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Generations in Public Administration 2024

OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Several global human resource management trends are directly related to the issues examined in this report. Many countries worldwide are grappling with an aging workforce. Simultaneously, welcoming Generation Z and, soon, the Alpha Generation into the labour market is also challenging. Effectively transferring the knowledge and experience of older employees to younger generations is critical for preserving and enhancing organisational knowledge. Automation, artificial intelligence (AI) and digital tools reshape work. Younger generations bring strong digital competencies, while older generations often contribute valuable experiential knowledge. Promoting workplace diversity, particularly age diversity, has become a central focus in global HR strategies. Enhancing intergenerational cooperation supports the development of inclusive workplace cultures that appeal to all age groups. Retaining talented employees in civil service is as crucial as in the private sector. HR policies and employer branding strategies should address generational aspects to strengthen civil service competitiveness in the labour market.

In aging societies, public administrations must develop strategies to maintain organisational knowledge and foster knowledge transfer between generations. This ensures organisational stability and improves the stable quality of public services. Different generations bring varying expectations to the workplace (e.g. work–life balance, value-driven work). Understanding and addressing these differences can reduce workplace conflicts and foster more effective collaboration. Civil service is responsible for maintaining social cohesion and improving citizens' quality of life. Strengthening intergenerational

cooperation enhances public administration operations and contributes to societal stability. Collaboration and knowledge-sharing among European public administrations provide opportunities to identify and adapt best practices. The findings of this research may offer input for improving HR policies at both national and international levels.

Overall, this research helps uncover how age diversity can be managed effectively and how intergenerational cooperation can drive modernisation and sustainability in public service organisations. The study provides insights into enhancing civil service operations while aligning them with global HRM trends by addressing these issues.

From 1 July 2024, Hungary holds the presidency of the European Public Administration Network (EUPAN) during the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union. The management of different generations in the civil service is a priority in its work programme, aiming to address the demographic challenges that all countries are increasingly facing. Effective communication and cooperation between different age groups significantly influence the effectiveness of the organisations. There is a growing need in public administrations to transfer the experience and knowledge of older workers to younger generations. To achieve this, recruitment policies and organisational culture need to evolve to encourage intergenerational cooperation and maximise the benefits of age diversity. An effective human resource management (HRM) policy is needed that takes advantage of the opportunities arising from age diversity.

The Hungarian Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Public Administration and Regional Development entrusted the Ludovika University of Public Service (LUPS) with conducting scientific research on the practices of the EUPAN countries and to explore the generational challenges. The study was carried out by the HRM Research Group of the University to map the differences between the generations working together, the factors influencing their cooperation, and to identify steps to improve intergenerational cooperation in the civil service.

This report reflects the network's collaborative effort to address key public administration issues in the field of human resource management during Hungary's presidency term. It includes insights and data collected through various channels to enhance public sector practices and policies, as well as it aims to facilitate further discussions and initiatives.

Topics covered by the research

- examination of the age characteristics and composition of government officials and the “survival” of seniority
- knowledge (capital) transfer, mentoring programmes
- the psychological contract
- generation management and employer branding
- learning and development (L&D)

In addition to documentary and content analysis, statistical data analysis, questionnaire surveys, and in-depth interviews were conducted with senior managers – top leaders in the Hungarian public administration during of the Hungarian presidency. The following chapter of the volume provides a detailed summary of the Hungarian aspects and findings of the research.

As part of the extensive research, a separate questionnaire was developed to explore the practices of EUPAN countries under the title *Questionnaire on the HR Management of Public Administration Organisations in EU Member States, Observer Countries and the European Commission with a Special Focus on the Area of Generation Management*.

The main topics of the questionnaire

- general data on the workforce composition
- general characteristics of employment in central administration, employer branding
- strategic HR decision support

Key focus areas

The primary goal of the questionnaire was to provide insights into the workforce composition, HRM strategies and specific tools employed to foster intergenerational collaboration. The survey collected data on key HR aspects such as workforce demographics, strategic planning, mentoring programs and employer branding. Additionally, it aimed to identify innovative practices that could serve as benchmarks for other Member States.

Workforce composition and characteristics: Detailed analysis of age distribution, gender ratios and contract types across various levels of public administration.

Examination of retirement trends and their impact on workforce sustainability.

HR strategies and decision support: Assessment of HRM strategies, including succession planning and policies addressing workforce aging. Evaluation of strategic frameworks and data-driven decision-making practices in personnel management.

Mentoring: Analysis of mentoring programs aimed at integrating new employees and facilitating knowledge transfer.

Employer branding: Exploration of employer branding strategies to attract and retain talent, particularly in the context of generational differences. Identification of factors that enhance the appeal of public administration careers, such as work–life balance and competitive benefits.

Learning and development: Evaluation of learning and development (L&D) methods, including innovative tools such as AI-supported training and micro-credentials.

Satisfaction and progress: Employee satisfaction surveys and organisational development programs at the central level, based on which effective strategies can be developed to enhance employee engagement, improve organisational efficiency and address specific challenges.

This research is valuable for gaining insight into and enhancing HRM practices in public administrations across Europe. Collecting diverse data

and highlighting effective practices tackles prioritising issues such as an aging workforce and generational differences while providing strategic guidance for shaping future HR policies in the ever-changing context of civil service.

Questions answered by the questionnaire

- Does the ageing of central public administration staff affect all EUPAN countries in the same way, or are there any differences among these countries?
- What is the average age of central administration staff in the EUPAN countries, and how does the age composition develop?
- Is there a planned succession strategy in place in the organisations?
- What are the characteristics of mentoring programmes that support inclusion (e.g. in terms of level of regulation, training, managerial commitment)? How committed is an organisation to implementing the programme? Does it have a role in building individual career pathways?
- What is the social media presence of organisations–agencies like?
- How flexible are the working hours in the public administrations?
- What kind of modern technology is being used to strengthen the workplace–employer brand?
- What learning and development (L&D) tools–methods are used to develop civil servants?

A total of 26 countries and the European Commission completed the questionnaire by the end of August 2024.

Some questions were not answered by all countries, so the number of countries responding to each question may vary. This is also due to the fact that certain data might not have been available in some EUPAN countries, as was indicated in previous data collections. The report contains analysis and findings based on country responses.

Sections of the report

- overview of the research framework
- general data on workforce composition (questions 1–8)
- strategic thinking (questions 9–10)
- mentoring programmes (questions 11–12)
- employer branding (questions 13–15)
- training and development (questions 16–18)
- satisfaction and progress (questions 19–20)
- personnel decision support (questions 21–23)

The structure of each section is consistent, beginning with a theoretical overview followed by the analysis of the questionnaire data. Each section concludes with a brief summary and references.

Methods

The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative analyses to comprehensively process responses from 27 partners. Out of a total of 38 entities (27 member countries, the European Commission and 10 observer countries), 27 completed the questionnaire. This represents approximately 71.05% of the total entities.

The questionnaire was designed to capture both structured, closed-ended responses and open-ended qualitative insights. The structured sections of the questionnaire provided data on key indicators and trends, while the open-ended sections encouraged participants to elaborate on specific practices, challenges and perspectives. The combination of these formats facilitated a nuanced exploration of the research questions. It included Likert scale ratings for factors such as strategic alignment, workforce planning and leadership competencies, alongside free text fields for sharing best practices. This dual approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of HR practices while allowing respondents to elaborate on unique experiences.

Structured, closed-ended responses were organised and analysed using Microsoft Excel. This facilitated calculations of frequencies, percentages and averages, while visual representations such as charts highlighted trends across countries. Open-ended responses were manually reviewed and analysed to identify and collect the best practices from the countries. Data cleaning and systematic categorisation ensured the reliability of the findings. This methodological approach provided a balanced perspective, leveraging both numerical patterns and detailed qualitative insights to address the research objectives effectively.

Authors and chapters

Overview of the research framework: Csilla Paksi-Petró

Q1–8: Zoltán Hazafi

Q9–10 and Q21–23: Péter Klotz

Q11–12: Edit Kajtár

Q13–15 and Q16–18: Edit Kajtár, Adrienn Magasvári

Q19–20: Csilla Paksi-Petró

The countries (and the European Commission) participating in filling out the research questionnaire are the following:

- | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Austria | 10. France | 20. Portugal |
| 2. Belgium | 11. Germany | 21. The Republic of Türkiye |
| 3. Bulgaria | 12. Greece | 22. Serbia |
| 4. Croatia | 13. Hungary | 23. The Slovak Republic |
| 5. Cyprus | 14. Ireland | 24. Slovenia |
| 6. The Czech Republic | 15. Italy | 25. Spain |
| 7. Denmark | 16. Latvia | 26. Sweden |
| 8. The European Commission | 17. Lithuania | 27. Switzerland |
| 9. Finland | 18. Luxembourg | |
| | 19. Poland | |

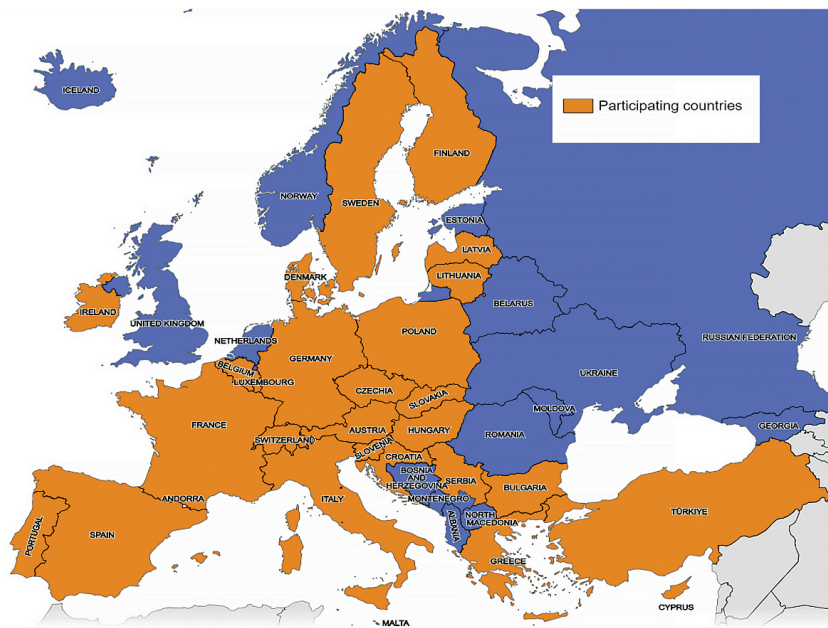


Figure 1

Participating countries in the research questionnaire

Source: Eurostat

In the report, the term “EUPAN countries” refers to the countries participating in the EUPAN cooperation as members or observers.

We sincerely thank all contributors involved in preparing this report, including the Ministry of Public Administration and Regional Development, the Ministry of the Interior, and the external and internal experts of the Ludovika University of Public Service.

Sincere appreciation is extended to the representatives from the EUPAN countries and observer countries for their willingness to provide data included in the report.

GENERAL DATA ON WORKFORCE COMPOSITION (Q1-8)

Theoretical framework

This section presents fundamental statistical data on the composition of the workforce, with a specific focus on civil service employees. It examines various factors such as the number of staff, gender and age distribution, as well as different employment types, including contractual and civil service positions.

In the first part of the questionnaire (Q1-8), we collected data on the composition of the workforce, including key staffing figures, age composition, gender ratio and the form of employment.

Using detailed data and charts, the chapter explores employment trends in public service across EUPAN and OECD countries, with a particular emphasis on the age composition of the workforce, including the proportions of younger and older employees and the average age.

Number of employees

The headcount figures alone do not tell us anything, but if we compare them, for example with the economically active population, we can compare countries (Eurostat s. a.).¹ The ratio of the number of staff in central government to the economically active population aged 15–64 can be used as an indicator to assess the relative weight of the number of staff per country.

According to this, in EUPAN countries, the central administration workforce accounts for an *average of 2.8% of active employees*. However, certain countries significantly deviate from this average. In the Republic of Türkiye, the proportion of those working in central administration is more than five times the average, in Luxembourg more than four times and in Sweden more than twice the average. On the other hand, in eleven countries, the proportion

¹ The economically active population (also called labour force) is the sum of employed and unemployed persons.

of the central administration workforce does not even reach half of the average, and in Poland, this figure is less than one-tenth of the average ($N = 23$).

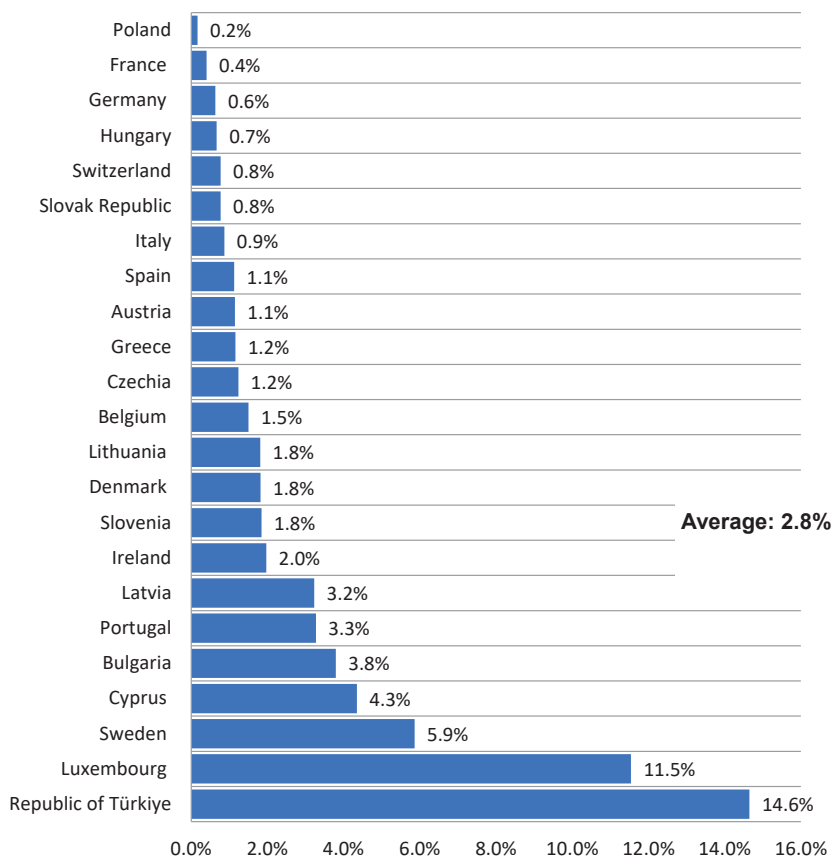


Figure 2

The proportion of the people employed in the central public administration in relation to active employees in the labour market

Source: Compiled by the author based on EUPAN,² Eurostat s. a

² Whenever EUPAN is cited as the source, it specifically refers to the research of *Generations in Public Administration 2024*, conducted for the Hungarian EU Presidency 2024, as part of the EUPAN activity.

