Sciences in the country, at prestigious universities; 3 points for holding the scientific title of Doctor of Legal Sciences, in the country, at prestigious universities; 2 points for holding the scientific title of Doctor of Administrative Sciences, in the country, at other universities; 1 point for holding the scientific title of Doctor of Legal Sciences, in the country, at other universities.

Item	Indicator	Evaluation from 1 to 5
Professional experience	Professional career in public office (until the moment of exercising the position of prefect)	5 points for exercising the position of dignitary (in the Government, Parliament); 4 points for exercising the function of subprefect; 3 points for public functions exercised in the public administration at central level; 2 points for public functions exercised in the public administration at county/regional level; 1 point for public functions exercised in the public administration at local level.
	Professional career in public administration (until the moment of exercising the position of prefect)	5 points for managerial positions, for a period longer than 10 years; 4 points for management positions, for a period longer than 5 years; 3 points for management positions, for a period of more than one year; 2 points for execution positions, for a period longer than 5 years; 1 point for execution positions, for a period of more than one year.
	Professional career in the Prefect's institution (before and during the exercise of the prefect's office)	5 points for exercising the position of prefect, by competition, for a period longer than 5 years; 4 points for exercising the position of prefect, by appointment, for a period longer than 5 years; 3 points for exercising the position of prefect, by competition, for a single mandate; 2 points for exercising the position of prefect, by appointment, for a single mandate; 1 point for exercising the function of subprefect.
	Professional path in the private sector (until the moment of exercising the position of prefect)	5 points for management positions in important companies at national level; 4 points for execution positions in important companies at national level; 3 points for management positions in important companies at county/regional level; 2 points for execution positions in important companies at county/regional level; 1 point for management positions at local level.
	The office held before appointment to the position of prefect	5 points for important positions in public administration at central level; 4 points for positions in public administration at central level; 3 points for positions in public administration at county/regional level; 2 points for positions in public administration at local level; 1 point for other functions performed.
	Length of service (until the moment of exercising the position of prefect)	5 points for over 20 years of service; 4 points for more than 15 years of service; 3 points for more than 10 years of service; 2 points for more than 5 years of service; 1 point for up to 5 years' length of service.

Item	Indicator	Evaluation from 1 to 5
Professional experience	Training and improvement programs in public administration (until the moment of exercising the prefect's office)	5 points for more than 2 training programs graduated abroad at prestigious institutions; 4 points for 2 training programs graduated at prestigious institutions, one in the country and one abroad; 3 points for more than 2 graduated training programs in the country at prestigious institutions; 2 points for a single training program completed abroad; 1 point for a single training program completed in the country.
	Terms served in Parliament (until the prefect's office is exercised)	5 points for more than four full parliamentary terms; 4 points for four full parliamentary terms; 3 points for three full parliamentary terms; 2 points for two full parliamentary terms; 1 point for a full parliamentary term.
Political affiliation	The political party of which they were a member before being appointed as prefect	5 points for political affiliation in the same political formation as the one to which the Prime Minister who appointed them as prefect belongs; 4 points for political affiliation in a political party that supports, within an alliance, the Prime Minister who appointed them as prefect; 3 points for political affiliation in a parliamentary political party, which did not support the Prime Minister who appointed them as prefect; 2 points for political affiliation in a political formation existing at local, county or regional level; 1 point for political non-affiliation.
	Number of parties in which they were a member (before and during the exercise of the prefect's office)	5 points for affiliation in one party; 4 points for affiliation in two parties; 3 points for affiliation in three parties; 2 points for affiliation in more than three parties; 1 point for political non-affiliation.
	Length of party membership before their appointment	5 points for a period longer than 20 years; 4 points for a period longer than 10 years; 3 points for a period longer than four years; 2 points for a period longer than one year; 1 point for political non-affiliation.
	Length of party membership after their appointment	5 points for a period longer than 10 years; 4 points for a period longer than four years; 3 points for a period longer than two years; 2 points for a period longer than one year; 1 point for political non-affiliation.

