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COMPARATIVE APPROACH TO THE CONDITIONS FOR THE MANIFESTATION OF LOCAL AUTONOMY IN THE ROMANIAN AND ITALIAN CONTEXT

Abstract: This research addresses the subject of local autonomy - administrative and financial, through a comparative analysis of the determining premises that condition its exercise. Using the cities of Gura Humorului (Romania) and Bergamo (Italy) as practical benchmarks, the study identifies the structural and functional convergences/divergences between the two local communities, highlighting how the administrative configuration influences real autonomy. The central question of the approach, "Which model of local administration offers a more real autonomy?", guides the entire investigation beyond the formal legal framework, towards the functional reality of self-government.

The objectives pursued are: analysis of the configuration of local communities, assessment of the availability of human, material, and financial resources, analysis of electoral mechanisms for the establishment of local authorities, study of models of executive organization, recognition of the plenitude of competence for local authorities, and identification of the limits of central power control. The mixed methodology combines qualitative analysis of legal texts with quantitative analysis of administrative and financial indicators, the comparative method being used throughout the scientific path.

The research results confirm the hypotheses launched at the start, demonstrating that the stability of the specialized apparatus and a high self-financing index are direct predictors of real autonomy, that the collegial executive model of the Giunta type favors more technical management, and that forms of administrative supervision significantly condition local decision-making freedom in both systems.

The theoretical-practical implications lie in offering a model for analyzing administrative resilience in a European context, the study providing Romanian decision-makers with arguments for consolidating the autonomy of the administrative apparatus, using the Italian model as a benchmark for efficiency. The conclusions indicate that authentic local autonomy depends on the balance between legal competencies and the concrete resources (human and financial) necessary for their exercise, transforming the city hall from an executor of the center into a service provider capable of responding to the real needs of citizens.

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Key-words: *Comparative analysis, administrative autonomy, human resources in the city hall, self-financing capacity, executive authorities, legality control, administrative and financial subordination*

ABORDARE COMPARATIVĂ PRIVIND CONDIȚIILE DE MANIFESTARE A AUTONOMIEI LOCALE ÎN CONTEXT ROMÂNESC ȘI ITALIAN

Abstract: *Prezenta cercetare abordează subiectul autonomiei locale - administrativă și financiară, printr-o analiză comparativă a premiselor determinante care îi condiționează exercitarea. Utilizând ca repere practice orașele Gura Humorului (România) și Bergamo (Italia), studiul identifică convergențele/ divergențele structurale și funcționale dintre cele două comunități locale, evidențiind modul în care configurația administrativă influențează autonomia reală. Întrebarea centrală a demersului, „Care model de administrare locală oferă o autonomie mai reală?”, ghidează întreaga investigație dincolo de cadrul juridic formal, către realitatea funcțională a autoguvernării.*

Obiectivele urmărite vizează: analiza configurației colectivităților locale, evaluarea disponibilității resurselor umane, materiale și financiare, analiza mecanismelor electorale de constituire a autorităților locale, studierea modelelor de organizare executivă, recunoașterii plenitudinii de competență pentru autoritățile locale, identificarea limitelor controlului puterii centrale. Metodologia mixtă combină analiza calitativă a textelor juridice cu analiza cantitativă a indicatorilor administrativi și financiari, metoda comparativă fiind folosită pe întregul traseu științific.

Rezultatele cercetării confirmă ipotezele lansate la start, demonstrând că stabilitatea aparatului de specialitate și un indice ridicat de autofinanțare sunt predictorii direcți ai unei autonomii reale, că modelul executiv colegial tip Giunta favorizează o gestionare mai tehnică, iar formele de supraveghere administrativă condiționează semnificativ libertatea decizională locală în ambele sisteme.

Implicațiile teoretico-practice rezidă în oferirea unui model de analiză a rezilienței administrative în context european, studiul furnizând decidenților din România argumente pentru consolidarea autonomiei aparatului administrativ, utilizând modelul italian ca reper de eficiență. Concluziile indică faptul că autonomia locală autentică depinde de echilibrul dintre competențele legale și resursele concrete (umane și financiare) necesare exercitării acestora, transformând primăria dintr-un executant al centrului într-un furnizor de servicii capabil să răspundă nevoilor reale ale cetățenilor.

Cuvinte-cheie: *Analiză comparativă, autonomie administrativă, resurse umane din primărie, capacitate de autofinanțare, autorități executive, controlul de legalitate, subordonare administrativă și financiară*

1. INTRODUCTION

If we ask ourselves what is the purpose of comparative public administration studies, the answer given by M. S. Haque, Z. van der Wal and C. van den Berg is very clear. As this group of authors tells us, in the current context of globalization, there is a pressing need to expand comparative research in the field of public administration, in order to analyze the transnational variations that occur in the process of adopting new global models of governance¹. But if a brief comparative theoretical excursion could be said not to necessarily raise problems, a truly detailed research that would mirror at least two administrative systems requires a thorough intellectual effort and rigorous analysis. This is confirmed by K. Yang, from whom we learn that, although today we need more than ever

¹ Haque M.S., Wal Z., Berg C. Comparative Studies in Public Administration: Intellectual Challenges and Alternative Perspectives. In: Public Administration Review, 81(2), 2021, p. 344. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13349> (accessed March 1, 2026).

studies that compare administrative systems (due to all the crises we are going through), fewer and fewer researchers dare to do such detailed analyses. [...] It is essential to learn to look beyond our own country, to compare what we do with what others do and to have a real dialogue with foreign experts in order to find the best solutions.²

In the context of comparative public administration studies, a place is occupied by research that has as its central subject local autonomy. In their work, A. Ladner, N. Keuffer and H. Baldersheim measure local autonomy in 39 countries, arguing that it is a fundamental indicator of good governance in any country. The fact that many European countries are constantly trying to give more power and more responsibilities to municipalities shows how important decentralization is. However, it is quite difficult to measure and compare how “free” a municipality really is from the government. This happens because specialists have different opinions about what exactly autonomy means, and the rules that work in one country are often difficult to apply or compare with those in another country³.

In another research conducted in 57 countries in Europe and beyond, A. Bastianen and N. Keuffer show that local autonomy is significantly linked to the existence of an elected local administration, the quality of democracy, accountability, transparency, equal participation and openness. The same authors argue that local autonomy is like a space of freedom for local democracy, local administrations needing their own decision-making power to be able to respond to the needs of the community. Because in a community there are different needs, and local administration must be able to provide services exactly as the members of the community want and need. When local administrations manage to respond to these needs, they not only make the implementation of public policies more efficient, but also contribute fundamentally to strengthening the legitimacy of the entire system of governance.⁴

Although working with empirical data on local government in Poland, the paper by W. Aksztejn et al. provides a universal framework for analyzing relations between central and local governments in specific countries (Spain, Italy, Greece), thus facilitating comparative studies. The cited authors believe that when central power limits the autonomy of sub-state actors, this is a sign that democracy is in danger.⁵

Subject and object of the research. The subject of this scientific approach discusses the fundamental pillars of local democracy: administrative and financial autonomy, seen as premises of good governance. The object of the research is the comparative analysis of the conditions for the manifestation of autonomy related to the local administration models in Romania and Italy, using as practical benchmarks the case studies applied in the cities of Gura Humorului and Bergamo.

Current situation and motivation of the research. In a European context marked by

² Yang K. To Compare with Care: Lessons From a Journey in Comparative Public Administration. In: Public Administration and Development, 46(1), 2025, p. 3. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pad.70027> (accessed March 1, 2026).