OECD data show that despite austerity measures following the 2007–2008 financial crisis, the share of public service employment in total employment has remained relatively stable, falling from 18.2% in 2007 to 17.9% in 2019.

If we look only at the EUPAN countries, we can see that the number of administrative posts increased in the vast majority of countries between 2007 and 2019. The highest average annual increase was in Luxembourg (3.6%), while in Greece and Latvia the average annual decrease was more than 1% (N = 23).

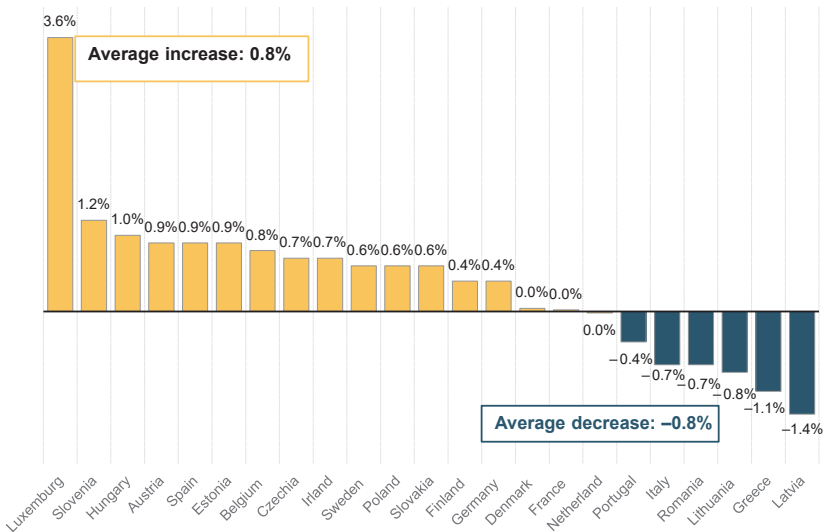


Figure 3
Average annual change in the number of jobs in public administration (2007–2019)
 Source: Compiled by the author based on OECD data

Public administration employment then continued to grow, with all but a few countries (France, Poland) exceeding the previous year's level in 2021. The largest increases occurred in Latvia and Estonia. The increase is explained by both the average increase in administrative employment over the year and the slight decrease in general employment (N = 24).

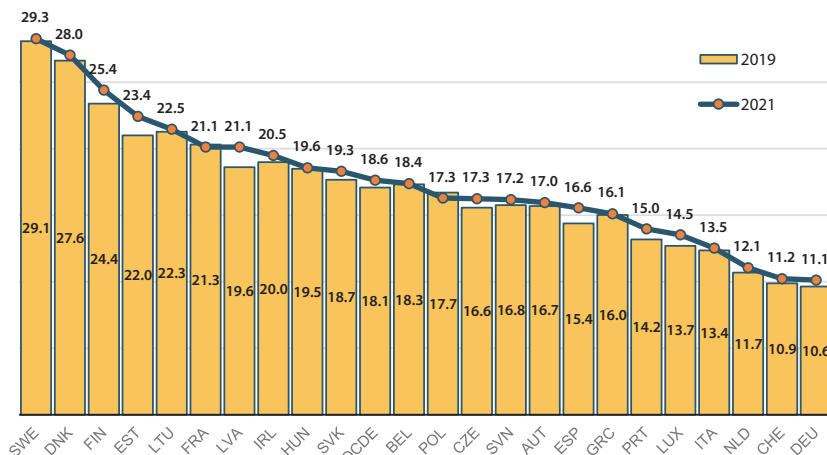


Figure 4

Administrative posts as a share of total posts (2019–2020)

Source: Compiled by the author based on OECD data

However, these changes did not affect the “normal” order of countries. Public service employment is highest in the Nordic countries (Sweden, Denmark, Finland), where it accounts for almost 30% of total employment. They are followed by the Baltic States.

If we take a look at how the change in the number of civil servants has affected the internal proportions of age groups, we come to the conclusion that *three trends* have emerged across countries. In the Czech Republic, Denmark and the Netherlands (in the latter two the size of the staff has not changed), the proportion of young people has increased sharply (15.9%, 10.7% and 4.4% respectively), while in other countries, although the employment of young people has increased, it has not risen as much as the overall increment in the number of employees (Austria, Belgium and Finland).

In other countries, despite the growth of public administration staff, the share of persons in the age group of 18–34 years has fallen. The phenomenon is most striking in Germany, where employment in public administration increased by 5%, but the share of young people fell by 13.4%.

In Latvia, Lithuania and Portugal, both the number of people in public administration and the share of young people fell (in Latvia by twice as much) (N = 21).

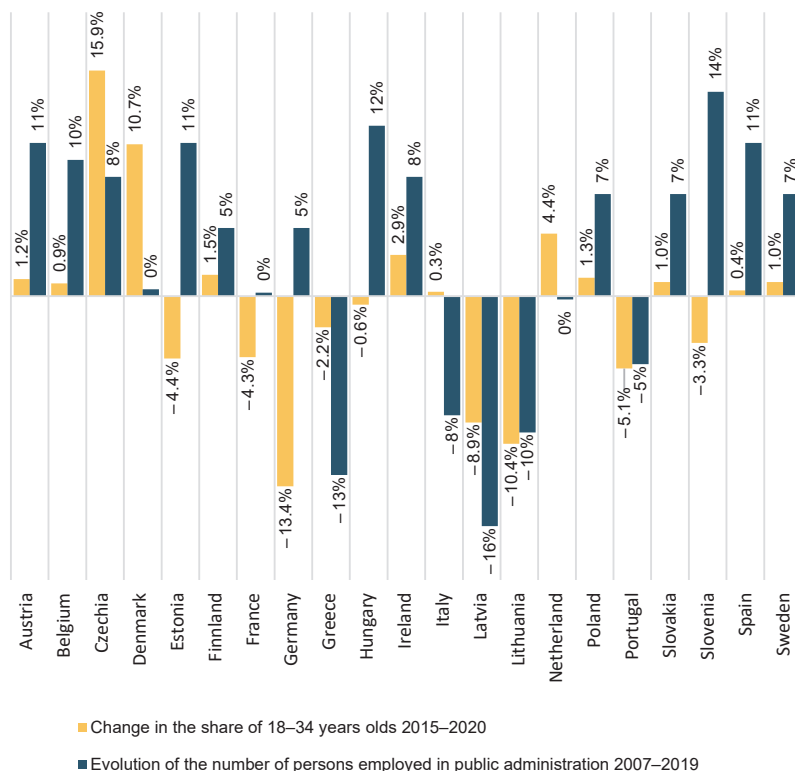


Figure 5
Evolution of the number of persons employed in public administration and of the number of persons aged between 18–34

Source: Compiled by the author based on OECD data

Trends in workforce size and the number of employees

Average age

Most data were provided with the average age of the central administration. The *average age* in EUPAN countries is 46.8 years. In comparison, 7 countries (EC) have an average age higher than this (N = 21).

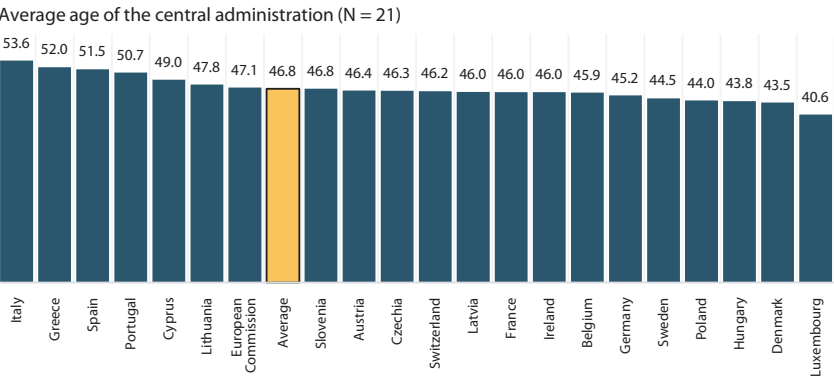


Figure 6
Average age in the central administration
Source: Compiled by the author based on EUPAN

Contractual employment and application of the Labour Code

In 10 of the responding countries (N = 10) there is a possibility to apply general labour law rules in the central and the public administration, which provides favourable conditions for personalised employment. Some countries have a particularly high proportion of contract workers (Portugal, Germany and Lithuania).

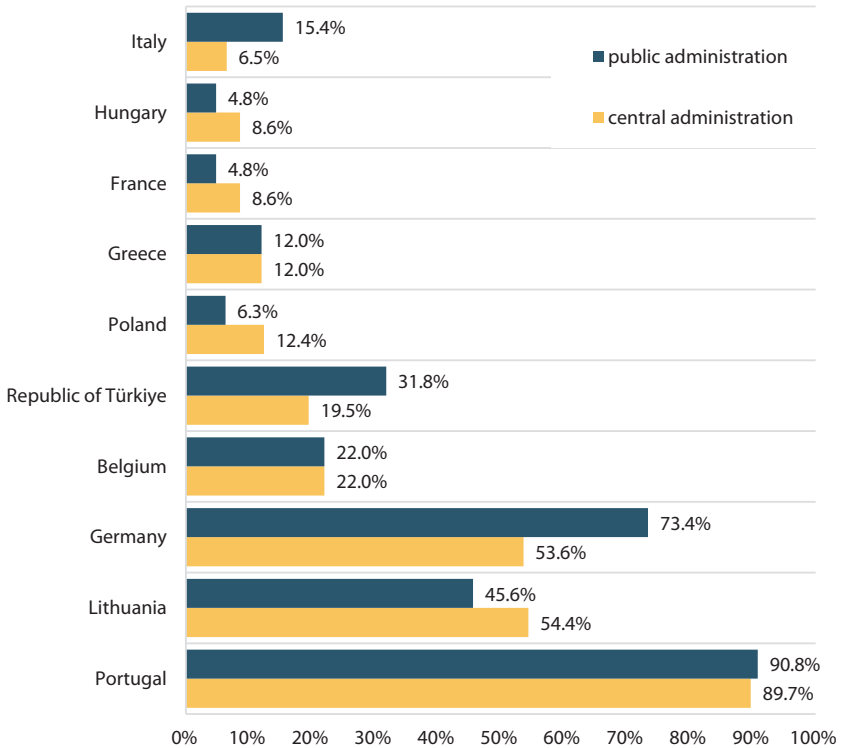


Figure 7
Contractual employment and application of the Labour Code
 Source: Compiled by the author based on EUPAN

Gender distribution

On average, 59.4% of people working in public administration are women. They are the majority in all countries' administration except Switzerland and the Republic of Türkiye. In seven countries, they account for more than two-thirds of the population ($N = 25$).

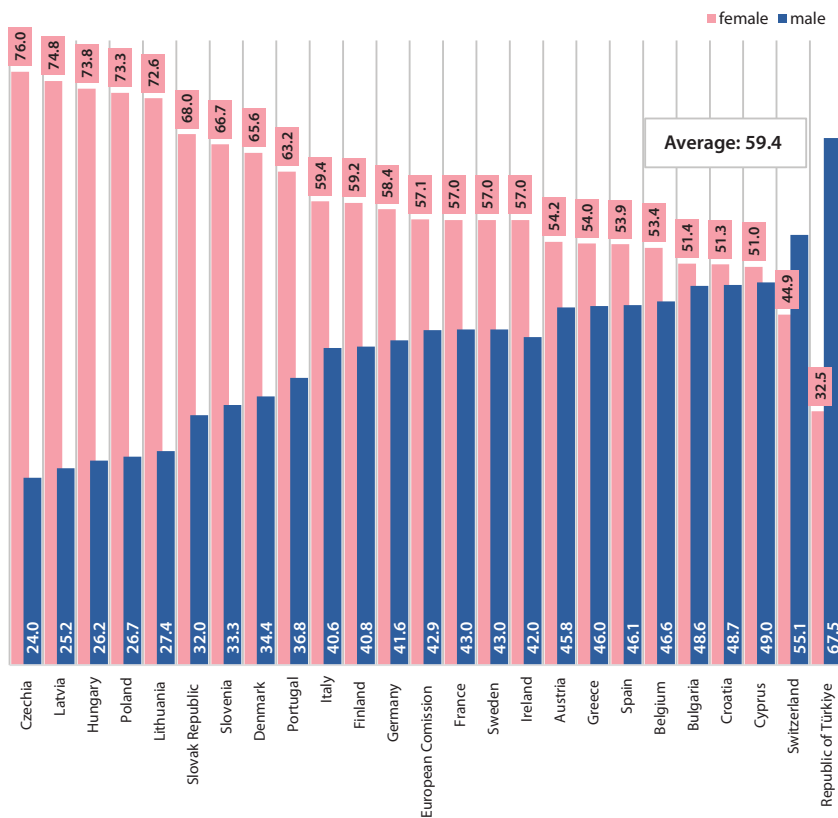


Figure 8
Gender ratio in public administration
 Source: Compiled by the author based on EUPAN

In the broadly defined public sector, women make up 59.9%. In contrast, they are underrepresented in the overall labour force, where their proportion is 47.7%.

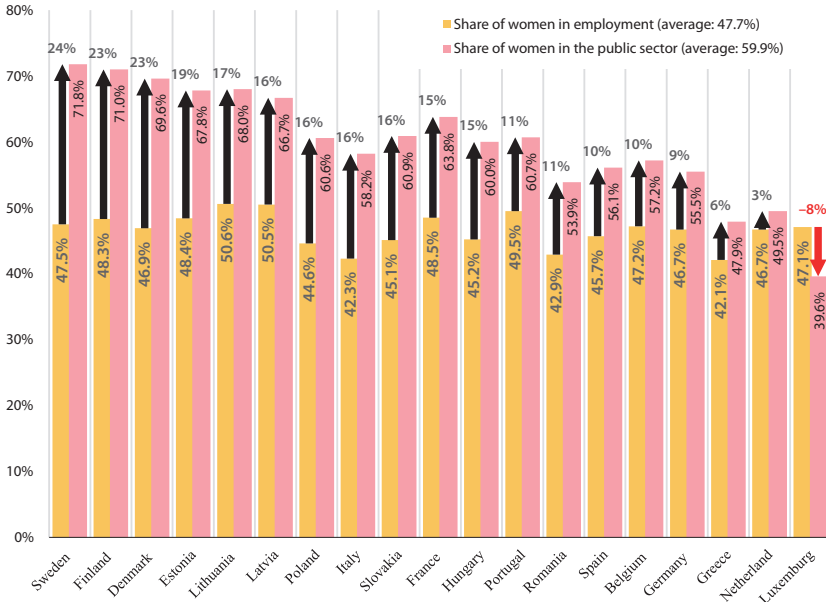


Figure 9

*Share of women 2019**Source:* Compiled by the author based on OECD data

In Hungary, gender distribution was already dominated by *women* in the early 1990s (67%–33%), and later this trend strengthened further (HAZAFI 2023: 87). Today, approximately three out of four civil servants are women. The proportion of women working in public administration is almost as high as in the education (76.2%) and health sectors (81%), which are traditionally considered female professions.³

³ Number of persons employed by industry, sector, gender – author's calculation based on TEÁOR'08 s. a.