Source: Authors

We use Multiple Linear Regression (MLR) to identify the general trend and the specific particularities of each analyzed group, in relation to two homogeneous samples (Roback and Legler, 2021) that include 36 prefects out of 42 (at the time of the analysis 6 prefectural offices had no representative) from Romania and 16/16 prefects from Poland. The application of this statistical tool indicates, with the help of prosopographic analysis, how

the prefect's profile is articulated in the two states. In order to identify the main trends in shaping the prefect's profile in Romania and Poland, within the MLR we use the following variables:

- Educational path – dependent variable that shows us the level and type of studies completed before the moment of appointment to the position of prefect, denoted by x_1 ;
- Professional path – dependent variable that illustrates the professional experience of the prefect, before and after the moment of appointment, denoted by x_2 ;
- Political activity – independent variable with the help of which we identify the fidelity and political affiliation of the prefect, before and after the moment of appointment to office, denoted by y .

The general trend identified at the level of each research sample gives us an overview and allows us to comparatively analyze the recruitment mechanisms of the prefect. This approach is relevant, at the same time, in testing the relationship between the three variables (education, career path and political affiliation), by identifying the importance of each of them in two different political contexts: stability in Poland and governmental crisis in Romania, respectively. For each item and indicator, we use the average values of the evaluation scale.

Table 2: The average value of the three items for Romania

Counties	Education	Professional experience	Political affiliation	Counties	Education	Professional experience	Political affiliation
Alba	2.67	2.63	3.75	Giurgiu	2.67	2.50	3.50
Arad	2.67	1.50	3.50	Gorj	1.33	2.88	3.50
Argeş	2.33	1.88	4.25	Harghita	2.33	1.00	2.25
Bacău	1.33	3.75	4.00	Hunedoara	1.33	2.75	4.00
Bihor	1.00	1.25	4.00	Iaşi	2.33	1.75	3.75
Bistriţa-Năsăud	2.67	2.75	4.00	Ilfov	2.33	2.63	4.00
Botoşani	2.67	3.25	3.75	Mehedinţi	2.67	2.63	3.50
Brăila	2.67	2.00	1.00	Mureş	2.67	2.75	3.75
Braşov	2.67	2.25	1.00	Neamţ	2.67	2.38	4.00
Buzău	2.67	1.88	3.75	Olt	1.33	2.75	3.50
Călăraşi	1.33	2.13	3.75	Prahova	2.67	2.88	1.00
Caraş-Severin	2.67	2.25	4.00	Sălaj	2.33	2.50	3.75
Cluj	2.67	1.38	3.50	Satu Mare	2.67	2.25	3.25
Constanţa	2.67	2.13	3.50	Sibiu	2.67	3.00	4.25
Covasna	2.33	2.00	4.00	Suceava	2.67	2.75	3.00
Dâmboviţa	2.33	2.63	3.75	Teleorman	2.67	2.13	3.50
Dolj	2.33	2.63	3.75	Vrancea	2.33	2.38	3.50
Galaţi	2.33	2.00	4.25	Vâlcea	2.67	2.38	4.00

Source: Authors

Table 3: The average value of the 3 items for Poland

Voivodeships	Education	Professional experience	Political affiliation
Poznań	2.33	2.5	4
Łódzkie	4.33	1.625	4
Dolnośląskie	1.33	2.75	3.75
Lubuskie	2.33	2.875	4.25
Opolskie	2.67	3	4.25
Małopolskie	2.67	1.75	4.25
Podkarpackie	4.33	2.5	4.75
Śląskie	2.33	2.5	4.75
Lubelskie	2.67	2.75	4.5
Podlasie	2.33	3	4.5
Kujawsko-Pomorskie	2.67	2.75	4.5
Zachodniopomorskie	2.33	2.25	4
Warmińsko-Mazurskie	2.67	2.375	4.5
Świętokrzyskie	2.33	2.25	4.25
Pomorskie	2.67	2.5	4
Mazowieckie	2.67	2.625	3.25

Source: Authors

The quantitative analysis thus completes the prosopographic analysis, giving us, at the macro level, a representation of the main criteria for recruitment as prefect in the two countries. To test the level and type of correlation between variables, we calculate the Pearson coefficient for each of the two samples. This approach is useful in evaluating, in a comparative horizon, the level of personalization and politicization of the leadership of the prefect's institution in Romania and Poland, with regard to the existing personal relations between the prefect and the Prime Minister as well as those concerning the political party of which the former is a member before and after appointment.