³ Ladner A., Keuffer N., Baldersheim H. Measuring Local Autonomy in 39 Countries (1990–2014). In: Regional & Federal Studies, 26(3), 2016, p. 321. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13597566.2016.1214911> (accessed March 2, 2026).

⁴ Bastianen A., Keuffer N. Are the Normative Rationales of Local Autonomy related to Democratic Legitimacy Justified? Evidence from 57 Countries in Europe and Beyond (1990–2020). In: Local Government Studies, 51(5), 2025, p. 873. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03003930.2024.2378128> (accessed March 2, 2026).

⁵ Aksztejn W. et al. The Multiple Faces of Recentralization: A Typology of Central-Local Interactions. In: Journal of Urban Affairs, 46(7), 2024, p. 1329. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07352166.2022.2124916> (accessed March 2, 2026).

successive crises, the capacity of local communities to effectively self-manage has become a highly topical issue. The motivation for this study lies in the need to understand whether local autonomy is a practical reality or just a formal legal concept. The choice of Italy as a comparison point is justified by its advanced tradition in structural and fiscal decentralization, offering a model of good practices for the administrative consolidation process in Romania.

Purpose and specific objectives. From such a direction, this research aims to comparative analyze the determining premises that condition the exercise of local autonomy in Romania and Italy, taking as a case study the cities of Gura Humorului and Bergamo, in order to identify the existence of structural and functional convergences and divergences between the two local communities, highlighting the way in which the administrative configuration influences real autonomy in relation to the central power.

In order to achieve the proposed purpose, we formulate the following specific objectives:

O1: analysis of the configuration of local authorities established within the Romanian and Italian national communities, respectively, as a foundation for local autonomy.

O2: assessment of the availability of human, material and financial resources at the level of the two administrative-territorial units

O3: analysis of the electoral mechanisms underlying the establishment of local public administration authorities in the case of the two communities

O4: study of the models of executive organization of the authorities at the level of the two local administrations

O5: determination of the recognition of the full competence for local public administration authorities to administer public affairs at the level of both local systems

O6: identification of the limits of the control exercised by the executive power bodies over the activity of public administration authorities at the level of both territorial divisions.

The degree of research on the subject in doctrine. In Romanian specialized literature, the pillars of local autonomy have been comprehensively analyzed by authors such as V. Vedinaș⁶, C. Manda⁷ or M. Preda⁸, who emphasize the legal and functional dimension of autonomy. Complementarily, in the Italian space, the theorization of autonomy as a form of self-government is based on the fundamental contributions of jurists such as M. S. Giannini⁹ or S. Cassese¹⁰. Although local autonomy is a vast theme in specialized literature, comparative studies applied to specific administrative-territorial units in states with distinct administrative traditions are rarer. The present research complements the existing doctrine through an empirical analysis, extracted from the case studies of Gura Humorului and Bergamo, being based on concrete data (official organizational charts and budgetary statements).

⁶ Vedinaș V. Drept administrativ. Bucharest: Universul Juridic, 2007, pp. 363-366.

⁷ Manda C. Drept administrativ. Tratat elementar. Bucharest: Universul Juridic, 2008, pp. 238-245.

⁸ Preda M. Drept administrativ. Parte generală. Bucharest: Lumina Lex, 2006, pp. 350-356.

⁹ Giannini M. S. Autonomia. Teoria Generale e Diritto pubblico. In: Enciclopedia del Diritto, vol. IV, Milano: Giuffrè, 1959, pp. 346-370. https://www.ius-publicum.it/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/30_-autonomia-nel-diritto-pubblico.pdf (accessed March 4, 2026); Giannini M. S. Autonomia (Saggio sui Concetti di Autonomia). In: Rivista Trimestrale di Diritto Pubblico, II, 1951, pp. 851-883. <https://www.scirp.org/reference/referencespapers?referenceid=973237> (accessed March 4, 2026).

¹⁰ Cassese S. (ed.). Guida per le Autonomie Locali⁷⁹. Roma: Edizioni delle Autonomie, 1979. https://www.persee.fr/doc/rfap_0152-7401_1980_num_16_1_1191_t1_0219_0000_2 (accessed March 4, 2026).

Trends and premises of the research. The current trend at European level, under the aegis of the European Charter of Local Self-Government¹¹, is to transfer more and more competences to the basic level of administration. The premise from which this paper starts is that real autonomy cannot exist without a stable specialized apparatus and without a solid financial independence from the political center.

Research question. The starting point of the entire scientific approach is the question: *Which model of local administration offers more real autonomy?* This question demands its solution and leads to the assumption of a rigorous analytical perspective of the real local conditions that activate the functioning of local autonomy, not as an abstract legal concept, but as an effective functional and financial capacity for self-government.

“Real” (de facto) autonomy is distinguished from “formal” (de jure) autonomy by the degree of dependence on the political center. This is conditioned by: human resources - the stability and specialization of the administrative apparatus; financial resources - the self-financing capacity that reduces dependence on conditional transfers; decision-making structure - the technical efficiency of the executive model (collegiality vs. monocratic); executive control - the limits of administrative supervision over local initiatives. The model that offers more real autonomy is the one that balances exclusive powers with financial independence and legal protection against interference by the executive power. By comparing Gura Humorului and Bergamo, we will demonstrate whether the Italian or Romanian model better meets the requirement of real autonomy.

Research hypotheses. In order to develop the approach to be undertaken in relation to the proposed purpose and objectives, as well as in order to solve the research question, we launch the following research hypotheses for validation/invalidation:

H1: The stability of the specialized apparatus (number of occupied positions) influences the capacity of the local authority to exercise exclusive powers.

H2: The capacity for self-financing influences the decision-making autonomy of local authorities, reducing political pressure and dependence on central transfers.

H3: The existence of a collegial and specialized executive body such as the Giunta favors more technical and efficient management compared to the monocratic model.

H4: The forms of control exercised by the executive power over the activity of local authorities influence their decisions and initiatives.

2. METHODS AND APPLIED MATERIALS

This research adopts a mixed methodology, combining *qualitative analysis* of legal texts with *quantitative analysis* of administrative and financial indicators (job occupancy rate, share of own revenues in total revenues). The central approach is the *comparative method*, used to identify convergences and divergences between the administrative system in Romania (exemplified by the city of Gura Humorului) and that in Italy (the city of Bergamo).

Research materials. The documentary basis of the work consists of:

- National regulatory framework: Romanian Constitution and Italian Constitution; Administrative Code of Romania and Legislative Decree no. 267/2000 (Consolidated Text of Local Authorities) of Italy
- Specific institutional documents: Organizational chart and List of functions of the

¹¹ European Charter of Local Self-Government, adopted in Strasbourg on October 15, 1985, ratified by Law no. 199 of November 17, 1997. In: Official Gazette, no. 331 of November 26, 1997.

specialized apparatus of the mayor of Gura Humorului and of the subordinate public services of local interest, without legal personality - 2025 and Integrated Plan of Activities and Organization - Triennio 2024/2026, Section 3.3.1: Programming of Objectives for Covering the Personnel Requirement of the Bergamo City Hall

- Official financial data used to calculate the self-financing index: Draft budget of income and expenses of the Gura Humorului city for the year 2025 and Bilancio di Previsione 2026 - 2028 11/02/2026, Quadro Generale Riassuntivo of the city of Bergamo

- Statistical databases: Data provided by the National Institute of Statistics (Romania) and the Istituto Nazionale di Statistica (Italy).

