AI Readiness in the Neo-Weberian State: The Case of Slovenia and Lessons for CEE

Matej Babšek, Aleksander Aristovnik

Faculty of Public Administration, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Abstract: The adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) in public administration (PA) offers both transformative opportunities and profound challenges, particularly within governance systems characterised by the neo-Weberian state (NWS) model. This study examines how administrative traditions influence AI readiness in PA, focussing on Slovenia as a representative case for Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). Using a qualitative case study design combining literature review and focus groups with policy makers and practitioners, the study identifies seven dimensions of AI readiness shaped by the neo-Weberian State (NWS) model, such as technology, organisational structure, organisational culture, people, legal and ethical frameworks, data and environment, and highlights key institutional strengths and barriers. Based on these findings, the study proposes five strategic foundations to improve AI readiness without jeopardising the core principles of NWS. The study contributes to theoretical advances in understanding AI readiness in traditional administrative contexts and offers practical strategies for policy makers and practitioners operating at the intersection of digital transformation and administrative tradition. Limitations arising from the single-country focus and qualitative design are acknowledged, as are recommendations for future cross-national, longitudinal and citizen-centred research.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, readiness, neo-Weberian State, public administration, Slovenia.