Age composition

A common feature of developed countries is the ageing of society and of the public administration staff, which is more significant in public administration than in society as a whole (HAZAFI 2009). For this reason, “shaping” the age composition of the workforce is one of the challenges of HRM, not only for today but also for the future. At the same time, it should be noted that all EUPAN countries have the highest proportion of middle-aged staff ($N = 22$).

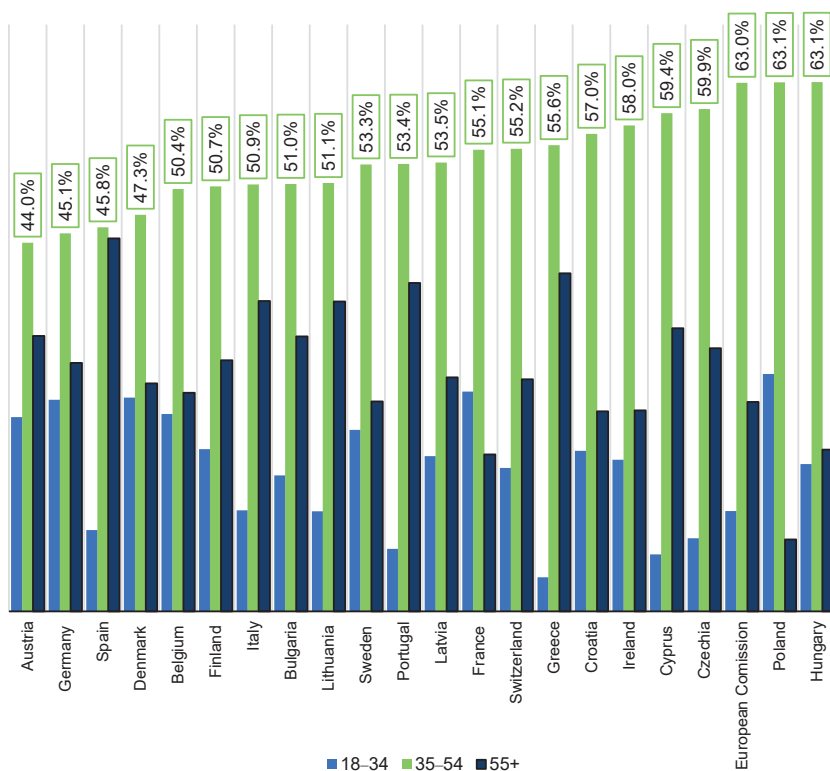


Figure 10
Age composition in public administration 1
 Source: Compiled by the author based on EUPAN

According to a study published in 2015, the *age composition* of the civil service varies across groups of countries in the European Union (Baltic Institute of Social Sciences – ODA 2015). Different trends characterise the “old” (western) and “new” (eastern) Member States.⁴ Data at that time showed that the proportion of people aged 50 and over was much lower in the “new” Member States (30.8%) than in the “old” Member States (41.4%). The direction of change also differs between these two groups of countries, with the proportion of people aged 50 and over generally decreasing in the “new” Member States and increasing in the “old” Member States between 2010 and 2014 (Baltic Institute of Social Sciences – ODA 2015). The largest decrease was in Hungary (7%) and the largest increase in Ireland (12%) (Baltic Institute of Social Sciences – ODA 2015). The study attributed this to the generational change that took place in the 1990s with the regime change. Furthermore, employment conditions in public administration in Eastern European countries developed favourably in the early 1990s. Young people considered public administration a good opportunity to gain their first work experience. In addition, experience in law and finance in public administration provided unique and competitive skills in the labour market (Baltic Institute of Social Sciences – ODA 2015).

If we look at current data from the “old” and “new” countries, this difference is no longer apparent (N = 22).

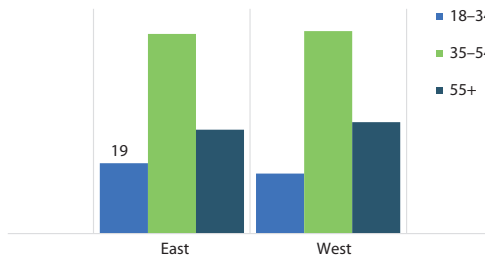


Figure 11
Age composition in public administration 2
 Source: Compiled by the author based on EUPAN

⁴ The division between “old” and “new” Member States distinguishes between Member States that joined before 2004 and those that joined after 2004.

The proportion of persons in the age group of 18–34 is below the average (17.2%) in only nine countries (and the European Commission). In five countries, it does not even reach 10%. The difference between the two extremes is nearly sevenfold (N = 22).

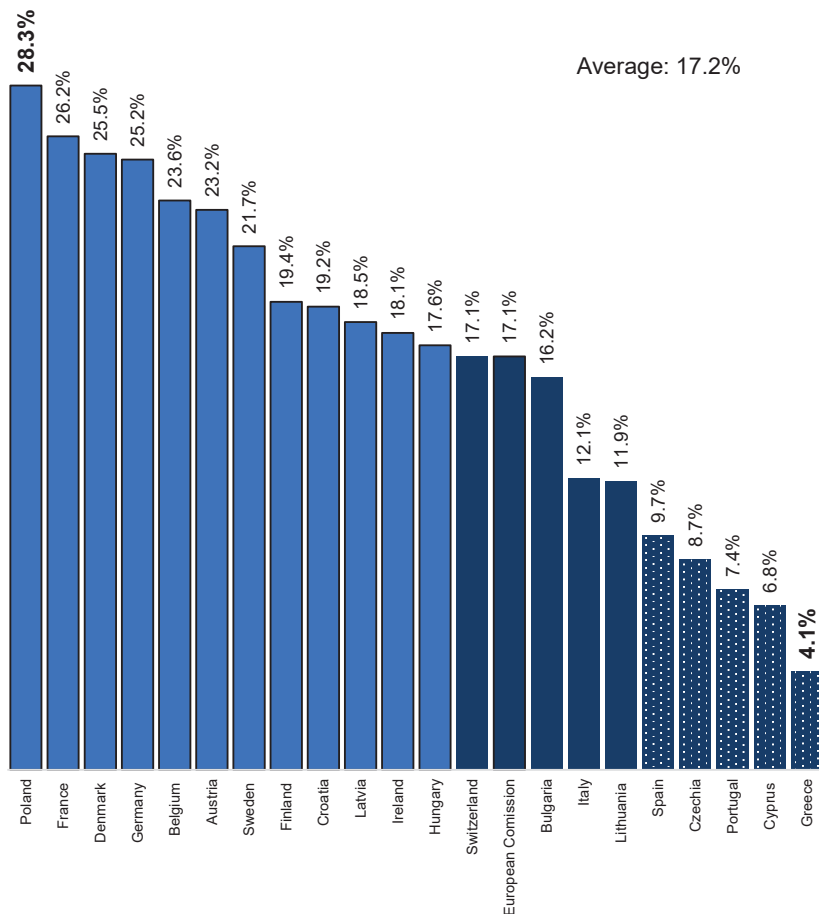


Figure 12

Proportion of persons aged between 18–34 years in public administration

Source: Compiled by the author based on EUPAN

The proportion of those aged over 55 years exceeds the average in eleven countries, with Spain having more than five times as many people from this generation working in public administration compared to Poland (N = 22).

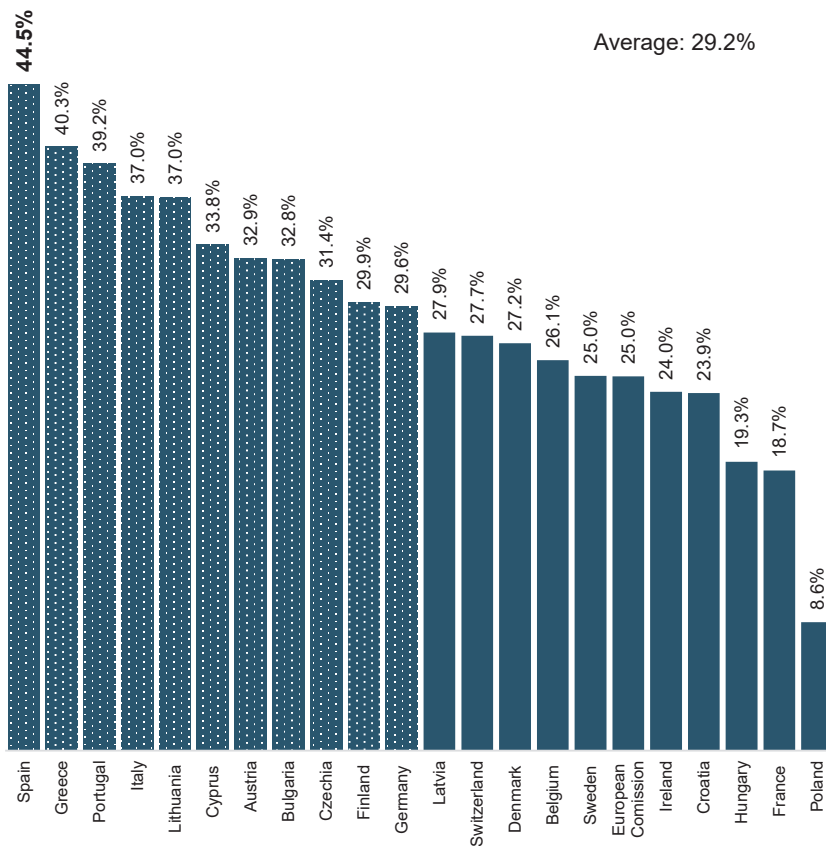


Figure 13

Share of persons aged over 55 years in public administration

Source: Compiled by the author based on EUPAN

OECD data also show that the *rejuvenation* started between 2015 and 2020 has stalled and the weight of the generation aged over 55 years has increased again ($N = 20$).

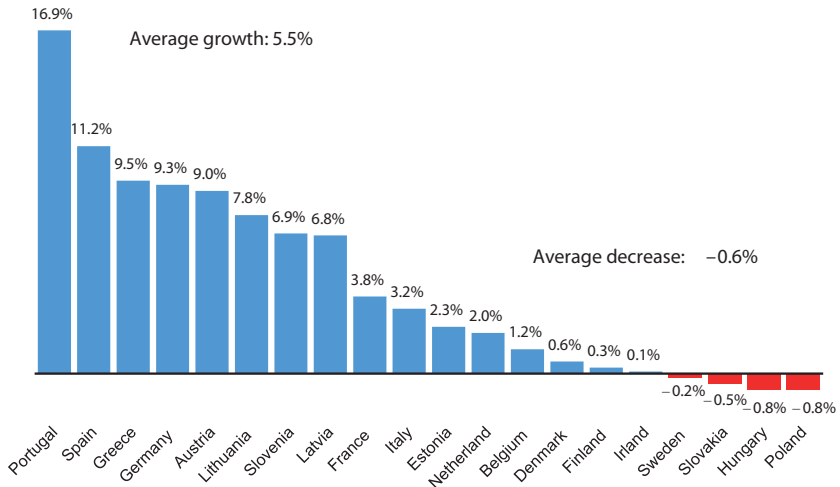


Figure 14

Change in the share of the persons aged over 55 years in public administration, 2015–2020

Source: Compiled by the author based on OECD data

The *ageing process* is also confirmed by the fact that, as the share of older people has risen, the number of young people has generally fallen ($N = 13$).

Experience is valuable in an “older” organisation, while a “young” organisation is strong in digital competences, entrepreneurship–innovation and motivation. Organisations can benefit most from generational diversity through transgenerational working groups and mentoring programmes. At the same time, intergenerational tensions are a major challenge for HRM, as each generation has its own vision of work, its own ways of working, and its own different attitudes towards hierarchy and different technologies (HAZAFI–KAJTÁR 2021).

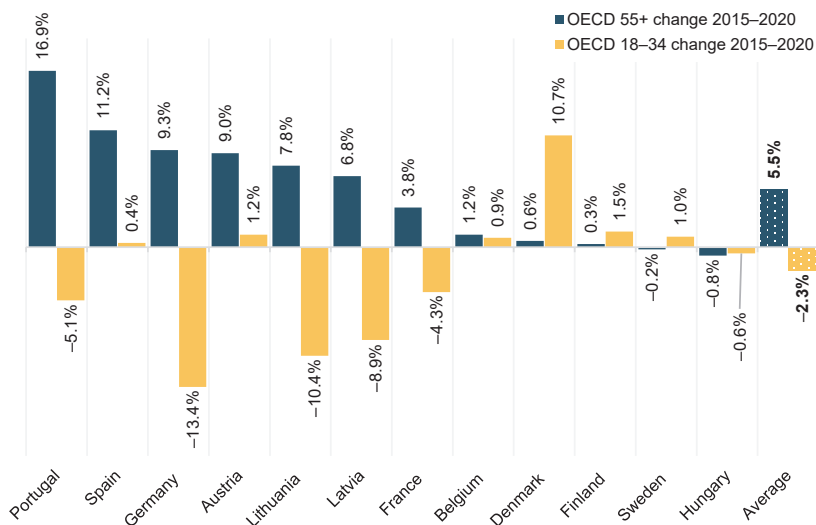


Figure 15

*Ageing in public administration, 2015–2020**Source:* Compiled by the author based on OECD data

They carry the values of the age in which they grew up (LING 2018). However, survey results show that if we simplify the age grouping into two large blocks (Baby Boomer and Generation X, Generation Y and Generation Z), the age group's perceptions of work are closer than we might normally think. The importance of work/life balance, self-fulfilment, job security, financial stability, freedom and flexibility are almost equally valued. There is also agreement on the need for autonomy, innovation, patience and ambition to be successful in their careers. All this shows that the age groups have almost identical value orientations on a number of important issues (LING 2018).

SUMMARY

The primary objective of this chapter was to present the findings pertaining to the composition of the workforce within the civil service. In EUPAN countries, the central administration workforce accounts for an average of 2.8% of active employees. The average age of the workforce is 46.8 years, and the proportion of women in the civil service is high (59.4%). The average proportion of those aged between 18–34 years in EUPAN public administrations is 17.2%. The proportion of those over 55 exceeds the average (29.2%) in eleven countries (e.g. Hungary, Poland, France and Ireland). Organisations can benefit most from generational diversity through transgenerational working groups and mentoring programmes but intergenerational tensions remain a challenge for HRM.