Working methods. For the processing of the materials, we use the following methods:

- Comparative method: it is the main one throughout the scientific path, facilitating the parallel analysis of the administrative systems in Gura Humorului - Romania and Bergamo - Italy, in order to identify similarities and differences in the exercise of local autonomy.

- Documentary and legal analysis: used for the study of normative acts and the interpretation of the norms that regulate the two local administrations.

- Case study: used to observe the applicability of the conditions that support the manifestation of autonomy in the real local context of the two cities.

- Financial analysis: used to calculate the self-financing capacity (own income, total income) and organizational charts (number of positions).

Justification of case selection. The choice of the cities of Gura Humorului and Bergamo as case studies is justified by their relevance in the administrative structures of the two states, allowing an analysis of real autonomy in a common European context, but with distinct administrative traditions. On the one hand, the Romanian system is marked by a unitary-centralist tradition, where local autonomy is in a continuous process of post-communist consolidation. On the other hand, the Italian system reflects an advanced regionalism and a culture of consolidated fiscal decentralization, characterized by collegial executive structures (Giunta type). This diversity of models provides an optimal framework to test the resilience of local autonomy in the face of central power influences and to identify solutions to streamline the management of public affairs.

3. DISCUSSIONS AND OBTAINED RESULTS

The premises for the functioning of local autonomy at the level of the cities of Gura Humorului in Romania and Bergamo in Italy

The premises that create and provide the necessary support for the activation and exercise of local autonomy at the level of Romanian and Italian local communities are rigorously analyzed in the following sections:

The presence of local communities within the national community

The implementation of local autonomy has as its starting point the existence of local communities established within the administrative-territorial divisions of the state.

Gura Humorului City. The Romanian national collectivity is divided into local collectivities constituted in counties, cities/municipalities, communes¹², as follows (see Figure no. 1):

¹² Art. 3, para. 3 of the Romanian Constitution.

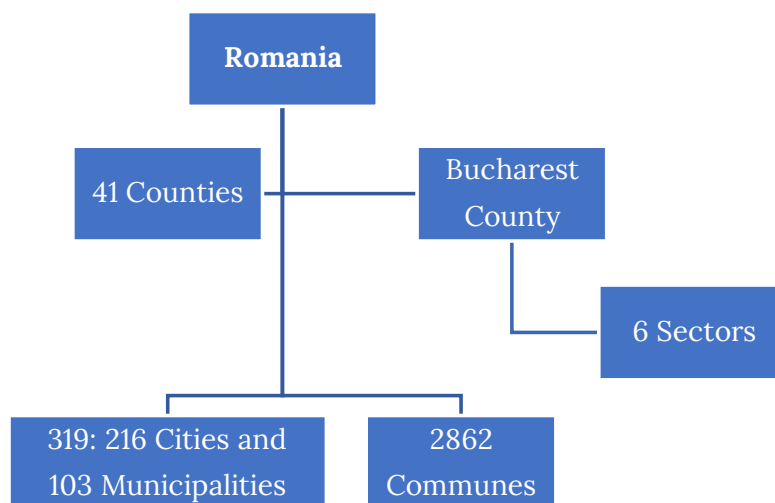


Figure no. 1.

Administrative-territorial units in Romania

Source: National Institute of Statistics. Tempo Online Database, ADM101A - Administrative organization of the territory, by categories of administrative units, macroregions, development regions and counties. <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table> (accessed March 7, 2026).

The composition of Romanian national and local (urban) communities, by population and area, is found in the following table (see Table no. 1):

Table no. 1.
Population and area of the Gura Humorului city

Crt. No.	Community	Population		Area		Density
		Inhabitants No.	Percent %	Km ²	Percent %	Inhab./ Km ²
	Romania	19.043.151	100%	238.398	100%	79.879
	Gura Humorului	17.356	0.091%	69.84	2.929 %	2.485

Source: Eurostat. Population on 1 January by age and sex. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/demo_pjan/default/table?lang=en; National Institute of Statistics. Tempo Online Database, POP107D - Population by domicile on January 1 by age and age groups, sexes, counties and localities. <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>; Eurostat. Area by NUTS 3 region. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/reg_area3/default/table; City Population. Gura Humorului - Area. https://www.citypopulation.de/en/romania/suceava/_/146584__gura_humorului/ (accessed March 7, 2026).

Bergamo City. The Italian national collectivity is divided into local collectivities constituted by regions, provinces/metropolitan cities and communities¹³ (see Figure no. 2):

¹³ Art. 131, para. 3 of the Costituzione Italiana. Testo vigente, aggiornato alla Legge Costituzionale 11 febbraio 2022, n. 1. <https://www.senato.it/sites/default/files/media-documents/Costituzione.pdf> (accessed March 7, 2026).

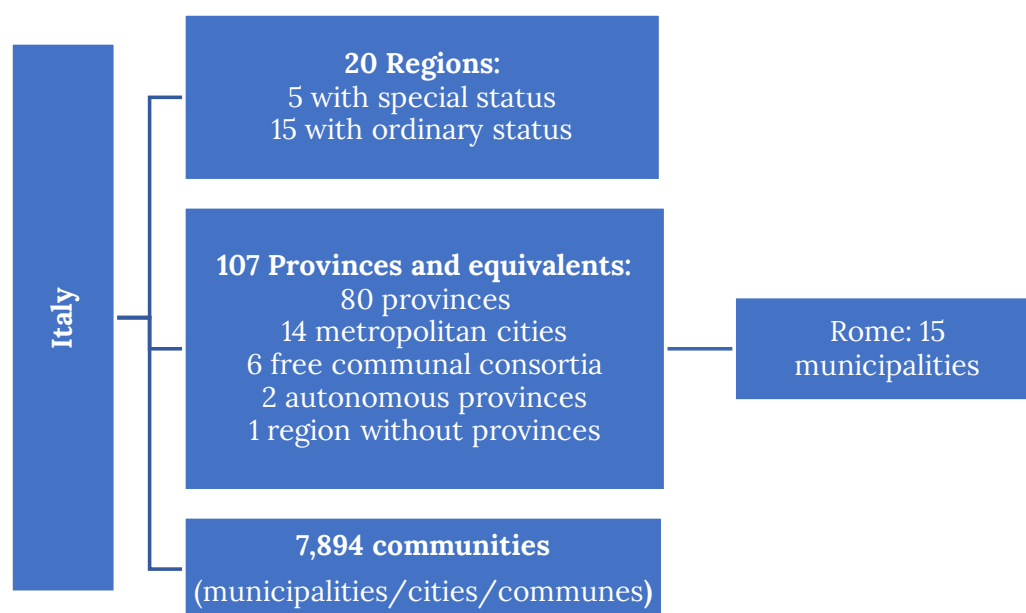


Figure no. 2.
Administrative-territorial units in Italy

Source: Autonomie locali italiane. Comuni italiani, l'elenco dell'ISTAT aggiornato al 30 giugno 2025. <https://aliautonomie.it/2025/09/15/comuni-italiani-lelenco-dellistat-aggiornato-al-30-giugno-2025/>; Istituto Nazionale di Statistica. Il benessere equo e sostenibile dei territori. Le città metropolitane, 2024, p. 2. https://www.istat.it/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/BesT_CM_2024_VSP.pdf; Istituto Nazionale di Statistica. Codici statistici delle unità amministrative territoriali, 2026. <https://www.istat.it/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Novita-2026-2017-26febbraio2026.pdf> (accessed March 7, 2026).