4. Empirical results

The existence of a positive correlation, directly proportional, but weak, whose Pearson coefficient (calculated for the MLR for the education, professional experience, political affiliation variables) is situated in the statistical range $[0.2, 0, 4]$, highlights, in the case of Romania and Poland, the tendency to articulate the prefect's profile especially in relation to a single variable, namely, the one represented by the political activity. The loyalty shown to the Prime Minister and the ruling political party is the main criteria that conditions the appointment to the position of prefect when accounting for the head of the Executive's discretionary powers of appointing and revoking prefects in office. On the one hand, the relationship between the Prime Minister and the prefects in office determines

the personalization of the institution, thus the prefect becoming the representative of the Prime Minister in the territory. On the other hand, the political relationship between the prefect and the political formations that support the Government in office leads to the politicization of the leadership of the prefect's institution, which exercises the role of political representative of the Government at county and regional level.

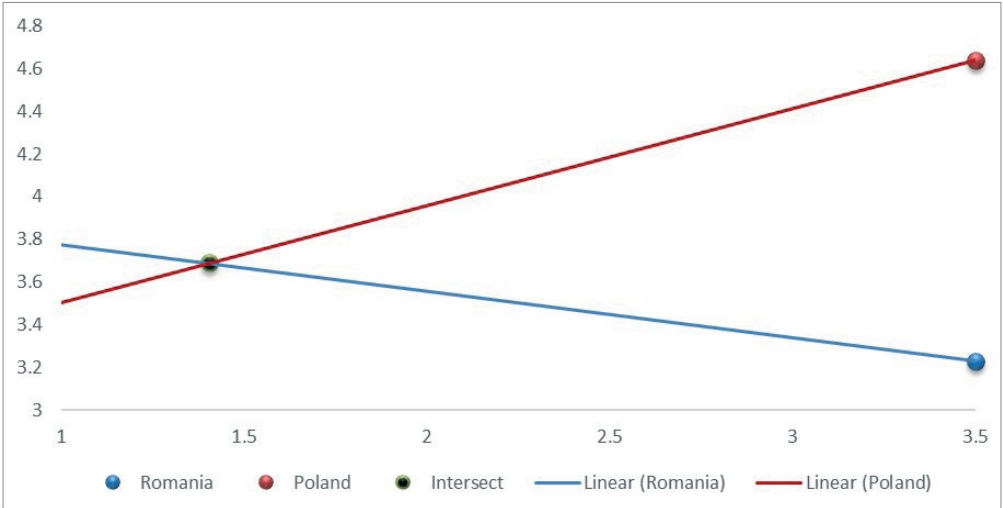


Figure 1: General trend analysis (MLR) in Romania and Poland

Source: Authors

The two trends identified in Romania and Poland hypothetically intersect in a single point, statistically described by the values 1.4029 (which is the average value for the dependent variables x_i and x_j) and 3.6909 respectively (the value for the independent variable y). In other words, if the average values for each item reflect a moderate weight for the political activity, and a low weight for the educational and professional path, the person corresponding to this profile has the vocation of appointment to the position of prefect in Romania or Poland. However, we mention that this situation is rather an exceptional one, which we have not identified in relation to the 52 biographies analyzed.