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STRATEGIC THINKING (Q9–10)

Theoretical framework

The concept of strategic human resource management (SHRM) was formed in the 1990s and became a fully accepted approach after the turn of the millennium (WRIGHT–MCMAHAN 1992; BOXALL–PURCELL 2003). As recent research has shown (STOREY et al. 2019), the approach to HRM has changed significantly in recent times, with new areas of study (leadership, performance, ethics, generations) becoming the focus of attention. Despite the wide range of research, experts agree that organisational performance and the achievement of organisational goals depend primarily on the composition, competencies and readiness of human resources, which management must address at a strategic level and within a strategic framework.

As the earlier EUPAN's research during the Latvian Presidency found, “[the factors of attitudes towards public administration] are at least partly based on actual problems connected with strategic personnel planning. It means that it is not possible to improve the image of public administration as an employer only by communicative means. However, in the long-term, it might only be achieved by a systematic development of personnel policy, adjusting it to the overall strategy of public administration and labour market demand” (Baltic Institute of Social Sciences – ODA 2015: 7).

Almost a decade since the study was carried out, we have been prompted to examine the framework for strategic planning in public administration in the context of our questionnaire. In other words, the extent to which specific HRM strategy is developed within public administrations. Although we are unable to provide comparative data for previous years due to the lack of a similar survey, and thus, it is not possible to outline trends and developments, the research can nevertheless provide useful information on the strategic HRM thinking of public administrations in the EU Member States, European Commission and observer countries.

HRM strategy in the central public administrations

The management of different generations in the civil service is a priority of the EUPAN presidency program of Hungary during the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union (aiming to address the demographic challenges that all countries are increasingly facing). Therefore, in our questionnaire, we not only asked about the strategic HRM framework of the EUPAN countries but also examined the extent to which the strategy *regarding the ageing of personnel*, including the employment of both older and younger generations, is a feature of the strategy. Accordingly, we examined the continued employment of the older generation after retirement age and the challenges of attracting young people to public administration.

Our analysis of the HRM strategy has been limited mainly to the level of central administration. Our research defined central administration as core ministries and agencies of central and federal governments. The reason for narrowing the focus is that, on the one hand, the strategic management of public administration has its most significant impact at the level of central administration and, on the other hand, the fact that even if HRM strategies are adopted at the level of territorial administration in a country and age-specific issues are addressed, this is not necessarily the case for all territorial administration bodies in the country.

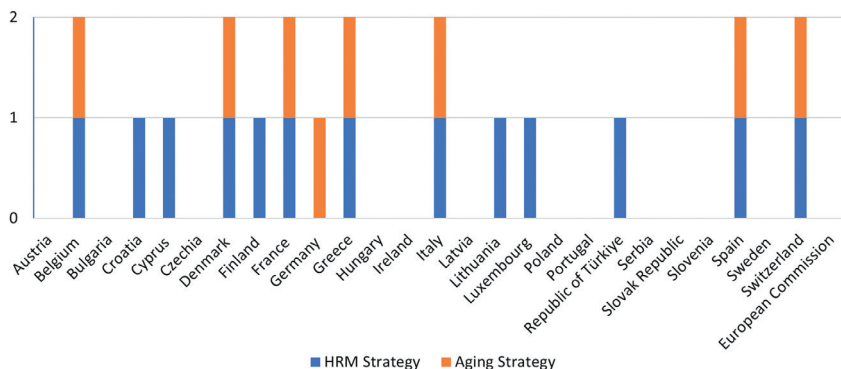


Figure 16

HRM strategy and ageing strategy in the central public administrations

Source: Compiled by the author based on EUPAN

Many EUPAN countries and observer countries responded to the questionnaire, allowing us to analyse data from 26 countries and the European Commission. Of these entities, 26 responded to questions 9 and 10 on the state of play of the HRM strategy and the ageing strategy, respectively.

From the answers to question Q9 (Is there an HRM strategy in the central administration?), 14 of the responding countries have an HRM strategy in the central administration, which indicates a rate of 50%. The responses are summarised in the chart below (N = 27).

As can be seen from the chart, the HRM strategy is very often accompanied by a strategic element addressing age specificities, but in Germany, there is a separate ageing strategy.

Some of the responding countries also provided additional comments to the completed questionnaire, which helped to refine further the picture of the situation of HRM strategy in central administrations.

In *Austria*, the individual departments carry out strategic human resources planning, management and coordination (human resources management). The federal administration needs an overall strategy for the ageing workforce.

However, individual ministries take measures in this area based on their strategic fields of action.

In *Denmark*, the HRM strategies are handled by the local HRM units at the local workplaces. Due to the decentralised organisation of the Danish central government, they do not make decisions or create strategies across the central government.

In *Finland*, the government is focusing on the whole life cycle management of public officials instead of specific ageing management. Therefore, measures mentioned in the questionnaire are taken as part of everyday management and work but not as part of a specific strategy.

In *Ireland*, the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform (DPENDR) has overall responsibilities for the civil service workforce, while individual Departments and Offices receive delegated sanction from DPENDR. The Department does not currently have one overarching HRM strategy for the Civil Service workforce but it does provide policy and strategy across individual aspects of HRM. Aspects of DPENDR's approach to the development of the workforce are included in the Better Public Services – Public Service Transformation Strategy 2030. Individual Departments are also able to devise and develop their strategies for HRM, people and culture.

Poland and *Latvia* are working on developing their specific HRM strategy. Poland uses specific standards for human resources management, and Latvia focuses more on public administration modernisation and learning and development plans for public administration employees.

In *Lithuania*, the Public Management Agency was established in 2023 and is responsible for implementing state policy in public administration and civil service, including HRM. The agency participates in improving human resources management through the following activities: organising and implementing centralised career management for institutional executives, ensuring the legality of competitions for career civil servant positions, and participating in the enhancement of the human resources development process and organisational culture of public institutions.

In *Germany*, there is a specific program for structured knowledge transfer entitled “Wege-Weiser”, a specific concept for organising the remaining working years and the transition to retirement.

The project Wege-Weiser was developed by the German Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community in 2021. The idea behind it is that, like any other employer, the Federal Administration has a great interest in keeping older employees healthy and motivated for as long as possible. After all, they have a wealth of knowledge and valuable experience. Measures for and age-appropriate work organisation and a health-promoting environment play a key role here. The public sector has a role model function. Therefore, different measures should be implemented in order that:

- Employers recognise the particular strengths of this group of employees. They are better than before, but they also utilise them so that employees continue to feel valued as experienced, often long-standing employees.
- Employees are informed about voluntary employment opportunities at an early stage of the remaining working years, the transition to retirement and the time after that.
- Both sides are enabled to plan transparently and structurally and to organise the remaining working years, the transition to retirement and the time afterwards smoothly (Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community 2021).

In *Spain*, the importance of data for management, the talent attraction program, the evaluation of the performance of the public employee’s program, etc. are making up an HRM strategy from the Spanish Secretariat for the Civil Service, all of them in line with introducing reforms to make the civil service more desirable to younger generations and attract specific professional profiles in the IT fields. In this sense, there is a framework document entitled “Consensus for an Open Administration”, developed by the Ministry for Digital Transformation and Civil Service, that, as a roadmap, includes the guidelines for inclusive public employment with better working conditions and strategic planning for the human resources, paying particular attention to count on social dialogue to get the results.

The *European Commission* has adopted in 2022 a well-elaborated Human Resources Strategy, presenting a common vision for a modern, flexible and values-driven organisation that empowers staff to deliver outstanding results for people across the EU and globally. The strategy addresses the Commission's need to perform at the highest level in the interest of Europeans, and the staff's need to have an attractive workplace and a fulfilling career where their excellence and efforts will be rewarded. The strategy focuses on the three strategic priorities to address the common challenges facing the Commission: attractiveness, selection and recruitment and career prospects (European Commission 2022).

As it can be seen from the additional answers, around half of the responding countries have an HRM strategy in place, and two more countries, Poland and Latvia, are preparing one. However, this does not mean that the other countries do not have a strategic framework for HRM at all. Austria, Denmark and Germany coordinate this task at a lower level due to their administrative structures, while Finland takes a life-cycle approach.

Ageing strategy in the central public administrations

For question Q10, we asked whether the central administration has a strategy regarding the ageing of personnel in central government administration (personnel management). The number of responses to this question was lower, with a *total of 8 countries* (Switzerland, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, France, Germany, Italy, Greece [N = 8]) and the European Commission; indicating that they had such a strategic framework. They typically cover the whole public administration, while in Germany, they cover the specialised branches under the control of ministries, and in Belgium they exclusively cover ministries or central agencies.

The *dates of adoption* of the current ageing strategy are very diverse. Belgium, Denmark and Italy adopted their strategy more than five years ago, Germany and Spain between three and five years, Greece, France and the European Commission between one and three years. In contrast, Switzerland adopted its strategy less than a year ago.

Greece, France and the European Commission *have not yet reviewed their strategy*, while Switzerland, Denmark and Spain have recently revised their strategy less than a year ago. Italy and Belgium reviewed their ageing strategies between one and three years ago, while more information is needed on the review of Germany.

The questionnaire also asked which of the *ageing objectives* the strategy prioritises. Belgium, Italy, Greece and the European Commission consider the area of attracting young people to the workforce to be of paramount importance, Denmark and Spain consider the continued employment of the older generation after reaching retirement age. In contrast, Switzerland, France and Germany consider these two elements equally important.

In terms of ageing strategy, the questionnaire offered several options (Increasing the required length of service for full/retirement pension; Reducing weekly working hours for individuals aged 60 and over by up to 15 hours, without adversely affecting future pension; Providing a flexible work schedule for more extended periods; Reducing working hours with a minor decrease in benefits; Performing mentoring tasks; Volunteering; Scholarships; Mentoring; Training/continuing education opportunities, and support for studies; Accelerating career advancement; Premium salary; Special benefits, e.g. Family Support Benefit; Favourable employment conditions, e.g. more flexible working hours, support for training, and additional leave for individuals raising children or starting a family; Mandatory retirement for senior government officials), but only few responses were received, so these are not examined in detail.

SUMMARY

Summarising the answers to Q9 and Q10, it can be concluded that although human resource management strategy is an essential element of human resource management in central administrations, it is only present in about half of the responding countries. However, the picture of HRM strategy is nuanced by the fact that, due to their constitutional setup and governance structure, some

countries need to address HRM strategy in a centralised way but at a sectoral or territorial level. Other countries, however, see the need to develop an HRM strategy and are working on it. Demographic changes and their impact on public administration require increased attention to generational issues. The responses to our questionnaire show that in about a third of the responding countries, this issue is already being addressed strategically, either in terms of attracting new generations into public service or knowledge transfer and retention linked to retirement. However, the main lines of the concrete supporting measures resulting from the strategy cannot yet be clearly outlined from the available data. The challenge and opportunity for development in the coming years will be to raise HRM issues to a strategic level and to continuously update and revise these strategies in response to rapidly changing external and internal operating conditions.

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MENTORING PROGRAMMES (Q11–12)

Theoretical framework

Mentoring typically pairs up individuals from different age groups, therefore, it can serve as a *bridge between generations*. Be it classic or reverse, one-on-one or group mentoring, the process promotes dialogue and mutual understanding. Various studies show that team composition matters for peer learning (DE GRIP 2024). Young employees can benefit immensely from knowledge spillover from their more experienced peers in the workplace. Having a mentor is one of the most crucial success factors in developing leadership characteristics. Its benefits include improved skills, knowledge and increased confidence (EHRICH–HANSFORD 2008). From the organisation's point of view mentoring is valuable in attracting and retaining talent. Mentoring can promote the development of specific parts of the staff (see the Portuguese best practice later). Moreover, it is an often-used tool to support underrepresented groups, such as women in higher positions (KUPERUS–RODE 2010; DUNBAR–KINNERSLEY 2011: 17).

The relevance of mentoring, the duration of the mentoring process

In the central administration of *Croatia, Denmark* and *the Slovak Republic* it is very typical to implement mentoring programmes to support the integration of new entrants. *Austria, Belgium, Lithuania, the Republic of Türkiye, Spain, Sweden* and *the European Commission* also place strong emphasis on mentoring. At the other end of the spectrum we find *Cyprus* and *Switzerland*, where there is no mentoring provided. *Portugal* is unique in this regard, as the trial period has elements similar to mentoring for new entrants.

Table 1
The duration of the mentoring programmes

Duration of the programme	Countries
1–3 months	Denmark, Latvia, Lithuania, the Slovak Republic
3–6 months	The Czech Republic, the European Commission, Hungary
6+ months	Belgium, Croatia, Finland, France, the Republic of Türkiye, Slovenia
Special	Austria, Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Poland

Source: Compiled by the author based on EUPAN

The typical duration of the organised programmes is relatively short (1–3 months) in Denmark, Latvia, Lithuania and the Slovak Republic. In the Czech Republic, the European Commission and Hungary the programmes usually last longer (3–6 months). In Greece the mentoring programme is about 14 days long. For the newly appointed employees an onboarding programme is scheduled to help to adjust to the new working environment. This can extend to several month depending on the position and duties assigned to the participant. Belgium, Croatia, Finland, France, the Republic of Türkiye and Slovenia invest the longest time in the process, the duration of the programme in these countries exceeds half a year.

In *Austria* the mentoring programme for the new staff is provided by the individual ministries, therefore, no data on general duration can be provided.

HR Management in the *Polish* Civil Service is also *decentralised* with Directors General of each office responsible for policy and its implementation at the level of the office (including ministries, but also smaller or lower level offices). Specific offices can have different solutions implemented. Mentoring is set as a recommendation in the Ordinance of the Head of the Civil Service concerning the standards of HRM.

In *Ireland*, while mentoring is in use in parts of the Civil Service, at a central level there are currently no consistent mentoring programmes for all Departments, nor are there any mechanisms to monitor the use of mentoring. Mentoring is not reserved for the young, it can also target the development of

senior civil servants as well. It is offered as one element of the senior leadership programmes (*SPS*).

As it was stated previously in this report, the *ageing strategy* in the central public administrations of Belgium, Italy and Greece gives priority to attracting young people. In the questionnaire, the European Commission also indicated this option as a priority. Denmark and Spain, on the contrary, place more importance on continued employment of the older generation after reaching retirement age. For Switzerland, France and Germany both goals are equally important. Mentoring can be beneficial for all three groups of countries, because it promotes retention of older civil servants (mentors) in addition to attraction of young people (mentees).

The key role of leaders in the mentoring process is highlighted by multiple countries (Austria, Poland, Croatia, Latvia, the Republic of Türkiye, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Italy and Spain) as one of the elements of learning organisation.

