ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND MERIT-BASED LEADERSHIP SELECTION IN ROMANIAN STATE-OWNED ENTERPRISES: A DECISION-SUPPORT FRAMEWORK

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Abstract
This article presents a proof of concept for supporting leadership selection in Romanian state-owned enterprises with artificial intelligence while preserving lawful human responsibility. It combines literature review, legal analysis and institutional comparison with an artificial *ex ante* evaluation based on selection procedures from a district-heating operator and a mining company. Sixty-nine source criteria are organised into thirteen merit dimensions, with legal eligibility assessed separately. Sixteen deliberately constructed candidate profiles test sector fit, transferable experience and legal or evidential barriers; they do not represent the executive labour market. The framework produces documented eligibility outcomes, transparent scores and a pool of candidates meeting predefined robustness conditions, not an appointment decision. Sensitivity tests vary weights, thresholds, criterion mappings and individual ratings. The pools remain stable across the tested thresholds and mappings, but small rating changes can alter leading positions and pool membership. The contribution is an auditable process linking evidence, merit and human review within the applicable appointment rules. The study does not establish predictive validity, reduced patronage or better real-world appointments; these require subsequent evaluation using lawful candidate data.

Keywords
state-owned enterprises; corporate governance; artificial intelligence; merit-based selection; executive recruitment; algorithmic accountability; Romania

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