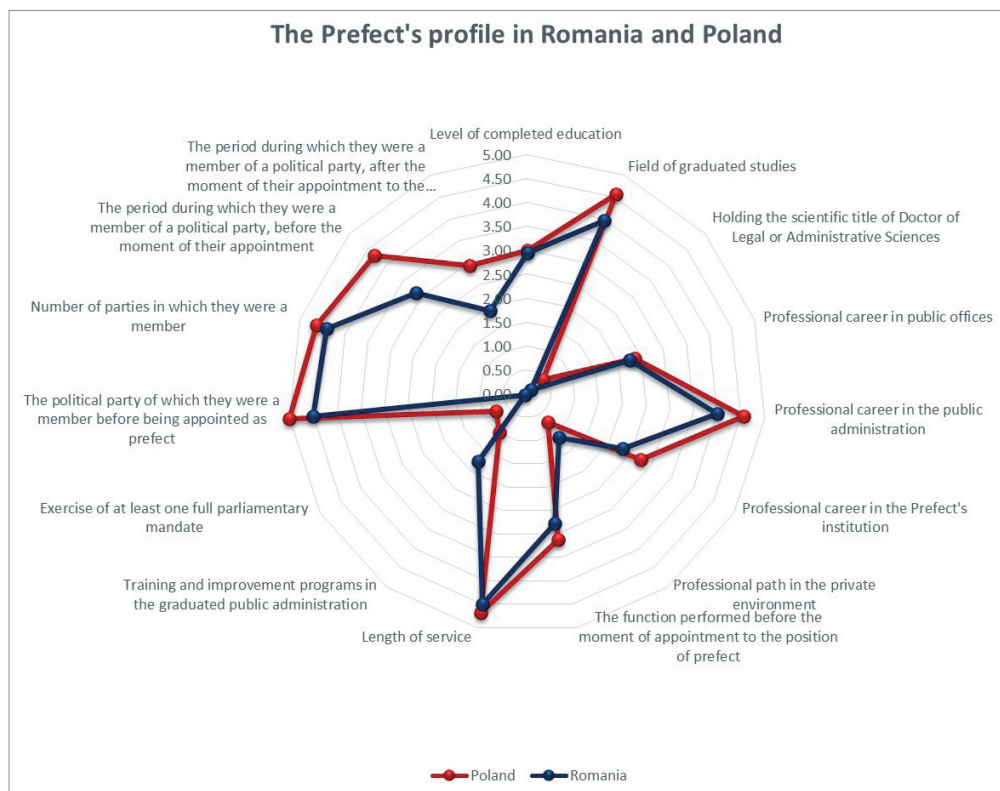


Figure 2: The general framework of the prefect's profile in Romania and Poland

Source: Authors

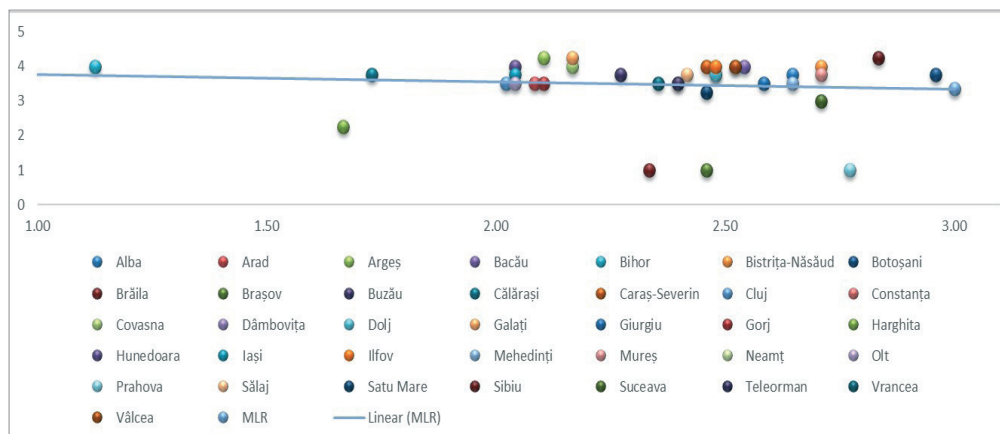


Figure 3: The prefect's profile in Romania

Source: Authors

ANOVA					
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>
Regression	2	0.254333	0.127166	0.834912	0.4559
Residual	13	1.980042	0.152311		
Total	15	2.234375			

$$y = 3.056221 + x_1 * 0.18829 + x_2 * 0.26417$$

	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>Lower 95%</i>	<i>Upper 95%</i>	<i>Lower 95.0%</i>	<i>Upper 95.0%</i>
Intercept	3.056221	0.977053	3.128	0.008004	0.945427	5.167015	0.945427	5.167015
Education	0.18829	0.154131	1.221629	0.243539	-0.14469	0.521269	-0.14469	0.521269
Professional experience	0.264169	0.286677	0.921485	0.373582	-0.35516	0.883497	-0.35516	0.883497