The composition of Italian national and local (urban) communities, by population and area, is found in the following table (see Table no. 2):

Table no. 2.
Population and area of the Bergamo city

Crt. No.	Community	Population		Area		Density
		Inhabitants No.	Percent %	Km ²	Percent %	Inhab./ Km ²
	Italy	58.943.464	100%	302.073	100%	195.129
	Bergamo	120.389	0.204%	40,16	0.013%	2.997

Source: Eurostat. Population on 1 January by age and sex. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/demo_pjan/default/table?lang=en; Istituto Nazionale di Statistica. Resident population by age, sex and marital status on 1st January 2025. <https://demo.istat.it/app/?i=POS&l=en>; Eurostat. Area by NUTS 3 region. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/reg_area3/default/table; Istituto Nazionale di Statistica. Superfici delle unità amministrative. <https://www.istat.it/it/files/2015/04/Superfici-delle-unit%C3%A0-amministrative-Dati-comunali-e-provinciali.zip> (accessed March 7, 2026).

The availability of human, material and financial resources at the local community level

Local autonomy can function genuinely and local needs can be served if local public administration authorities and the communities that designated them have the necessary

and sufficient human, material and financial resources at their disposal.

Gura Humorului City

Human resources. The local public administration operates with a number of 325 positions, as follows (see Table no. 3):

Table no. 3.
Number of positions in the specialized apparatus
of the mayor of Gura Humorului City

Crt. No.	Positions	Occupied	Vacancies	Total
	Public dignitaries	2	0	2
	Senior civil servants	0	0	0
	Public management functions	6	1	7
	Public execution functions	49	44	93
	Contractual management functions	5	4	9
	Contractual execution functions	142	72	214
	Total positions within the public institution/ authority	204	121	325
	Positions according to GEO no. 63/2010 for amending and supplementing Law no. 273/2006 on local public finances, as well as for establishing financial measures, with subsequent amendments and supplements	77	23	100

Source: Local Council of Gura Humorului. Decision No. 16 of January 31, 2025 on the approval of the Organizational Chart and the List of functions of the specialized apparatus of the mayor of Gura Humorului and of the subordinate public services of local interest, without legal personality. <https://primariagurahumorului.ro/wp-content/primaria/administratie/consiliu/sedinte/hcl/2025/> (accessed March 8, 2026).

Material resources. The heritage of the city of Gura Humorului is composed of movable and immovable assets belonging to the public and private domain of the city, as well as all rights and obligations of a patrimonial nature.¹⁴ According to Annex No. 11 to the Statute of the City of Gura Humorului, the following are included in the inventory of assets in the patrimony of this administrative-territorial unit, for example: park alleys, water supply, playground layout, garbage collection bunkers, computers, thermal power plants, sanitary buildings, household waste containers, copiers, cabinets, complete water game equipment, parking access control equipment, artesian fountains, wooden gazebos, snow blowers, protective fences, hydraulic group, traffic signs, video surveillance installations, laptops, playgrounds, wooden warehouses, multifunctional, solar panels, parking lots, parking meters, wooden footbridges, trailers, heating networks, sewer networks, water supply extension networks, underground district heating networks, sports halls, schools, city hall headquarters, intersection traffic lights, irrigation systems, streets, poles, video projectors, etc.¹⁵

¹⁴ Local Council of Gura Humorului. Art. 16, para. 1 of the Statute of the Gura Humorului city, Suceava county. <https://primariagurahumorului.ro/monitorul-oficial-local/> (accessed March 9, 2026).

¹⁵ Ibidem, Annex no. 11.

Financial resources. The self-financing capacity of local public authorities reflects the degree of financial autonomy, being determined as a percentage ratio between own revenues and total local budget revenues¹⁶. The proximity of this indicator to the reference value of 100 indicates a reduced dependence on transfers from the state budget, and vice versa.

The calculation formula is:

$$\text{Self-financing capacity} = (\text{own income} / \text{total income}) \times 100. \quad (1)$$

To calculate the self-financing capacity of the Gura Humorului city, we use the data from the Draft Budget of Revenues and Expenditures for 2025¹⁷, where:

Own revenues = 74,752,090.28 lei

Total revenues = 107,568,150 lei.

Applying the formula, we obtain $(74,752,090.28 \text{ lei} / 107,568,150 \text{ lei}) = 69.49\%$.

The self-financing capacity of almost 70% demonstrates that the city of Gura Humorului has a strong local economic structure, capable of generating internal resources for the vast majority of programmed expenditures.

Bergamo City

Human resources. The number of positions at the Bergamo City Hall level is 875.25, as follows (see Table no. 4):

Table no. 4.
Number of positions within the Bergamo City Hall

Crt. No.	Working area	In service	Plan	Reduction	Total
	Total managers (management)	12	1	0	13
	Total officials	207,25	26	0	233,25
	Total instructors	459,4	39	-11	487,4
	Total expert operators	138,1	2	-2	138,1
	Total operators				
	Total general	820,25	68	-13	875,25

Source: Comune di Bergamo. Allegato - Piano Integrato di Attività ed Organizzazione – Triennio 2024/2026, Sezione 3.3.1: Programmazione degli Obiettivi per la Copertura Del Fabbisogno Di Personale, Dell'ente, Piano Triennale del Fabbisogno di Personale – Annualità 2024/2026, 1° Aggiornamento. <https://bergamo.trasparenza-valutazione-merito.it> (accessed March 10, 2026).

Material resources. The assets belonging to the city of Bergamo are classified into three main categories: public domain; unavailable private domain; available domain. The assets in the public domain are inalienable (cannot be sold) and are intended for collective use: - maritime and water public domain: canals and waterways on the city's territory; - public street domain: streets, squares and sidewalks; - cultural public domain: historical

¹⁶ Dogariu E. Studiu privind autonomia financiară locală în România. In: Economie Teoretică și Aplicată, XVII, 6(547), 2010, p. 68. https://store.ectap.ro/articole/478_ro.pdf (accessed March 9, 2026).

¹⁷ Local Council of Gura Humorului. Annex 1 to the Draft budget of income and expenses of the Gura Humorului city for the year 2025. https://primariagurahumorului.ro/wp-content/primaria/administratie/documente_financiare/2025/ (accessed March 9, 2026).

and archaeological monuments owned by the state or the city.¹⁸ The assets in the unavailable private domain belong to the institution, but have a specific destination of public interest and cannot be sold as long as that destination remains valid: - administrative headquarters: city hall and other office buildings; - public utility buildings: schools, kindergartens, hospitals, libraries and sports centers; - museums and gardens¹⁹. The assets in the available private domain are owned by the city hall as a private owner, and they can be rented, sold (alienated) or used to generate income: - Social housing: Apartments owned by the city and given for rent to people with low incomes; - Land and commercial buildings: Spaces given under concession to private operators; - Confiscated assets: Properties taken over from criminal organizations and integrated into the local patrimony for social purposes²⁰.

Financial resources. To calculate the local self-financing capacity of the Bergamo city we use the official data from the Bilancio di Previsione 2026-2028 (approved in February 2026), and we extract the values from the Quadro Generale Riassuntivo delle Entrate²¹.

To calculate the self-financing capacity, using the figures in the Competence column for the year 2026, where:

Own revenues = Title I (Taxes and duties) + Title III (Extra-tax revenues): €104,171,000 + €48,958,000 = €153,129,000

Total current revenues = Title I + Title II (Transfers from the state/region) + Title III: €153,129,000 + €26,936,035 = €180,065,035.