Best practices of the EUPAN countries

The knowledge spillover can be illustrated by the example of *Spain*, where the candidates who have passed the civil service exams for the senior corps have to carry out a stage in units where they *learn-by-doing*, under the mentoring of the head of the unit (usually a member of the same corps of civil servants), and before/after that, their training includes some international visits abroad (to the European institutions, to international schools, etc.) where they can further develop both professional and human skills for their future leadership in the public administration.

In Greece, under Law 4940/2022, a new *skill-based assessment and evaluation system* focuses on continuous improvement through *Development Plans for employees and supervisors*. This collaborative approach can be likened to mentoring. Employees and their supervisors identify necessary skills and define development steps together, while supervisors offer ongoing support. Mandatory meetings between supervisor and the employee are scheduled three times a year. The January meeting focuses on yearly work planning and setting clear expectations and priorities. The May meeting reviews progress and allows for necessary

revisions to the Development Plan. The December meeting evaluates the year's performance and formulates the Development Plan for the following year. Development plans utilise targeted training activities and specialised administrative tools, aiming to improve individual and team performance, thus increasing organisational efficiency and productivity. In *Austria* an *interministerial mentor programme* supports women's career. As part of the Federal Civil Service's staff development programme, a cross mentoring scheme is available. Experienced managers such as directors and directors general coming from outside the mentee's organisation (from other Federal Ministries) act as mentors and support female colleagues interested in developing professionally and in advancing their careers. The mentors provide both career development and psychosocial functions. Not only do they pass on their knowledge and experiences and give advice on career planning but also facilitate the mentees' entrance into professional networks.

The trainees of the *Hungarian Public Administration Scholarship Programme* are assisted by mentors (officials employed by the host department) for 10 months (7 month in Hungary and an additional 3 months abroad). The mentors are responsible, in particular, for preparing the work placement programme, supervising the trainees work, as well as regularly evaluating them (see Government Decree 52/2019 (III. 14.) on the Hungarian Public Administration Scholarship).

Mentoring caters for different target groups and can be adjusted to various development programmes. In *Portugal* the Secretariat-General of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers has created a mentoring programme as part of a wider programme aligned with the concepts of organisational well-being and happiness. The *Projeto Bem-Me-Quer* supports the easier integration of new workers or people reassigned to other workplaces. Another specific mentor programme is the *Mentoring Programme for Innovation and Leadership*, led by the National Institute for Administration. The target audience here is workers and managers responsible for innovation projects; and the mentoring for leadership is aimed at top and middle managers.

SUMMARY

Mentoring serves as a bridge between the different generations in the central administration of many Member States. In addition to its classic function, i.e. attraction of young people (mentees), mentoring also promotes retention of older civil servants (who can pass their knowledge and personal insight on to the next generation as mentors). Senior civil servants, however, can be mentees themselves as well. Mentoring caters for different target groups and can be adjusted to various development programmes. The best practices offered by the EUPAN countries include programmes for women, leaders and participants of innovation projects. The key role of leaders in the mentoring process is highlighted by multiple countries as one of the elements of the learning organisation.

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EMPLOYER BRANDING STRATEGY (Q13–15)

Theoretical framework

The relevant scientific literature offers three main perspectives on employer branding. The primary perspective emphasises the crucial role employer branding plays in winning the “war for talent” and highlights its benefits for skilled workers in competitive labour markets (CHRISTENSEN HUGHES – ROG 2008). The second (the functional organisational perspective) stresses that employer branding provides a framework for career management programmes and offers a novel approach to the organisation’s talent management strategy or acts as a corporate communication tool (AVERY– MCKAY 2006; BACKHAUS–TIKOO 2004). Finally, according to the third perspective, the target group of employer branding is usually potential employees in the recruitment process and current employees waiting to be retained (CABLE–TURBAN 2001; EWING et al. 2002). In the context of the public sector, employer branding can be defined as “an approach to recruitment and retention that involves internally and externally promoting a clear view of what makes an organization uniquely attractive as an employer” (THEURER et al. 2018: 155).

Improving recruitment performance through favourable employer branding can reduce recruitment costs (BARROW–MOSLEY 2005; KNOX–FREEMAN 2010). Public employers need to be visible and distinctive in their employer branding, as potential recruits are often simply unaware of potential employers (BAUM–KABST 2014). However, being able to attract is as important as being able to create and sustain the loyalty of the current employees, since low job satisfaction leads to high employee turnover, thus lower productivity. Several advantages of brand building include rising number of applicants and growing employee motivation. It also attracts the attention and interest of potential employees from Generations Z and Y, and contributes to a drop in employee fluctuation. It is also noteworthy that employer brand building is a dynamic process which can also react to the changing social, economic and labour landscape; thus, it can (and should) be continuously tweaked and updated (KAJOS–BÁLINT

2014). In light of the above, it may seem that employer branding is primarily a private sector issue, but a well-founded and well-developed employer brand can work well in the public sector too, given that labour shortages and the need to attract and retain top performers are relevant in both sectors.

The aim of this part of the research is to explore whether the EUPAN member countries participating in the study are making themselves visible as employers and whether they are building an employer brand. If the answer is affirmative, what is the focus of the strategy? Is it attracting young entrants or retaining existing older employees? What factors contribute to their employer brand? Our research questions in this area were formulated as follows:

- 1) Do the public administration bodies have an employer brand? Do they carry out activities related to the creation of a brand?
- 2) What are the values that make public sector organisations attractive employers for the different generations?

At the outset of the research, we hypothesised that public sector organisations are most often recommended by employees for values such as stability and security, as well as for serving the community and the prestige of work.

Existing employer branding strategy

Among the responding EUPAN countries ($N = 26$), 11 are engaged in employer branding and have an *employer branding strategy* (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, the Slovak Republic, Sweden and Switzerland). 15 countries do not have branding strategy (Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Finland,⁵ Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Portugal, the Republic of Türkiye, Slovenia, Spain and the European Commission) or do not know if such a strategic document exists (Poland).

⁵ In connection with the internal employer image-branding, agencies of Finland rarely have separate practices. They believe that internal branding is built on good work and a good work community.

The European Commission utilises attractiveness measures rather than a targeted employer branding strategy.

As shown in Figure 17, half of the participants have an employer branding strategy in the public sector.

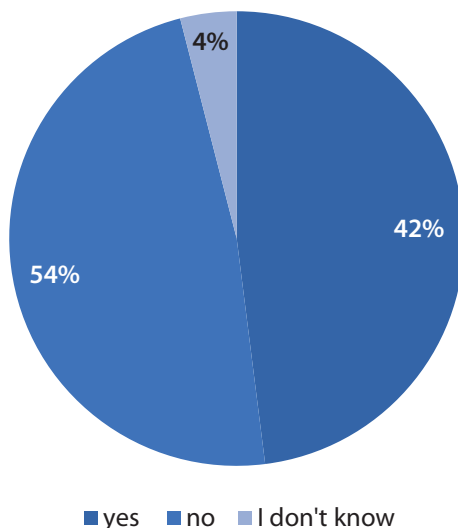


Figure 17

Employer branding strategy in the public administrations

Source: Compiled by the author based on EUPAN

Development of employer branding strategy

For this question, we requested data from countries where public administrations have an employer branding strategy. Due to invalid data,⁶ the answers of the following countries are not included in the analysis: Hungary, Finland, Luxembourg, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain.

⁶ The data was considered valid if the answer to question 13 on the existence of an employer brand was “yes”.

Luxembourg has set up a central employer branding strategy for the civil service, all the while encouraging the ministries and administrations to set up their own employer brands. So far, they focus, within the strategy, on *image campaigns, (digital) content, targeted partnerships and recruitment events*.

Although in *Portugal* there is currently no employer branding strategy in place at the central public administration, the preparation of one is *underway*.

In *Spain*, it is not typical to have an employer branding strategy, but the Ministry of Digital Transformation has developed a *talent attraction programme*, and the civil service uses a specific brand to be more recognisable.

According to WÆRAAS and SOLBAKK (2009), branding in the public sector can be more complex than in the private sector. For example, it can be challenging to define a common brand identity because identity can be fragmented within public administrations. Others (KEPPELER–PAPENFUSS 2020) suggest that public sector employers should consider whether an integrated employer branding strategy can be more effective than isolated efforts by individual public sector employers. Apart from some functional advantages, some potential employees do not seem to differentiate between the brands of public organisations.

Some public sector organisations in EUPAN countries have *independent employer branding strategies*, but some responding countries have common objectives as recommendations or guidelines. The public sector organisations of Austria,⁷ Denmark,⁸ Italy,⁹ Latvia and the Slovak Republic develop their employer branding strategy independently; there is no shared approach to employer branding across central government.

⁷ The source of the data: Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, the Civil Service and Sport. There are other campaigns by individual ministries, but it is not possible to be more specific about their factors.

⁸ Since information of this sort is not centrally available, the answer to this question is an educated guess based on the information continuously gathered through research and discussions on the topic.

⁹ The Department for Public Administration of Italy launched a traditional and social media branding campaign covering the whole public sector. However, line ministries and agencies have their own specific strategy.

The employer branding strategy of Belgium, France, Ireland, Germany, Switzerland and Sweden is based on central guidelines. This takes several forms. Belgium has an employer brand at the federal level, while France, for example, has an interministerial brand.

Belgium launched an employer branding campaign in 2021 in order to increase interest in a career within the federal administration. An easy-to-understand name of their employer brand is “working for Belgium”. The aim was to clearly indicate what the administration represents and what it means to work here. In addition to public administration, the campaign has also focused on the IT and health sectors, where it is difficult to find suitable candidates for vacant posts.

In *France*, the employer brand was launched as part of a *multimedia communication campaign*. It is hosted on a website that brings together all the information available on public sector job offers, the various employers and the jobs available.

Innovation Fellowship Project of *Switzerland* is an innovative project that promotes innovation and also has a positive internal effect. The program integrates experts from the private sector or academia into the administrative divisions of the Federal Administration for one year with the aim of promoting innovation. Both sides benefit from this commitment: The administrative body will benefit from new ideas, expanded expertise and the important external perspective, while the fellows will broaden their horizons and can work on innovative projects for Switzerland.

The Government of *Ireland* has *brand directives* applicable to all departments and offices. There are also cases where the strategy contains central guidelines, but based on this, the individual organisations develop their own brand themselves.

In *Germany*, an *umbrella employer brand* has been developed for the federal administration. All federal authorities are free to use this as a *recommendation*.

In *Sweden*, the agencies are free to form their strategies individually but can use the common EVP (*employer value proposition*) as guidelines. The common EVP is created as an employer branding initiative for the government sector. The aim is to build a strong employer brand that can contribute to more people wanting to work within the public sector.

The definition provided by the questionnaire did not include local governments and the broader public sector (e.g. healthcare, teachers, police, military, justice, etc.). However, some respondents also mentioned some of these sectors. In *Portugal*, for example, employer branding strategies are mainly applied at sectoral level, such as the navy, the armed forces and security forces. Traditionally, these sectors have strategies to attract applicants to various recruitment and selection processes. The employer branding strategy of *Belgium* also focuses on the IT and healthcare sectors, where it is difficult to find suitable candidates for vacant posts.

To review, although half of the responding countries do not have a specific employer branding strategy, public administrations in the EUPAN countries address recruitment, talent attraction and retention in different frameworks, and try to make themselves visible.

Key factors of employer branding strategy

According to several studies (DEMMKE 2005; DONG 2014), an important mechanism for building an image of the public administration as an attractive employer is to emphasise those aspects of the job that are important to both job seekers and employees in the organisation. The central element of the functioning of public administration is that it contributes to the functioning of society by serving the community. This is its core mission. The main advantages of public administration are the stability and security of work, the possibility of reconciling work and private life, learning opportunities, and better job guarantees and long-term social guarantees.

24 EUPAN countries provided evaluable answers to this question (Based on the governing – current government personnel policy, on which factors do you build your employer branding?); in case of Serbia, Germany and Sweden we do not have data on the objectives of the employer brand. Each country participating in the survey was asked to rate its brand on a scale of one to six based on 19 predefined factors. Table 2 shows the results.

Table 2
Employer branding factors based on averages

Factors on which the employer brand is built	Averages
The idea of serving the community, social responsibility (CSR)	5.29
Training and development opportunities	5.27
Work–life balance (e.g. family-friendly, flexible working, home office, remote work, part-time work)	5.09
Employment security	4.83
Career opportunities	4.83
Information about employment opportunities and requirements (e.g. recruitment tools)	4.64
Competitive exams, other selection methods	4.10
Workplace atmosphere (e.g. community, physical environment, community events)	3.65
Creativity, innovation	3.52
Performance management system	3.52
Ability of leadership	3.50
Esteem of employees	3.40
Varied professional task system – work (e.g. rotation)	3.06
Competitive salary compared to the private sector	3.05
Opportunity to gain international experience	3.10
Appropriate handling of generational challenges	2.76
Other financial benefits (e.g. cafeteria, company car, laptop, telephone, reimbursement of travel costs)	2.50
Application of the possibilities offered by modern technology (e.g. chatbot, virtual assistant, vlog, use of social media)	2.40
Well-being services (e.g. swimming pool, gym, relaxation room, sports facilities)	2.23

Source: Compiled by the author based on EUPAN

Based on the average scores of each factor, the responding EUPAN countries (N = 24) build their employer brand mainly on the following factors: work–life balance (e.g. family-friendly, flexible working, home office, remote work, part-time

work) employment security, training and development opportunities, the idea of serving the community, social responsibility (CSR). As shown in Figure 18.

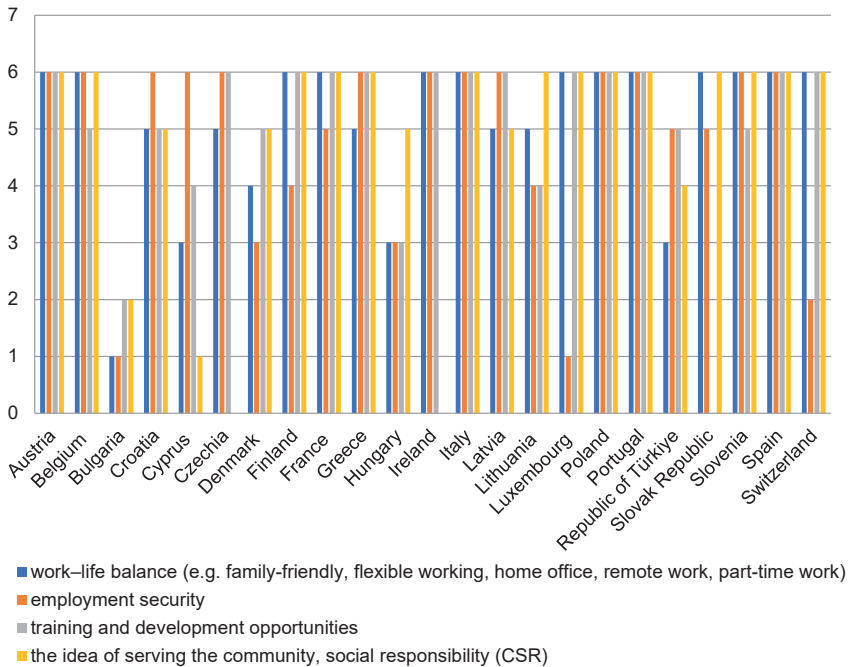


Figure 18
Employer branding factors in the public administrations 1
 Source: Compiled by the author based on EUPAN

Based on the averages, the factors in Figure 18 (application of the possibilities offered by modern technology, well-being services and other financial benefits) are typically less common in the employer brand strategy of each respondent country.

