

Foreword

Nothing illustrates the importance of public service generational management better than the fact that there is no European country that is not grappling with generational challenges hampering the replenishment of the public administration workforce. It is a general phenomenon that societies are continuously aging, and this trend is even more accelerated in public administration. The increasing demands place ever-growing burdens on healthcare and social systems, making it increasingly difficult to secure sufficient human capacity to ensure public services. Despite these difficulties, the countries that succeed are those that not only address the challenges posed by an “overweight” older population but also see them as opportunities for development. With age-conscious personnel policies, they can influence demographic trends and, as part of this, redesign HRM processes to consider age-specific needs, maintain the work ability and well-being of government officials throughout their careers, and ensure continuous professional development during a lifelong career.

In Hungarian public administration, the proportion of younger age groups increased due to government measures introduced in the early 2010s. However, the age composition of the workforce has once again started to shift toward aging. This predicts that within 5–15 years, we will face another, more prolonged wave of retirements, and the government must be prepared to address this issue. A first step toward addressing this challenge could be the scientific research conducted by the Department of Human Resources at Ludovika University of Public Service at the request of the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Public Administration and Regional Development.

The researchers focused on key areas, including the age composition of employees in government administration, the persistence of seniority, knowledge transfer, the functioning of mentoring programs, expectations expressed in the “psychological contract”, the interrelations of generational management and employer branding, as well as development and talent management programs. These topics are of particular importance for ensuring the sustainability of public service operations, as the efficiency of public services depends not only on the age

of employees but also on the effectiveness of knowledge sharing and collaboration between generations. Bridging the generational gap and preserving the knowledge of older workers are crucial for the future of public administration.

I would particularly like to highlight that, for the first time, data from the recently introduced Government Personnel Decision Support System were utilised for scientific research. This enabled a comprehensive empirical examination of the entire body of government officials, comprising over 77,000 employees. The research resulted in more than 12,000 completed questionnaires, generating not only quantitative analyses but also detailed, in-depth qualitative findings. The combination of interviews and survey data collection allowed for a thorough analysis of intergenerational dynamics and the challenges of generational management.

International connections also played an important role in the research. Analysing European practices, such as the generational strategies employed by the OECD and the EU, alongside international experiences, helped us identify directions for the Hungarian public service that align with global trends while accounting for domestic particularities.

The research aims not only to benefit Hungarian public administration but also to contribute to European administrative practices. The findings were presented and recognised at both the working group meeting and the Directors-General meeting of the European Public Administration Network (EUPAN).

The thoroughness and professionalism of this research have contributed significantly to advancements in the field of generational management. The work of the researchers not only provides valuable contributions to the scientific community but also supports governmental decision-makers in shaping public service strategies and policies. This document fulfils Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's sentiment: "We do not inherit the Earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children." It reminds us that the transfer of knowledge and joint effort are about laying the foundations for the future, not merely preserving the past.

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