Applying formula (1), we obtain $(€153,129,000 / €180,065,035) \times 100 = 85.04\%$.

A percentage of 85.04% indicates a solid degree of financial autonomy, with the city of Bergamo providing over 85% of the resources necessary for its current operation through its own efforts (local taxes, fines, rents, services), which is a very good indicator of financial health for a medium-sized city in Italy. Only about 15% of the current budget comes from transfers from the state or region (Title II), which gives the city hall great freedom of decision in local policies.

The election of local government management authorities by community members

Romanian and Italian local communities have their own administrative authorities that represent their interests.

Gura Humorului City. At the level of the Romanian local community, the local public administration authorities – the mayor and the local council, are constituted by election, through universal, equal, direct, secret and freely expressed vote, by the members of the community, a situation that is favorable to the functioning of local autonomy²² (see Table no. 5).

¹⁸ Comune di Bergamo. Inventario dei Beni Culturali, Ambientali e Archeologici. <https://www.comune.bergamo.it/ibcaa?page=6> (accessed March 11, 2026).

¹⁹ Comune di Bergamo. Elenco Fabbricati al 31 12 2024. <https://bergamo.trasparenza-valutazione-merito.it/> (accessed March 11, 2026).

²⁰ Comune di Bergamo. Piano delle Alienazioni e Valorizzazioni del Patrimonio Comunale. <https://www.comune.bergamo.it/sites/default/files/2019-11/piano%20alienazioni.pdf> (accessed March 11, 2026); Comune di Bergamo. Elenco beni confiscati alla criminalità organizzata. <https://bergamo.trasparenza-valutazione-merito.it/> (accessed on March 11, 2026).

²¹ Comune di Bergamo. Bilancio di Previsione 2026 - 2028 11/02/2026, Quadro Generale Riassuntivo. <https://bergamo.trasparenza-valutazione-merito.it> (accessed March 12, 2026).

²² Art. 1, para. 2 of Law no. 115 of May 19, 2015 on the election of local public administration authorities. In: Official Gazette, no. 316 of April 25, 2016

Table no. 5.
The method of establishing the governing authorities
of the local administration in Gura Humorului

Administrative-territorial division	Governing authorities of the local administration	Method of establishing	Term of office
Gura Humorului City	Mayor	elected by community members	4 years
	Local Council (17 local councilors)	elected by community members	4 years

Source: Law no. 115 of May 19, 2015 on the election of local public administration authorities, art. 1, para. 2; Gura Humorului City Hall. Local Council Section. <https://primariagurahumorului.ro/administratie/consiliul-local/> (accessed March 16, 2026); Administrative Code of Romania, adopted by Government Emergency Ordinance no. 57 of July 3, 2019. In: Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, no. 555 of July 5, 2019, art. 128, para. 1 and art. 151, para. 1.

The mayor ensures respect for the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens, the provisions of the Constitution, as well as the implementation of laws, decrees of the President of Romania, ordinances and decisions of the Government, and decisions of the local council. The mayor orders the necessary measures and provides support for the implementation of orders and instructions of a normative nature of ministers, of other heads of central public administration authorities, of the prefect, of the provisions of the president of the county council, as well as of the decisions of the county council, under the terms of the law²³. The mayor fulfills the following main categories of duties: duties exercised as a representative of the state, under the law; duties relating to the relation with the local council; duties relating to the local budget of the administrative-territorial unit; duties regarding public services provided to citizens, of local interest; other duties established by law²⁴.

The local council has the initiative and decides on all matters of local interest, except for those that are given by law to the competence of other local or central public administration authorities. It exercises the following categories of powers: powers regarding the administrative-territorial unit, its own organization, as well as the organization and functioning of the specialized apparatus of the mayor, of public institutions of local interest and of autonomous societies and local interest authorities; powers regarding the economic, social and environmental development of the commune, city or municipality; powers regarding the administration of the public and private domain of the commune, city or municipality; powers regarding the management of local interest services; powers regarding interinstitutional cooperation internally and externally²⁵.

Bergamo City. At the level of the Italian local community, the local public administration authorities – the mayor and the local council – are constituted by election by the local population, and the giunta (local executive) is constituted by appointment by the mayor (see Table no. 6).

²³ Art. 154, para. 1 of the Administrative Code of Romania.

²⁴ Ibidem, art. 155, para. 1.

²⁵ Ibidem, art. 129, paras. 1, 2.

Table no. 6.
The method of establishing the governing authorities
of the local administration in Bergamo

Administrative-territorial division	Governing authorities of the local administration	Method of establishing	Term of office
Bergamo City	Mayor	elected by community members	5 years
	Giunta (10 executive councilors - assessori)	appointed by the mayor	5 years
	Local Council (32 local councilors)	elected by community members	5 years

Source: Comune di Bergamo. Organi di Governo Section. <https://www.comune.bergamo.it/amministrazione/organi-di-governo>; Decreto Legislativo n. 267/2000 (Testo Unico degli Enti Locali), art. 51, para. 1. <https://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:decreto.legislativo:2000-08-18;267> (accessed March 16, 2026).

The mayor is an individual body of the city responsible for the political management function of the municipality. He presents the programmatic lines of his government to the Council and exercises them by appointing councilors. He is simultaneously the head of the city administration and a government official. He performs the other functions assigned to him as a local authority; institutional political representation, as a monocratic organ of the institution, legal representation²⁶.

The Giunta is the city's governing body, consisting of the mayor, who chairs it, and nine councilors, including the vice-mayor, representing an executive made up of five women and five men. It collaborates with the mayor in governing the city through collegial deliberations and implementing the general and political-administrative guidelines of the local council; carries out all acts falling within the powers of the government bodies that are not reserved for the local council and that do not fall within the competence of the mayor or decentralized bodies; collaborates with the mayor in implementing the general guidelines of the local council. The Giunta reports to the latter annually on its activities and carries out proactive activities towards it²⁷.

The local council is the public assembly that represents the citizens of the city, consisting of 32 elected councilors. It has planning, management and political-administrative control functions. Among the main areas of competence are the statute of the institution, the budget, the final account, the local urban plan, the public works plan and agreements between local authorities²⁸.

The plenitude of competence of local authorities in managing local public affairs

In order to manage local public affairs operatively, local public administration au-

²⁶ Comune di Bergamo. Sindaca Section. <https://www.comune.bergamo.it/amministrazione/organi-di-governo> (accessed March 16, 2026).

²⁷ Ibidem, Giunta comunale Section. <https://www.comune.bergamo.it/unita-organizzativa/giunta-comunale> (accessed March 16, 2026).

²⁸ Ibidem, Consiglio comunale Section. <https://www.comune.bergamo.it/unita-organizzativa/consiglio-comunale> (accessed March 16, 2026).

thorities have full competence that ensures their autonomy in relation to central authorities.

Gura Humorului City. Local public administration authorities exercise exclusive powers, shared powers and delegated powers, according to the law²⁹.

Exclusive competence refers to the powers expressly and restrictively established by law for the local public administration authorities, for the implementation of which they have the right to decide and have the necessary resources and means³⁰. There are exclusive powers, for example, public domain administration, markets, parks, sanitation, local urban planning.

Shared competence concerns the powers exercised according to the law by local public administration authorities, together with other public administration authorities, expressly and restrictively established, with the establishment of financial resources and the limits of the right to decide for each public authority³¹. It falls into the category of shared competences, for example, social assistance, public order through the local police service, health and education – where the state pays the salaries and the city hall maintains the buildings.