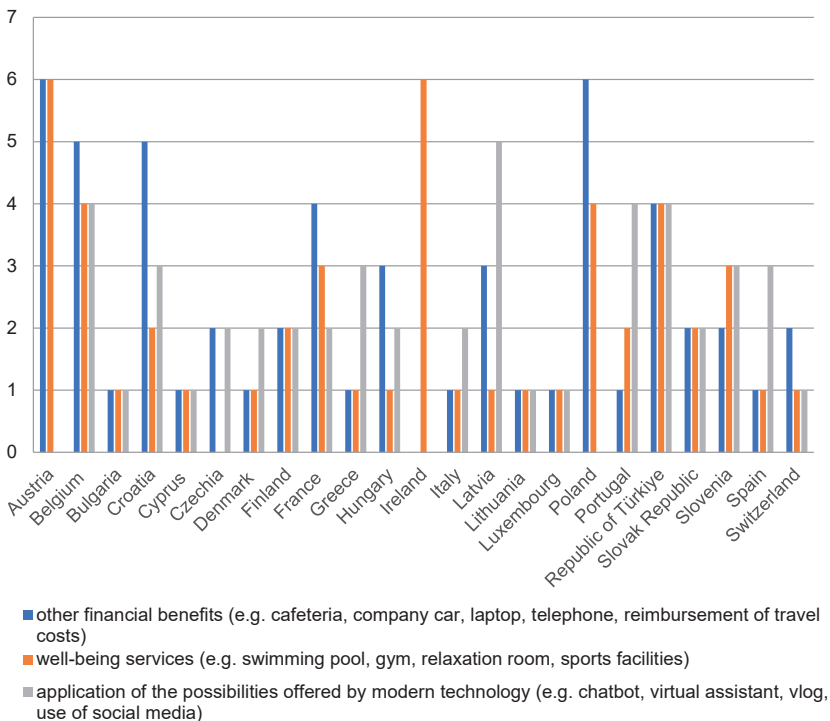


Figure 19
Employer branding factors in the public administrations 2
 Source: Compiled by the author based on EUPAN

Public administrations in the responding countries typically build their employer brand on the values that distinguish public administration from the private sector, such as the importance of *employment security* or *service to the community*. They also formulate objectives that make them an attractive employer for the younger generation, such as *learning and development opportunities*, ensuring *work–life balance* or *career opportunities*.

Regarding the *European Commission*, the attractiveness measures are excellent *career opportunities*, *sophisticated selection* (e.g. competitive exams and other methods) as well

as the opportunity to gain *international experience*. EU officials are recruited across the European Union and communicate in 24 different languages.

Studies about generational issues have increased in the academic literature in recent years (COSTANZA et al. 2012; LYONS–KURON 2014; BENÍTEZ-MÁRQUEZ et al. 2022). The key idea of the existing research is that there could be significant differences between the generations currently present in the labour market. These differences can lead to internal conflicts in the workplace; thus, the functions of HR management need to be redesigned (REIS–BRAGA 2016).

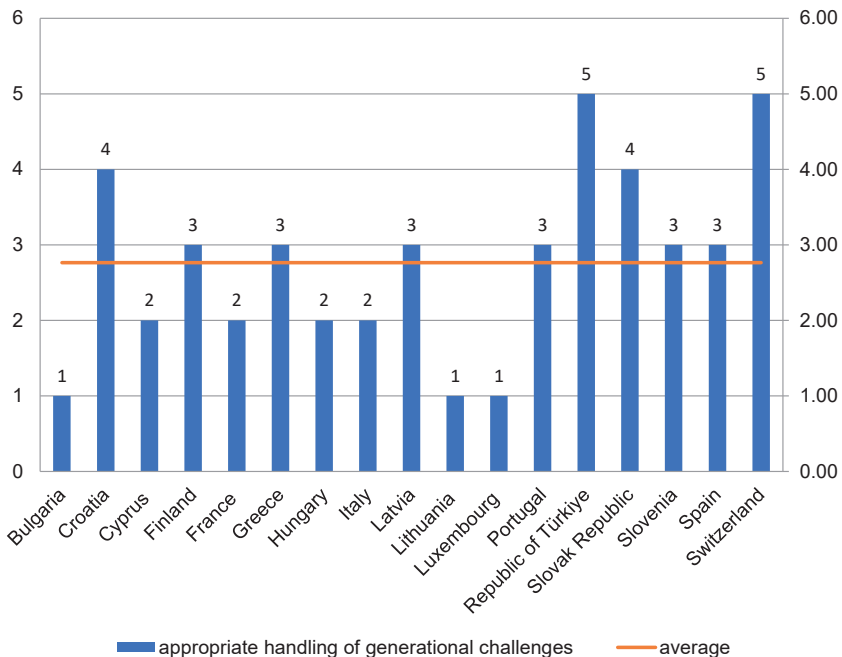


Figure 20
Handling of generational challenges in public administrations
 Source: Compiled by the author based on EUPAN

Branding activities should consider the needs of different stakeholders. Academic research shows that attitudes about the brand of public sector employers are related to personal characteristics such as age and gender (KEPPELER–PAPENFUSS 2020).

Our research also looked at whether the employer branding strategy of central public administration organisations includes objectives to address generational differences. Figure 20 (N = 17) clearly shows that the employer branding strategy of 7 out of the 17 responding countries does not include goals for managing generational differences (below average).

Addressing generational challenges is an objective in the employer branding strategy of only a few responding countries. We compared this factor with the average age characteristics and age distribution of EUPAN countries' administrations but found no significant correlation. There is no clear trend as to whether generational challenges are more prevalent in organisations trying to attract younger generations or in organisations trying to retain older staff.

In *Ireland*, previous research indicated low awareness level concerning public service recruitment brands. This was exacerbated by a confusing brand architecture for recruitment, with many different brand names and logos. To address these issues and to enable greater clarity of their brand identity in today's recruitment market, all previous brand names were consolidated under the refreshed singular brand identity of "publicjobs". "Publicjobs" was introduced in June 2024. It aims to deliver a clear, consistent, modern and accessible visual identity for organisations with a view to increasing awareness about the services and driving recruitment activity. The mission of the program is to recruit diverse people with character, who are talented, and committed to achieving results in Ireland. The strategic priority is to achieve recruitment excellence. The refreshed identity comprises several key elements that come together to make the brand more recognisable. These include a new bilingual logo (English and Irish) and a distinctive, meaningful braid symbol. The intersecting colours of the braid symbol suggest a wide variety of perspectives and career pathways available in the public sector. The use of symmetry indicates that all communities can expect to see themselves reflected in the people who make up the public sector. The internal star shape created by the intersecting lines expresses excellence and collaboration toward common

goals. The refreshed brand is underwritten by comprehensive brand guidelines that detail how the brand should be used, including logo usage, colour palette, typography, imagery style and other elements. The tagline accompanying the refreshed brand is: “There’s a public job for that.” This supports the theme of diversity and the fact that there is a career in the public sector for you.

SUMMARY

Summarising the answers to Q13–15, employer branding usually focuses on attracting potential employees and retaining current employees. In this research, we explored the factors that contribute to the employer branding strategy of the responding EUPAN countries.

Some public sector organisations in EUPAN countries ($N = 5$) have independent employer branding strategies, but some responding countries have common objectives that serve as suggestions or guidelines. Even where there is no specific employer branding strategy, recruitment, retention and visibility are priorities. The attractiveness measures of the European Commission stand out because of the special nature of the EU institution. The responding EUPAN countries build their employer brand mainly on the following factors: work–life balance (e.g. family-friendly, flexible work, home office, telework and part-time work), job security, training and development opportunities, the idea of serving the community, corporate social responsibility (CSR) and career opportunities. These are the values that differentiate public administration from the private sector and make it an attractive employer.

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LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT (Q16–18)

Theoretical framework

In today's VUCA world, i.e. an era that is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous, offering a diversified learning and development (L&D) programme is quintessential for effective central administration. L&D plays a crucial

role in various areas: attracting and retaining a skilled workforce, increasing employee engagement, providing the workforce with skills, developing a strong, value-based culture, as well as branding (VAN DAM 2018: 3).

The relevance of learning and development methods

The respondents were asked to indicate the factors on which they build their learning and develop strategy taking into account their current personnel policy. Figure 21 (N = 21) concerns training and development opportunities (for the relevance of other factors, see the detailed chart on employer branding). On a 6-point scale (1: not at all, 6: definitely), the answers are as follows.

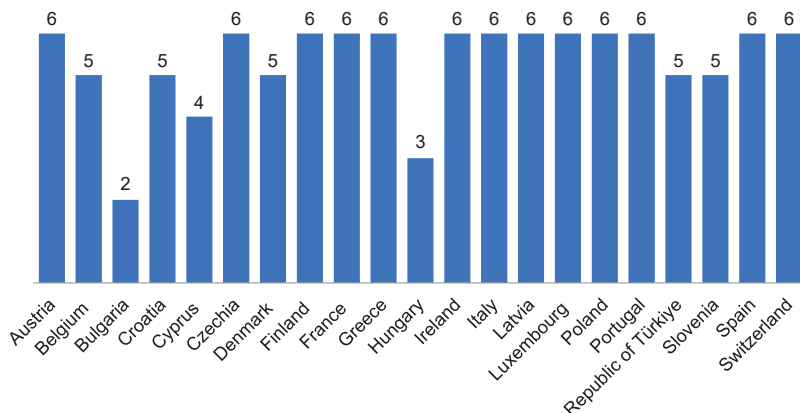


Figure 21

Training and development opportunities

Source: Compiled by the author based on EUPAN

The majority of the responding countries recognises the strong impact of L&D opportunities on the attractiveness of the employer. In fact, when we look at the averages, it is the second most important among the employer branding factors. This is in line with the findings of a recent global Deloitte survey. “L&D opportunities” is amongst the top three factors for Millennials and Gen Z, when it comes to choosing an employer (DELOITTE 2024: 23–24).

Navigating the multigenerational workforce calls for sophisticated L&D systems. Items on the L&D toolkit are ranging from traditional to new. The list includes training, sabbatical, payback clause, individual learning account, study voucher, L&D plan, L&D credit system, coaching, knowledge sharing platforms, micro-credentials, independent learning, as well as AI. The respondents were asked to indicate the relevance of the tools at central administration in their country on a 6-point scale.¹⁰ Figures 22 and 23 on the relevance of learning and development methods offers a snapshot of the central administration landscape (N = 24).¹¹ It is noticeable that the responding countries (as well as the European Commission) have multiple strings to their bow. This is to be welcomed as, arguably, the more wide-ranging a package is, the more potential it has to meet the needs of the diverse, multigenerational workforce.

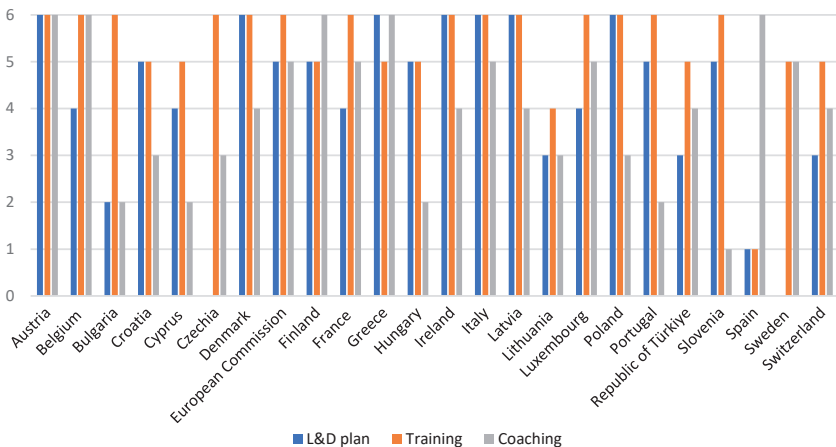


Figure 22

Learning and development methods available at central administration 1

Source: Compiled by the author based on EUPAN

¹⁰ In the following text 1: never, 2: rarely–seldom, 3: occasionally, 4: sometimes, 5: frequently, 6: very often.

¹¹ Only selected items are displayed. Agency and department-specific differences further elaborate the picture.

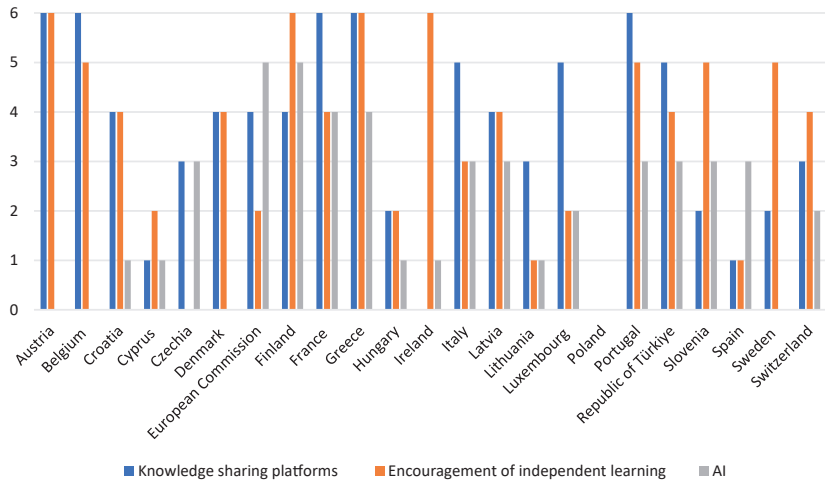


Figure 23

Learning and development methods available at central administration 2

Source: Compiled by the author based on EUPAN

As we can see, *training* is by far the most often used method in the responding countries (with the exception of Spain). If fitted in a consistent system, training accompanies civil servants throughout their entire career cycle. In *Italy*, for instance, the training curriculum is linked with *personal career paths*. From a generation perspective the utilisation of trainings is vital, as these learning events oftentimes host a space for open dialogue between generations. Answering the question on exemplary practice, the *Slovak Republic* highlighted its *Centre for Education and Evaluation*, a centre that offers solution-oriented, comprehensive trainings for civil servants across all relevant offices.