Referring to the main trend identified with the help of the prosopographic analysis in Romania and Poland, we find that the profile of prefect tends to be that of someone who has relevant political activity and checks the following elements: Belonging to a political formation on average for more than 10 years in Poland and 4 years in Romania; They were generally members of a single political party, both before and after appointment; Exercising leadership positions at the county or regional level within that party; Being a member of the Prime Minister's party or, in the case of Romania, was part of a party based on ethnic representation, in which case they enjoyed stability at the local level; Loyalty to the party has continued, *de facto*, even after the appointment, with little regard to laws concerning the incompatibilities of prefects with regard to political partisanship.

In comparison, this trend is much more pronounced in Poland, with the average values recorded being higher due to the different internal context, characterized in particular by a greater stability of the ruling Law and Justice Party (PiS). In the case of Romania, the political crisis generated by the breaking of the governing coalition and the dismissal of the government, led to the vacancy of the post of prefect in six counties (Ialomita, Maramureş, Timiş, Tulcea, Vaslui) and in Bucharest. Also, a particular case in Romania was the appointment of three independents, who did not become party members following their appointment. Nonetheless, the average recorded values are also influenced by the different sample size in the two countries: 16/16 prefects in Poland, respectively 36/42 prefects in Romania.

Table 4: The prefect's profile with regard to political affiliation

Item	Indicator	Poland	Romania
Political affiliation	The political party of which they were a member before being appointed as prefect	5.00	4.50
	Number of parties in which they were a member (before and during the exercise of the prefect's office)	4.63	4.42
	Length of party membership before their appointment	4.31	3.14
	Length of party membership after the appointment	2.94	1.89
Average Political affiliation		4.22	3.49

Source: Authors

While the political dimension is an important component in the articulation of the prefect's profile in both countries, the share of the average values calculated for the educational and professional path is at a much lower level, with significant differences being recorded between Polish and Romanian prefects. The trends identified in relation to the articulation of the prefect's profile in the two samples highlight, in fact, the different relations between the three variables analyzed: in Poland, the low differences calculated for political affiliation place the other two variables in a direct, inversely proportional relationship. In other words, a lower score calculated for the educational path is generally supplemented by a higher score calculated for the career path, with the caveat that at the level of each variable there are no significant differences in relation to the central trend. Similarly, in the case of Romania, we generally identify direct, inversely proportional relationships between political affiliation and one of the other two variables. As a rule, when we encounter larger variations between variables, educational and professional deficiencies are the ones skewing the data to the advantage and stability of political affiliation. Overall, there is a much higher level of homogeneity of the prefect's profile in Poland, for which much smaller differences are recorded at the level of each variable, which is also reflected in the higher calculated value of the Pearson coefficient calculated for the multiple linear regression (0.337383 in the case of Poland, compared to 0.246872 calculated for Romania).

The most important discrepancies we identify when we refer to the educational path, whose coefficient presents a positive value in the case of Poland, and a negative value in the case of Romania respectively. This difference is mainly determined by the level and field of education completed, relative to the sample size. Except for the different share of prefects who have a PhD title, in both countries the main trend is represented by the graduation of master's studies, especially in public administration, law, economics, political science, management. In articulating the prefect's profile in Romania, lower values are determined by a greater variation of the values associated with the indicators specific to the educational path, which is why we identify a lower level of homogeneity of the sample. We thus note that, in Poland, the educational path carries moderate weight in defining the prefect's profile, a different tendency from the one observed in the case of Romanian prefects.