Delegated competence represents the powers established by law and transferred, together with the corresponding financial resources, to local public administration authorities by central public administration authorities to exercise them on behalf of and within the limits established by the latter³². Delegated powers include, for example, the issuance of civil status documents or the payment of allowances established by special laws.

Bergamo City. The powers at the level of local public institutions (city halls in communities) are divided into their own functions, conferred functions and functions delegated by the state³³.

The own functions are those powers that naturally belong to the local community to ensure the development and well-being of its citizens, being exercised with full autonomy. The city is responsible for all administrative functions affecting the population and the territory, in particular in the organic sectors of personal and community services, land development and planning and economic development, unless they are expressly attributed to other entities by state or regional law, according to their respective powers³⁴.

The conferred functions are powers which, although belonging to the State or Region by law, are “entrusted” (conferred) to local authorities (communities, provinces) for better organisation and efficiency. In compliance with the principles established by law and the statute, the community and province adopt regulations in matters of their own competence and, in particular, for the organisation and functioning of institutions and participating bodies, for the functioning of bodies and offices, as well as for the exercise of functions³⁵.

The functions delegated by the state are tasks that the mayor performs not as head of the local community, but as an officer of the Government, acting as a representative of the central power in the territory. The mayor, as a government official, supervises: to

²⁹ Art. 10, para. 1 of the Administrative Code of Romania.

³⁰ Ibidem, art. 5, letter ș.

³¹ Ibidem, art. 5, letter t.

³² Ibidem, art. 5, letter s.

³³ Art. 118 of the Costituzione Italiana; Art. 14 of the Decreto Legislativo n. 267/2000 (Testo Unico degli Enti Locali).

³⁴ Art. 13, para. 1 of the Decreto Legislativo n. 267/2000 (Testo Unico degli Enti Locali).

³⁵ Ibidem, art. 7, para. 1.

issue the acts assigned to him by law and regulations regarding public order and safety; to perform the functions entrusted to him by law regarding public security and the judicial police; to supervise everything that may affect public safety and order, informing the prefect in advance. The mayor, in exercising the functions listed above, also helps to ensure the cooperation of the local police with the state police forces, within the scope of the coordination directives issued by the Minister of the Interior - the National Public Security Authority. The mayor, as a government official, also supervises the keeping of civil status and population registers and the obligations entrusted to him by the laws on elections, military recruitment and statistics. The mayor, as a government official, adopts, by reasoned act, measures, including contingent and urgent measures, in compliance with the general principles of the law, with a view to preventing and eliminating serious dangers threatening public safety and urban security. The said measures shall be communicated in advance to the prefect and for the purpose of preparing the instruments deemed necessary for their implementation.³⁶

The control exercised by the central executive power bodies over the activity of local authorities

The full competence of local public administration authorities does not mean their absolute freedom in managing local public affairs, their activity being subject to control exercised by the competent authorities.

Gura Humorului City. In the Romanian administrative system, administrative tutelage represents the constitutional and legal prerogative of the prefect to exercise control of the legality of the acts of local authorities. This is exercised through administrative litigation actions, having the character of a right-obligation correlative to the function of guarantor of compliance with the law at the territorial level³⁷. In exercising the attribution regarding the verification of the legality of the administrative acts of the local or county public administration authorities, the prefect may challenge, before the administrative litigation court, these acts, if he considers them illegal. The challenged act is suspended by law³⁸.

Bergamo City. To protect the autonomy of the municipalities, the Italian constitutional reform of 2001 removed the general control of the legality of each local act. However, the prefect exercises exceptional control, retaining strong levers of intervention in the following situations:

- exercises control over the bodies (not only over the acts): dissolution of the local council (the prefect may initiate the procedure for the dissolution of the entire local council in case of: acts contrary to the Constitution; the commission of serious or persistent acts that violate the law or the Constitution; administrative blockage: the impossibility of ensuring the normal functioning of the governing bodies, such as failure to adopt the budget within the legal deadlines; lack of quorum: the simultaneous resignation of the majority of councilors (at least half plus one); reasons of urgency: situations that endanger public order or safety)³⁹.

³⁶ Ibidem, art. 54.

³⁷ Profiroiu A. G., Titirișcă C. Unele considerații cu privire la controlul exercitat de prefect asupra colectivităților locale. In: Revista Transilvană de Științe Administrative, 2(39), 2016, pp. 169-170. <https://rtsa.ro/rtsa/index.php/rtsa/article/download/539/536> (accessed March 20, 2026).

³⁸ Art. 123, para. 5 of the Romanian Constitution.

³⁹ Art. 141 of the Decreto Legislativo n. 267/2000 (Testo Unico degli Enti Locali).

- exercises a preventive control of legality only on request: this form of control “on request” represents the exception to the rule of full local autonomy in the Italian state in which the city hall decides alone, the state intervening only if notified or if there is a major risk. The prefect has the power to intervene on the mayor’s acts when he acts as an officer of the Government in matters of order and public safety⁴⁰.

- has the right of substitution: the central government, through the prefect, has the right of substitution (the power to act in place of the local authority) in three critical situations: non-compliance with international or European Union norms; serious danger to public safety and security; the need to guarantee the legal or economic unity of the country⁴¹.

Confirmation/ refutation of the research hypotheses launched at the start of this research

The results of the comparative analysis performed provided support for validating the research hypotheses from which we started this scientific approach, confirming the following:

- Regarding **the research hypothesis H1**: The high vacancy rate limits the exercise of exclusive competences (e.g., project implementation). The lack of executive staff in Gura Humorului represents a barrier to administrative autonomy, unlike the occupied structure in Bergamo. Based on the comparative and quantitative analyses of the occupancy rate (see Table no. 3 and Table no. 4), it is observed that Gura Humorului has a massive deficit: 121 vacant positions out of a total of 325 positions (approximately 37%). Of these, 44 are public executive positions and 72 are contractual executive positions. Bergamo, on the other hand, has a minimal deficit (only 13 planned reduced positions). These data demonstrate that a city hall operating with only 63% of its staff cannot cover all exclusive competences (urban planning, digitalization, fundraising) at the same speed as one that has the full scheme. Autonomy cannot be exercised effectively without human resources to implement political decisions, which shows the impact of the degree of occupation of positions on the quality of local public administration activity, in general, and of local public services, in particular. Therefore, there is a link between the stability of the specialized apparatus (number of occupied positions) and the capacity of the local authority to exercise exclusive powers, the high vacancy rate in Gura Humorului (37%) limiting, for example, the rapid implementation of development projects, compared to the stable structure in Bergamo, a situation that **confirms** the research hypothesis **H1**.

- Regarding **the research hypothesis H2**: To validate/invalidate research hypothesis H2, we again resort to comparative analysis, using self-financing capacity as the main indicator, since this is the mathematical measure of local decision-making independence. At the level of the city of Gura Humorului, a percentage of 69.49% was recorded, which demonstrates a dependence of ~30% on the state budget, meaning that almost a third of the resources come with a “special destination” or depend on central political decisions. In contrast, for the city of Bergamo, the data showed a percentage of 85.04%, which denotes a dependence of only ~15%, thus offering a much greater margin of maneuver. A higher percentage of self-financing translates directly into a greater capacity to initiate local projects without waiting for “approval” or “allocation” from the center. Since Bergamo has a much higher self-financing capacity (over 85%), its autonomy of manifestation is supe-

⁴⁰ Ibidem, art. 54.