An *L&D plan* is a tool that is especially important for those planning a long career in central administration. With regard to this category, the answers range from never to very often: never (Spain), rarely (Bulgaria), occasionally (Lithuania, the Republic of Türkiye and observer country Switzerland), sometimes (Luxembourg, Cyprus), frequently (e.g. Croatia, Poland, Hungary, Slovenia) and very often (e.g. Poland, Austria, Latvia, Denmark and Italy).

This distribution is interesting because it does not show a correlation with the average age of employees in central administration.

L&D requires *investment* in terms of time, money and energy on behalf of the central administration. If the fluctuation rate is high, this investment is wasted. According to the OECD, approximately 15–20% of young workers (i.e. under 30) transition to new jobs in a given year. Around 10% of them change occupations. Job and occupational mobility decline over the lifecycle, irrespective of gender and education groups. At mid-career (workers around the age of 45), only 7% of workers change jobs, and 3% change occupation, a proportion that remains relatively constant as individuals age (OECD 2024: 35–36).

One form of security is to apply a payback clause. The *payback clause* is an investment surrounded by protective rules stemming from acts, collective agreements, or individual agreements, depending on the given country's heritage. It also signals trust (or, shall we say, lack of trust) in the long-term cooperation of the parties concerned (KAJTÁR 2023). Payback clauses feature prominently in Ireland, the Republic of Türkiye, Hungary and also in the observer country Switzerland. If employees terminate the employment relationship within the agreed retention period, they can be requested to reimburse (a share of) the cost. This is a rather strict way to retain personnel as opposed to softer measures such as effective employer branding.

In the *Slovak Republic*, if the (direct) costs of training in one calendar year exceed EUR 3,500, the civil servant is obliged to remain in the civil service for one year. The *retention period* grows as the total cost increases; it is two years in case of +EUR 7,500 and three to five years in case of +EUR 10,000. If the civil servant's employment is terminated before the expiry of the fixed period, the civil servant shall pay the proportion of the costs exceeding 3,500 EUR. If the costs exceed 3,500 EUR in a calendar year and the civil servant agrees to continue the training, the civil service authority shall conclude a written agreement on competence training with the civil servant, specifying how long the civil servant is obliged to remain in the civil service after the training.

Sabbatical is worthy of our attention because it combines two classic functions: development and burnout prevention. The latter is significant regarding older civil servants, though burnout is sadly gaining relevance amongst younger generations, too. Spanish civil servants very often take advantage of sabbaticals (in fact, when we asked Hungarian civil servants to make suggestions on how to improve, one answer specifically referred to the sabbatical year in Spain). This tool is also often applied in the Republic of Türkiye. The possibility of taking a sabbatical can be appealing, especially for Millennials and Gen Z, who value more flexible and fluid forms of work–life balance (FODOR–JAECKEL 2018).

Portuguese higher education teachers and pre-school, primary and secondary school teachers with a permanent appointment are eligible for sabbatical leave without loss of rights, including the right to remuneration and meal allowance (Ministerial Decree 350/2008 of 5 May). This can be complemented with long-term unpaid leaves (Article 280 in LTFP – Law 35/2014).

However, traditional L&D tools alone no longer suffice. To meet the learning preferences of the younger generations, central administrations need to adapt their toolkit. This means more methods allowing self-directed and independent learning, individualised learning and inclusion of IT technology (CHILLAKURI 2020).

Employees are entitled to a *credit for professional self-training of 100 hours* per calendar year in *Portugal*, which may be exceeded when justified by the particular relevance to the job's activities. Self-training, when carried out during working hours, corresponds to effective performance of duties.

Individual learning accounts and study vouchers also offer more flexible and individualised ways of learning. The introduction of the Compte Personnel de Formation (CPF) in France was considered a milestone in the continuing training system in 2015. Individual or personal learning accounts (Council Recommendation of 16 June 2022 on individual learning accounts 2022/C

243/03) are still very often used in Belgium, Luxembourg, Greece and Ireland. However, they somewhat lost their relevance in France. They are sometimes or occasionally used in Latvia and Italy. The other responding countries offer no individual learning account at all.

The relevance of *study vouchers* (i.e. coupons of certain monetary value) is even less. So much so that these are the least significant amongst the methods examined. They are never or seldom used in 17 of the responding countries. A similar category is L&D credit system, exceptions being Greece and Hungary. In Hungary, the L&D credit system is indicated as the most frequently used tool.

Coaching is one of the most personalised methods. While its use is popular amongst Gen Z and Millennials, according to the responses, it is mostly applied to the development of civil servants in higher positions. In most countries, it is listed among the very often used (Austria, Belgium, Finland, Spain and Greece) or among the most frequently used tools (Luxembourg, Sweden, Italy, France and the European Commission). For the first time, coaching was introduced as an essential method for public servants' development in Greece.

When it comes to the use of IT, extensive use of *knowledge sharing platforms* is seen in Austria, France, Portugal, Greece and Belgium. It is a frequently used tool in Luxembourg, Italy and the Republic of Türkiye. These platforms are particularly relevant for younger generations. Their benefits include global and anytime access, up-to-date and constantly growing archive and variety of resources (e-manuals, videos, podcasts, etc.).

Research suggests that *microlearning* is an effective way to learn new information, particularly in workplace training and education. It can lead to improved recall and retention of information as well as increased engagement and motivation among Gen Z (CHOUDHARY–PANDITA 2024). Micro-credentials are relatively novel actors of the L&D scenery. Belgium and Croatia are pioneers in this respect. Currently, however, the use of micro-credentials is far from reaching its full potential in central administration. Countries such as Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania and Sweden have never used it. This might be due to the lack of proper quality control and recognition.

Informal learning is essential, and it can be a prime source for cost-effective intergenerational learning. In many responding countries, there is an awareness of its importance. The support of *self-directed workplace learning* (e.g. Google search, obtaining information on social forums, informal knowledge sharing, production, and/or sharing of professional podcasts) is particularly encouraged in the central administration of Austria, Finland, Greece and Ireland, but not at all supported in Bulgaria, Lithuania and Spain.

Digital transformation and the spreading use of AI are among the biggest challenges for L&D today. AI spans various domains, including, amongst others, generative AI technologies, such as Chatbot and natural language processing tools, virtual assistants, or the development of video content with AI. It can be used in various phases of learning, like design, delivery and evaluation of learning programmes. To give an example, AI can be adopted to measure learning effectiveness, help learners spot mistakes and suggest corrections. The use of AI means flexible as well as cost and time-effective elements in learning processes for a large group of civil servants (see the literature review of BHATT–ASHUTOSH 2023). The use of AI is most relevant in Finland and the European Commission (see the best practices later). It is the least relevant in Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Hungary, Ireland and Lithuania.

The *European Commission* has already developed a targeted *learning package* for generalists and policymakers to help colleagues *learn about artificial intelligence*. AI packages for managers and developers are also being formed.

Portugal: AI virtual assistant called “Vitor” greets the visitors on the DGAEP website, as well as on the public employment platform and supports them by speeding up searches in matters of administration, public employment and centralised recruitment.

The blend of old and new is exemplified in the questionnaire by observer country, *Switzerland*. The Federal Administration recently launched the *GoodHabitz digital learning library*. Wherever possible, the self-study courses are linked to existing programmes (face-to-face courses, events, workshops, campaigns, etc.).

An important feature of contemporary L&D in central administration is increased *partnership*. The principle of partnership is essential in the articulation and expression of the coexisting development needs. This translates to active participation in the different phases of the L&D process, including planning and evaluation. After-training-satisfaction online questionnaire is one small element (RODRÍGUEZ-FERNÁNDEZ – DíEZ-GUTIÉRREZ 2022). Civil servants are active actors; they oftentimes even become micro-content creators (see the best practices of the Finnish eOppiva or the Irish OneLearning platform later).

A notable example of partnership can be seen in *Latvia*. *The public service senior leadership competency framework was developed* in close cooperation with senior level managers themselves.

With today's increasingly multigenerational workplace, we can observe multiple shifts in workplace preferences and expectations. One fundamental shift relates to the location of work (i.e. an increasing need for remote work). Another noticeable shift is connected to the preferred ways of communication. In-person interactions are regularly replaced with communication through text, voice, or video. These shifts inevitably leave their mark on the design of L&D. Online platforms and informal learning are gaining more relevance. However, traditional methods such as training keep their key role. While individual forms of learning tend to be more flexible and personalised, collective forms (e.g. training, team coaching) may harvest the advantages of age-diverse groups, and the combination of multiple perspectives and talents. Partnership, in other words, involvement of civil servants throughout the learning process, also allows for a more custom-made system.

Organisational learning, learning organisations and the generational viewpoint

Besides mobility and the use of flexible working arrangements, the learning culture is identified as one of the three aspects of flexible public service by the OECD (OECD 2023). As we can see from the answers to question No. 16 – albeit to varying degrees – *organisational learning* (i.e. learning which takes place within an organisational context) exists in all responding countries. This, however, does not necessarily make the central organisations learning organisations. A learning organisation requires a deeper organisational commitment to learning, as an enabler of change. It indicates the capacity to adapt and to compete through learning (ELLIOTT 2020: 272). It is about expansive learning, constant evolution, taking risks and *embracing change* (including *generational risks and change*) (SENGE 2014; ANAND–BRIX 2022). *Learning organisation* is not a status, but a state which is continuously being striven for (RUPČIĆ 2024: 201–211; HODGKINSON 2000: 159, cited by GLENNON et al. 2019).

The participants were asked to indicate to what extent factors associated with learning organisation are true for their organisation. A 6-point scale was applied (1: not at all, 6: definitely). Figure 24 (N = 25) depicts average figures for how the responding countries perceive themselves in the effort mentioned above.

What is clearly visible is that most responding countries see themselves as actors who *strive for continuous learning*. In contrast, the process of development adapted to the different learning characteristics of the generations received the lowest average point. The *mentoring function* of the leaders was highlighted by Austria, Poland, Croatia, Latvia, the Republic of Türkiye, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Italy, Spain and the European Commission. The data underlines the key position of leadership development, especially the development of those skills related to the development of others (e.g. coaching, mentoring, motivation skills, talent management, etc.).

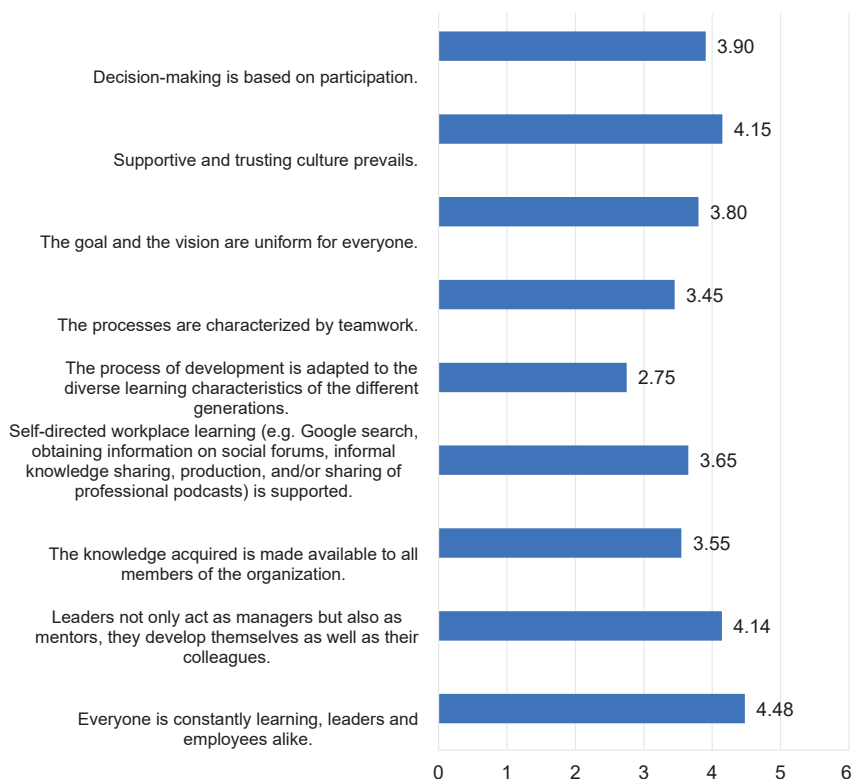


Figure 24

*Learning organisation averages**Source: Compiled by the author based on EUPAN*

Distribution of acquired knowledge to all members of the organisation is seen as a prime characteristic of the central administration of the Czech Republic and Ireland.

In *Poland* the Ordinance of the Head of Civil Service concerning the standards of human resources management in the civil service recommends the use of various forms of employee

development activities, in particular: *learning from other colleagues* (e.g. instructions, mentoring, coaching, consultations, study visits).

According to the self-evaluation, *uniform goals and vision* absolutely came to fruition in the central administration of Greece, Cyprus, Denmark, the Republic of Türkiye and Ireland.

Supportive and trusting culture received maximum number in Austria, Belgium, Ireland and Sweden.

When taking into account all classic learning organisation-related factors (in other words, all factors listed except the generation-related one), these weigh the most in Ireland and Denmark and least in Bulgaria.

A fine example is offered by *Latvia*, where the type of learning in central administration is both organisational and individual. The learning and development plan for public administration employees for 2021–2027 was especially developed to ensure the transformation of public administration into an *organisation that learns* and to make learning a daily habit for employees in public administration, as well as to make and horizontally integrate united and systematic knowledge management within the public administration. The plan defines five strategic priorities: 1. decent work in public administration; 2. innovation and co-creation for modern action policy and services in public administration; 3. leadership and effective change management; 4. digital transformation and data literacy; and 5. professionalisation of human resources and administrative capacity building (www.mk.gov.lv/lv/media/13067/download?attachment).

All but one factor in the questionnaire was related to organisational learning. This, in addition to one factor concerned *generation management*. Figure 25 (N = 21) offers country specific answers.

What stands out is that a specific ‘generation angle’ is only moderately or less used by most of the responding countries when they shape their L&D. Amongst the moderately generation-aware countries we find Austria, Croatia, Cyprus, Latvia, Slovenia and observer country Switzerland (they gave 3 points out of 6).