Table 5: The prefect's profile in reference to the educational profile

Item	Indicator	Poland	Romania
Education	Level of completed education (until the moment of exercising the position of prefect)	3.00	2.94
	Field of graduated studies (until the moment of exercising the office of prefect)	4.56	3.97
	Holding the scientific title of Doctor of Legal or Administrative Sciences (until the moment of exercising the prefect's office)	0.44	0.11
Average_Education		2.67	2.34

Source: Authors

With a moderate and positive share in both countries, the professional path registers, on average, low differences between Romania and Poland. The differences between the profiles of the prefects in the two states are determined by the existence of two diametrically opposed tendencies. Thus, in Poland, we find a greater correlation with a professional career in public administration (accounting for the seniority of the previously held office), and the acquisition of a parliamentary mandate before the moment of appointment. This describes a transition from the county to the central level, which is later reversed as a result of the prevailing tendency to give up the parliamentary mandate to exercise the position of prefect. In Poland, out of the 16 prefects, 7 were elected as parliamentarians before the moment of appointment as prefect, of which 4 did not exercise the full parliamentary mandate, while 4 of the prefects served at least two full parliamentary mandates. In the case of Romania, only two prefects out of a total of 36 had previously exercised a single full parliamentary mandate. Another difference is represented by the higher share of the professional activity in the private environment, respectively of going through several professional development courses in the country, in the case of prefects in Romania. However, in the case of both countries, we note that the appointment of prefects was primarily determined by the influence they exercised at county and regional level, as reflected by holding management positions at this level for a significant period, usually more than 5 years. The professional influence at the county/regional level generally overlaps with the political activity carried out at this level as well.

Table 6: The prefect's profile in reference to the professional path

Item	Indicator	Poland	Romania
Professional experience	Professional career in public office (until the moment of exercising the position of prefect)	2.38	2.25
	Professional career in public administration (until the moment of exercising the position of prefect)	4.56	4.00
	Professional career in the Prefect's institution (before and during the exercise of the prefect's office)	2.75	2.31
	Professional path in the private sector (until the moment of exercising the position of prefect)	0.75	1.14
	Office held before the moment of appointment to the position of prefect	3.13	2.78
	Length of service (until the moment of exercising the position of prefect)	4.69	4.50
	Training and improvement programs in public administration (until the moment of exercising the prefect's office)	1.00	1.75
	Exercise of at least one full parliamentary mandate (until the prefect's office is exercised)	0.75	0.06
	Average_Professional experience	2.50	2.35

Source: Authors

5. Conclusions

This study identifies the main trends with regard to the profile of people holding the office of prefect in relation to attempts at reforming public administration. The abstract representation of the prefect, strongly anchored in national legislation, is completed, in practice, with the socio-professional and political profile of the office holder. The empirical research applied to Romania and Poland through prosopographic analysis indicates a high level of politicization of the prefect's office, coupled to a low level of professionalization.

Who is the prefect in Romania and Poland? The prefect is a political agent, which is why the appointment and dismissal from office occurs in relation to the political mission that they exercise as a representative of the Government at local level. Accounting for the Prime Minister's discretionary prerogative to appoint and dismiss prefects, the field of graduated studies, together with experience in public administration, are criteria with different weights in Romania and Poland, depending on the internal context represented by the steps of public administration. For this reason, the person holding the office of prefect has departed from the desideratum of representing an emanation of the public administration, becoming, rather, an emanation of the balance of forces exercised by the political power at the local and central level. Fidelity and belonging to a political party at the local or central level have turned the prefect into a representative/member of the political elite.

This approach thus gives us an overview of the prefect's profile in Romania and Poland in 2021. It complements previous studies (which had focused on the legal framework and illustrated the minimum criteria which ensured the eligibility of the appointment) by examining the criteria on the basis of which the prefect acquires, from the Prime Minister and the political party, the vocation of exercising the mandate. Also, the main trends identified with regard to the prefect's profile in Romania and Poland constitute a reference framework capable of explaining the subsequent typologies of prefects in relation to the dynamics and extent of the changes which occurred in the political context.

For researchers, this pilot study outlines a relevant database consisting of the evaluation of biographies of 52 prefects from Romania and Poland. Having successfully tested our hypothesis, the items and variables employed by this approach can later be expanded in both scope and extent to facilitate further research. Expanding the geographic or temporal dimensions may prove to be a fruitful endeavor. It also provides practitioners in the field and civil society with an impartial and transparent assessment of the educational, professional and political dimensions which define who actually is the prefect.

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