⁴¹ Art. 120 of the Costituzione Italiana.

rior to that of Gura Humorului. A high self-financing capacity (as in Bergamo) protects the city from possible political crises at the central level or delays in the national budget. The capacity to function autonomously, regardless of the national political context, is the ultimate test of local autonomy. On this basis, the research hypothesis **H2 is confirmed** by analyzing the self-financing indicator: the Bergamo city, with a rate of 85.04%, has a higher decision-making freedom in managing public affairs than Gura Humorului (69.49%), reducing the risk of political subordination to conditional transfers from the state budget.

- Regarding **the research hypothesis H3**: Dividing responsibilities into clear areas (portfolios) produces better results than concentrating power in a single person. The existence of a collegial and specialized executive body in the Italian administration, in contrast to the monocratic model focused on the figure of the mayor in the Romanian administration, favors a faster and more technical management of shared competencies. By comparative analysis of portfolios (specialization), in Bergamo, there are 10 executive councilors (assessors), each responsible for a field (for example: one only for urbanism, one for the budget, one for culture). In Gura Humorului, the mayor must sign and coordinate everything, from asphaltting to cultural events. In other words, in Bergamo decisions are technically substantiated by a dedicated "local minister", which reduces reaction time and management errors, unlike the administrative overload of a single leader (the mayor) in Gura Humorului. In a collegial model (Giunta), members can deliberate and implement policies in parallel in their fields. In the monocratic model, everything goes through a single "funnel" (the mayor's signature). The existence of the Giunta allows the management of a much larger volume of projects (Bergamo's budget being over 10 times larger than that of Gura Humorului), thus validating that the collegial structure is necessary for complexity. Making the connection with the vacancies (Gura Humorului has a 37% staff deficit), the lack of a political executive team (to make up for the lack of technical/executive staff through vision and direct coordination) worsens the effects of these vacancies. In Bergamo, even if there were a lack of staff, the 10 executive councilors ensure political continuity in their fields. Therefore, Bergamo has a clearer sectoral vision (thanks to the Giunta), political specialization at the executive level determining increased efficiency, a basis on which the research hypothesis **H3 is confirmed**.

- Regarding **the research hypothesis H4**: The system of systematic administrative tutelage limits local decisions and initiatives, unlike exceptional control that encourages the assumption of responsibility, the fear of legal blockage influencing the decisions of the city halls. Comparing the consequences of attacking an act by the prefect in the two countries, we found that in Romania (Gura Humorului), if the prefect attacks a decision, it is suspended by law (it is no longer applied until the sentence), while in Italy (Bergamo), the acts have a presumption of legality and the control is "on request". In the Romanian model, the risk of blocking an entire project by simply notifying the prefect makes the authorities extremely cautious (or conservative), limiting innovative projects that could be interpreted restrictively by law. A systematic control (as in Romania) pushes the city hall towards a role of executor of the central law. An exceptional control (as in Italy) allows the city hall to be a creator of local policies. Analyzing the mayor's power to act in critical situations (safety/public order), it is worth highlighting that the mayor of Bergamo can adopt contingent and urgent measures for urban safety, informing the prefect afterwards. In Romania, the mayor has much less freedom, being limited by prior approvals. The ability of the mayor of Bergamo to issue acts with immediate legal force to solve an urgent local

problem confirms a greater assumption of responsibility, which makes it possible to **confirm** the research hypothesis **H4**.

The corroboration of these results demonstrates that real autonomy is simultaneously conditioned by the stability of human resources, financial independence, specialization of executive structures and a non-intrusive judicial control framework.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Based on what has been stated in the previous lines, we can conclude that the present scientific approach made it possible to achieve the formulated goal, namely the comparative evaluation of the applicability of the premises that favor the functioning of the principle of local autonomy in the Romanian and Italian context, the case study on the cities of Gura Humorului and Bergamo highlighting the main points of convergence, but also structural and functional disparities that characterize the two administrative entities, highlighting the efficiency of local administration models in relation to the center (see Table no. 7).

With reference to *the presence of local communities within the national community*, the comparative analysis of the two administrative structures reveals fundamental differences in vision on local autonomy. While Romania maintains a unitary and linear model, Italy presents an asymmetrical and stratified model. Local autonomy in Gura Humorului is exercised in a direct relation with the county council and the central administration. In contrast, in Bergamo, autonomy is exercised in a much more complex system, where the city interacts with the province, but also with the region. In Italy, the existence of the 5 regions with special status and the 2 autonomous provinces indicates that the principle of local autonomy is not applied identically throughout the territory, while in Romania the principle of autonomy is applied uniformly, without distinctions of status between counties. A much more pronounced fragmentation is observed in Italy (almost 8,000 communities compared to approximately 3,000 in Romania). However, Italy compensates for this fragmentation through complex forms of association, such as “metropolitan cities” or “free consortia”, structures that in Romania (like metropolitan areas) are still in the early stages of administrative operationalization.

The comparative analysis of the two cities regarding *the availability of human, material and financial resources* highlights clear differences in the administrative structure and financial performance. Regarding the human resources component, although both administrations manage hundreds of positions, Bergamo operates with a more extensive structure - 875.25 positions compared to 325 in Gura Humorului, reflecting the complexity of services in a medium-sized city in Italy. Furthermore, the staff shortage is not only a statistical problem, but a functional one, which transforms administrative autonomy from a legal right into a practical difficulty. With a vacancy rate of 37% (121 vacant positions), the Gura Humorului city hall is in an operational deadlock, unlike the Italian Bergamo model which works with an almost fully occupied staffing scheme (minimum deficit of 13 positions). These data **confirmed the research hypothesis H1**: human resources are the engine of autonomy, without the “arms” necessary for execution, exclusive powers remaining only on paper, with a direct impact on the quality of services provided to citizens. With reference to material resources, both localities have a diversified heritage, but Bergamo presents a more rigorous legal classification (public, private unavailable, private

available), including specific categories, such as assets confiscated from organized crime. The self-financing capacity of the two territorial divisions recorded a significant gap in favor of the Bergamo city (85.04%) compared to Gura Humorului (69.49%). Although both percentages are solid, Bergamo demonstrates a much greater independence from the central budget, relying overwhelmingly on its own revenues (taxes, rents, services). **The research hypothesis H2 was validated**, its confirmation demonstrating that Bergamo, with a dependence of only ~15% on central resources, has increased decision-making freedom and resilience in the face of external political factors, unlike Gura Humorului, where dependence on central resources (~30%) conditions and limits the exercise of local autonomy.

Regarding the election of local government management authorities by community members, we identified similarities, but also important structural differences between the Romanian administrative model - Gura Humorului and the Italian one - Bergamo, especially in terms of the duration of the mandate and the complexity of the executive. Both communities directly elect their mayor and local council, but while in Gura Humorului the executive power is concentrated in the figure of the mayor, in Bergamo there is a collegial body (Giunta) that functions as a "local government", allowing a clearer division of responsibilities by areas. **The confirmation of the research hypothesis H3** demonstrated that the collegial and specialized executive model in Bergamo (the 10 dedicated portfolios) ensures superior efficiency and rapid technical management of projects, unlike the monocratic model in Gura Humorului, where the concentration of decision-making at the mayor level generates administrative overload and institutional vulnerability. Then, the Bergamo City Council is almost double in number of members (32 compared to 17), reflecting the difference in population size and providing a broader platform for debate. The 5-year mandate in Italy offers a somewhat longer-term planning perspective compared to the 4-year mandate in Romania. In both cases, the local council holds the function of control over the executive, but in Bergamo, the Giunta has an explicit obligation to report annually to the council.

The comparative investigation of the premise of the functioning of autonomy regarding the plenitude of competence of local authorities in the managing of local public affairs has shown that, in the case of both administrative systems, local bodies are recognized as having the power to manage proximity issues, but with different terminologies and nuances of subordination. In the Romanian context, local public administration authorities exercise exclusive competences, shared competences and delegated competences, while in the Italian context, the competences at the level of local public institutions are divided into own functions, conferred functions and functions delegated by the state. In both cases, the competences are "limiting", clearly established by law, but in Italy, the mayor of Bergamo has a more marked double subordination: he is the head of the community for his own functions and the representative of the central power for those delegated.

Regarding the condition for the functioning of autonomy regarding the control exercised by the executive power bodies over the activity of local public administration authorities, the analysis carried out demonstrated essential differences in the sense that in Romania we encounter the existence of constant administrative control, while in Italy there is an exceptional control, based on punctual or crisis interventions. In Gura Humorului, the simple attack in court by the prefect suspends the execution of the respective act. In Bergamo, autonomy is protected by the elimination of the general control of legality

(since 2001), the city hall having full freedom until proof to the contrary or the notification of a major irregularity. In both systems, administrative blockage (such as the failure to adopt the budget) leads to radical measures, but in Italy, the prefect has a more direct power of intervention (dissolution of the council) in the event of mass resignation of councilors (lack of quorum). The Italian model (Bergamo) allows the Government, through the prefect, to directly take over the reins of the administration (the right of substitution) in situations of national risk or non-compliance with EU norms. In Romania, control is more judicial (through courts) than direct replacement of the authority. **Confirmation of research hypothesis H4** demonstrated that the Romanian model of systematic control and legal suspension of administrative acts (Gura Humorului) generates conservative behavior and limits local decision-making and innovation, in contrast to the Italian system of exceptional control (Bergamo), which encourages the assumption of responsibility and allows the mayor to act quickly and autonomously in critical situations.

Table no. 7.

**Comparative table on the conditions for the manifestation of local autonomy
in the Gura Humorului City, Romania and the Bergamo City, Italy**

Crt. No.	Comparison criterion	Gura Humorului City in Romania	Bergamo City in Italy
The presence of local communities within the national community			
	Hierarchical levels	2 levels: local (communes/cities/ municipalities) and county (counties)	3 levels: local (communities), intermediate (provinces) and regional (regions)
	Degree of autonomy	uniform (same rules for all counties)	asymmetrical (5 regions with special status, 15 with ordinary status)
	Intermediate level	41 counties (homogeneous structure)	107 provinces and equivalents (diversity: metropolitan cities, free consortia)
	Basic level	3,181 administrative-territorial units (communes, cities, municipalities)	7,894 communities (municipalities/cities/communes)
	Capital city specificity	Bucharest (6 sectors)	Rome (15 municipalities)
The availability of human, material and financial resources at the local community level			
	Human resources	325 total positions (204 occupied, 121 vacant); Mixed structure: dignitaries, civil servants and contractual staff	875.25 total positions (820.25 in service); Hierarchical structure: managers, officials, instructors and operators

	Material resources	mixed heritage (public and private; emphasis on utility infrastructure: water/sewer networks, schools, parks, snow removal equipment, surveillance systems)	legally classified heritage: public (inalienable), private unavailable (schools, hospitals) and private available (social housing, confiscated assets)
	Financial resources	self-financing: 69.49% level of financial autonomy: high, but with a ~30% dependence on transfers from the state budget	self-financing: 85.04% level of financial autonomy: very high, with minimal dependence (~15%) on external transfers (state/region)
The election of local government management authorities by community members			
	Term of office	4 years	5 years
	Mayor	directly elected; state representative and head of local government	directly elected; head of administration and government official; appoints the Giunta
	Local Council	17 councilors (directly elected); deliberative and administrative role in the public and private domain	32 councilors (directly elected); role of planning, orientation and political-administrative control
	Executive body	there is no separate collective body (the mayor exercises the executive function)	Giunta (10 councilors appointed by the mayor); collaborates with the mayor in governing the city
	Gender representation	there is no mandatory quota specified in the law	perfect parity in the Giunta (5 women and 5 men).
The plenitude of competence of local authorities in managing local public affairs			
	Competence type	exclusive competences: authorities decide autonomously	own functions: authorities decide autonomously
		shared competences: exercised together with other public administration authorities	conferred functions: exercised jointly with the state/region
		delegated powers: exercised on behalf of and within the limits established by the central public administration authorities	state delegated functions: the mayor acts as the government's representative in the territory

The control exercised by the central executive power bodies over the activity of local authorities			
	Type of control	administrative tutelage (systematic legality control over acts)	exceptional control (over bodies and acts only in critical situations)
	Role of the prefect	checks the legality of acts; can challenge them in court, the challenged act being suspended by law	intervenes in case of blockage, serious illegalities or dangers to public safety
	Object of control	focuses on acts of local public administration authorities	focuses on bodies (dissolution of the council) and on the state functions of the mayor
	Administrative sanctions	administrative litigation action	dissolution of the council and the right of substitution (the state acts instead of the mayor)

Source: own elaboration based on the data contained in this research

The comparative analysis of the operating premises of autonomy at the level of the two local authorities highlighted the fact that, although both operate within a European democratic framework, the Italian model (Bergamo) offers a more real and consolidated local autonomy for the following reasons: stability and executive - the existence of an executive team (Giunta) and a longer mandate (5 years) allows the implementation of long-term development strategies, without the syncope caused by a high rate of vacancies; financial independence - the ability to ensure over 85% of its income through its own effort reduces political pressure from the central level; protection from control - in Italy, the state no longer automatically checks each local act (as in Romania), but intervenes only in extreme situations, leaving the city hall to decide alone in most cases. Gura Humorului presents a model of autonomy in full consolidation, but which still remains under close administrative supervision (the tutelage of the prefect) and a greater financial dependence on the state budget.

To strengthen local autonomy in the city of Gura Humorului, based on the good practices identified in the administrative model in Bergamo, we can formulate some strategic recommendations: reducing the staff shortage - a critical priority is filling the 121 vacant positions (approximately 37% of the organizational chart), as an administration cannot be truly autonomous and efficient if it operates with an incomplete structure; specialization by portfolios - although Romanian law does not provide for a "Giunta", the mayor can delegate clearer attributions to the deputy mayor and department directors, creating a de facto executive more specialized by fields (tourism, infrastructure, social, etc.); increasing self-financing capacity by diversifying its own revenues - following the example of the city of Bergamo, Gura Humorului could place greater emphasis on capitalizing on available assets (concessions, rentals of commercial or advertising spaces) in order to reduce dependence on transfers from the state budget from ~30% to thresholds below 20%.

Overall, by retrospectively approaching the entire path covered in the framework of this work, we have managed to study all the areas taken into research in order to elucidate, in a comparative manner, in a comprehensive way, the theme of the conditions that activate the autonomy of local administrative systems. The comparison of the two local public administrations demonstrates that authentic local autonomy cannot be reduced to a simple legal concept, but fundamentally depends on a stable personnel structure, a robust self-financing capacity, executive specialization and the assumption of decision-making responsibility, elements that, once integrated, transform the administrative mechanism from a simple executor of the center into a service provider that responds to the real needs of the community.

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