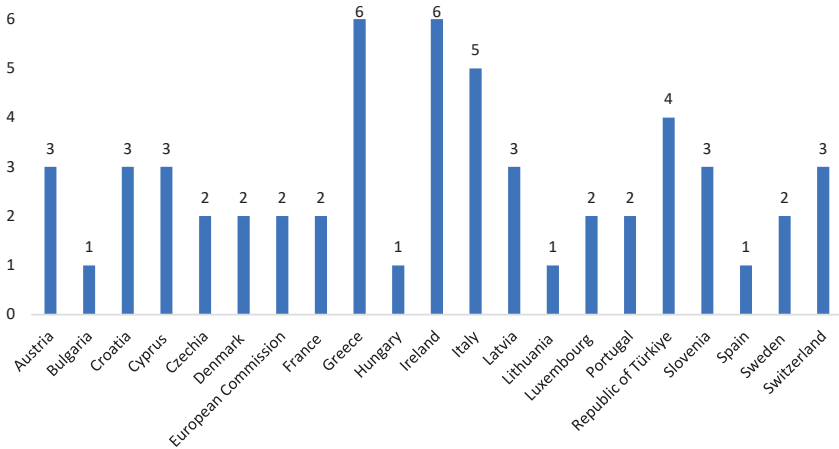


Figure 25

The generation perspective

Source: Compiled by the author based on EUPAN

The Republic of Türkiye indicated 4, and Italy gave 5 points out of 6. Greece and Ireland are the most conscious of the generational differences when shaping their L&D systems. The process of development is not at all adapted to the diverse learning characteristics of the different generations in Bulgaria, Hungary, Lithuania and Spain; and only to a very little extent adapted in the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Luxembourg, Portugal, Sweden and the European Commission. This is not to say that characteristics of the different generations are completely ignored in these countries. *Elements* of the generational angle are present. The existing strategies regarding *ageing of personnel* and the *mentor systems* typically target specific age groups. Finland applies *life cycle management*. The importance of *digital transformation* – arguably one of the most prominent elements of the generational differences today – is also taken into account in most countries.

Innovative, exemplary learning and development practices

While some of the exemplary practices are typically (but not necessarily) aiming at supporting Gen Z (e.g. the *onboarding* system in France), other programmes target personnel with many years of experience (e.g. the *senior management leadership programmes* of Latvia and Ireland).

A complex strategic development programme with a backbone of a competency framework of top leaders were highlighted in Latvia. The *Strategy of Senior Management Leadership Programme's development of 2023* envisages different learning and development activities for the senior level managers, as well as provides the solutions for creating a supportive operating environment. The strategy was elaborated based on the Senior Civil Service System matrix and the Senior Civil Service System self-assessment questionnaire offered by the OECD. In addition to that a public service senior leadership competency framework with 12 core competences was developed in close cooperation with senior level managers themselves. The Senior Management Leadership Programme concerns approximately 270 senior managers of all 100 institutions of public administration.

Some programmes are targeting new entrants but are also available for those who simply 'want to brush up on their skills' (*basic training for government employees* in Sweden).

EU officials form a diverse, multicultural and multilingual team like no other in the world. As part of this international community, staff get an unparalleled chance to grow, expand their horizons and work with *colleagues from all walks of life* and all types of backgrounds. The Commission is committed to improve guidance on training by developing *targeted learning packages for specific expertise or interdisciplinary competences* that are in line with the Commission's learning and development priorities. By June 2024, learning packages, developed jointly with sponsor DGs have been rolled out for 17 broad job profiles covering over 80% of all Commission staff, based on the Commission's learning priorities. These one-stop-shops per job profile contain essential and highly recommended courses and make it easier for managers to support their staff with clear guidance on learning and development.

Development plans (Greece), *mentoring* (highlighted for instance by the questionnaire of Austria, France, Spain and Greece) affect both younger and older civil servants thus cater for multiple generations.

A collaborative development approach and the use of personalised tools, such as mentoring and coaching, gained relevance in Greece.

The workshop for innovation in *Slovenia* is open to all civil servants from different generations. The goal of the *Innovative.si* project is to make innovative approaches a daily routine in public administration and to strengthen the innovation culture. It strives to create partnerships between public administration, citizens, civil society and the private sector. The *Training for Innovation in Public Administration* programme aims to enable a change in working methods, especially in problem-solving and solution design, as well as effective communication. The training is intended for public administration employees and is conducted in the form of workshops with an emphasis on active participation.

A rich combination of L&D tools characterises *Ireland*. A range of L&D, *coaching and mentoring* supports are offered to senior civil servants through leadership programmes (SPS). The *OneLearningplatform* for Civil Service L&D offers both a centralised repository of e-learning and facilitated courses, as well as a platform for individual Departments and Offices to create and curate their own courses. Both OneLearning and SPS transferred to the Institute of Public Administration (IPA) in 2023 as part of a vision to create a centre of excellence for learning and development for Ireland's public service. A programme of *innovation* is underway, including knowledge sharing to the wider Public Service.

Digital platforms appear in many questionnaires (besides the aforementioned Irish example, see Poland, Finland, Latvia and Italy). In fact, generation management can be partly framed within the context of digital transformation. One of the most important difference between generations is their attitude to digital technology. Digitalisation has a very different impact on the learning of Gen Z and Y than on the learning of X, Baby boomers and veterans (KHRYKOV et al. 2023: 79–80; NICHOLAS 2020). Gen Z has a natural affinity to technology, they exhibit digital proficiency and are more likely to engage in mobile learning through their digital devices (NICHOLAS 2020).

The Digital Academy in Latvia delivers programmes to strengthen digital skills for 62,900 public administration employees. The programme running from 2023 to 2026 aims to implement training at three levels: basic skills in ‘Effective and Secure Work in the Digital Work Environment’, expert skills in ‘Planning Digital Processes and Services – User-Oriented and Data-Driven’ and management and policy planning skills in ‘Skilful Management and Implementation of Digital Transformation Processes’.

Italy’s plan is to provide training to 750,000 civil servants by 2026. They also revamp their e-learning platform, Syllabus. The Syllabus aims to describe the digital skills and knowledge required by all Italian civil servants to bring forward the digital transformation and it delivers a structured training programme (*Syllabus 2.0* www.syllabus.gov.it/portale/web/syllabus/).

It can also be a *strategic choice* to use a sophisticated digital learning platform as the main channel for developing the competence of central government personnel.

An example of a cutting-edge, constantly evolving *digital learning platform* is offered in *Finland*. *eOppiva* has strengthened the central government’s shared competence in a completely new way and the number of learning events is now twenty times higher. The majority of central government employees (around 82,000) have adopted it. In 2023, 185,000 students embarked on their training journey. Nearly 80% of the courses started were completed. The founder and owner of the service is the Ministry of Finance, and the entity is operated by the HAUS Development Centre. Thanks to the internal operation, the price can be kept as low as EUR 4.1/completed study attainment (in 2023). The website contains online courses, podcasts, microvideos and learning blogs. It provides government-specific learning content, but true to its slogan, ‘learning is for everyone’, it also provides content for the general public (130 out of 250 online courses are openly accessible). There are already more than 250 online courses and all government agencies can use it free of charge. Just like the OneLearning Platform of Ireland, *eOppiva* also allows individual agencies to create and manage their own content. Currently, Moodle has around 1,700 training content produced by nearly 70 agencies. The ingredients for outstanding success are financial commitment, strong cooperation within central government, pioneering spirit and enthusiastic people

trusting the process. To quote the Finnish Questionnaire: “We aim at being as creative and innovative as possible and, above all, cherish the joy of learning.”

The crucial takeaway from the scientific literature on generation management is the presence of *differences in terms of attitude (including attitude to digital technology), communication and work preferences* within the workforce. There are many factors behind these differences besides characteristics attributed to the different generations. The generation theory might be overly simplistic. However, it does highlight the fact that sharp differences are present within the workforce. L&D management needs to address this increasing heterogeneity. Acknowledging and addressing differences (either generation, age, life stage, personality, or any other related factor) requires adaptability and flexibility. We need to achieve both if we want a central administration that is ready for the challenges of the future.

SUMMARY

Navigating the multigenerational workforce calls for sophisticated L&D systems. Complex organisational learning exists in all responding countries. Items in the L&D toolkit range from traditional to new. The list includes training, a sabbatical, a payback clause, an individual learning account, a study voucher, an L&D plan, an L&D credit system, coaching, knowledge-sharing platforms, micro-credentials, independent learning, as well as the use of AI. It must be highlighted that the more wide-ranging a package is, the more potential it has to meet the needs of the diverse, multigenerational workforce. The majority of the responding countries see themselves as actors that strive for continuous learning.

The growing need for self-directed and individualised learning is recognised. Online learning platforms came visibly to the forefront in many countries. We can also find opportunities for offline human connection, intergenerational

dialogue and learning (e.g. mentoring, coaching and training). Training is by far the most often used development tool, while AI is not yet seen as a key factor.

While certain generation-related factors, such as age, career stages, etc. are taken into account, most of the responding countries only adopt a moderate 'generation approach' when they shape their L&D.

The crucial takeaway from the scientific generation management literature is the presence of differences in terms of attitude (including attitude towards digital technology), communication and work preferences within the workforce. L&D management have to address this increasing heterogeneity. Acknowledging and addressing the differences (be they generation, age, life stage, personality, or any other factor related) requires adaptability and flexibility. We need to cultivate both if we want a central administration that is ready for the challenges of the future.

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SATISFACTION AND PROGRESS (Q19–20)

Theoretical framework

Regularly conducting employee satisfaction surveys is crucial for organisations aiming to enhance performance, employee well-being and overall workplace culture. These surveys serve as diagnostic tools that provide insights into employee perceptions, motivations and areas requiring improvement. Scientific research underscores the significance of these surveys in fostering a productive and engaged workforce. Employee satisfaction surveys enable organisations to assess various facets of the work environment, including job satisfaction, engagement levels and organisational commitment. By systematically collecting and analysing employee feedback, employers can identify factors that contribute to job satisfaction and those that may lead to dissatisfaction or disengagement. This understanding is pivotal for implementing targeted interventions aimed at enhancing employee morale and productivity. Employee surveys, when effectively designed and administered, can lead to meaningful improvements in workplace dynamics and outcomes (GARRAD–HYLAND 2020).

Studies have demonstrated a positive correlation between employee satisfaction and organisational performance (COLE–COLE 2005). Research indicates that higher levels of employee satisfaction are associated with increased job engagement, workplace well-being and employee retention. These factors collectively contribute to a more motivated and committed workforce, which in turn enhances organisational effectiveness and reduces turnover rates (SYPNIEWSKA et al. 2023).

Regular administration of employee satisfaction surveys also facilitates effective feedback mechanisms. Providing employees with opportunities to express their views and concerns fosters a culture of open communication and recognition. This practice enhances higher job satisfaction and engagement levels (WALKER 2024).

An organisation must meet employees' expectations to retain them, or they will likely leave. Therefore, it is essential to holistically manage the relationship between the organisation and its employees, encompassing motivation, incentives and rewards.

Since the 1960s, the concept and significance of the psychological contract have increasingly come to the forefront of workplace research. Within the psychological contract framework, the employee and the employer mutually understand and accept the written and informal aspects of the employment relationship (ARGYRIS 1960). The psychological contract expresses the written, unwritten, spoken and unspoken expectations between the employee and the employer in their relationship (BAKER et al. 1985).

The “Generations in Public Administration 2024” research aims to understand how the psychological contract evolves and its effect on job satisfaction and commitment while exploring unique administrative patterns. The findings may offer valuable insights for enhancing HRM systems to better support employees in public administration. The topic is examined through international and domestic questionnaire-based research, supplemented by in-depth interviews and document analysis. During the international questionnaire-based research, we examined EUPAN countries' practices regarding satisfaction surveys and organisational development programmes.

Workplace satisfaction surveys can help reveal how much the psychological contract is fulfilled. The data collected from these surveys can highlight areas where employees' expectations are not being met, thereby assisting employers in improving the employee experience, increasing satisfaction and strengthening commitment. Regular workplace satisfaction surveys are positively associated with improved management practices and organisational culture in public administration (PARK 2020).

The culture and structure of the civil service system affect the likelihood of implementing formalised organisational development programmes, with some countries preferring more informal or decentralised approaches.

We found many useful connection points with the results of the report “Public Employee Motivation in EU Central and Federal Public Administrations: An Exploratory Approach”, prepared under the Portuguese Presidency in 2021.

*Workplace satisfaction survey at the
central level in the last five years*

Engaged employees perform better, take more initiative and are more innovative than those who are not engaged. Higher engagement leads to fewer sick days and better retention, influenced by good leadership, favourable working conditions and opportunities for career growth. The OECD *Government at a Glance* (2023) report found that 70% of the civil servants in seven countries were satisfied with their jobs, and 63% felt inspired by their work. Public sector organisations might consider strategies to enhance organisational attachment and ensure that all levels of staff feel valued and motivated.

Q19 investigated whether there have been workplace satisfaction survey at the central level in the past 5 years. Below, we have compiled the responses submitted by the EUPAN countries (N = 27).

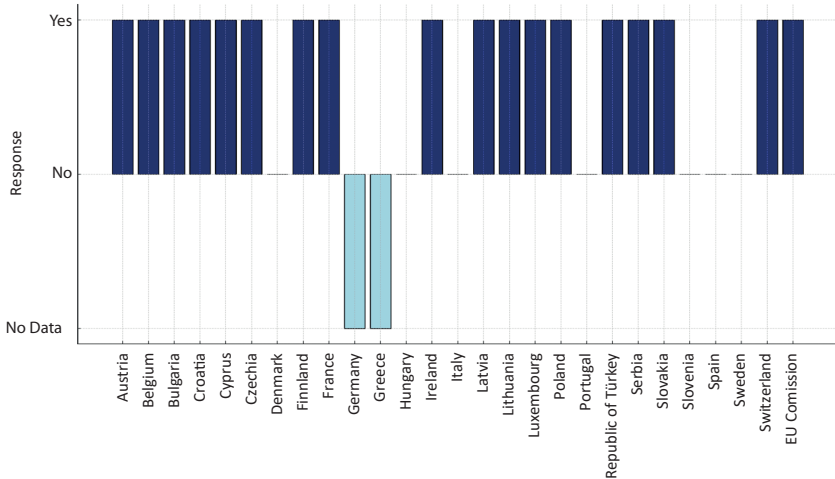


Figure 26

Workplace satisfaction survey in the last five years by country

Source: Compiled by the author based on EUPAN

We can observe different practices among certain countries, satisfaction surveys are conducted *annually* at the central level (e.g. Bulgaria, Finland, Latvia), while in others, they occur *less regularly* (e.g. Lithuania every 2 years; Switzerland every three years), every few years, or rarely.

Out of the 27 responding countries, 18 confirmed that a *workplace satisfaction survey* for personnel was conducted at the central level within the last five years (Yes: 66.67%; No: 25.9%; No Data: 7.41%). This suggests that a significant majority, specifically 66.67 % of the surveyed countries, have taken steps to assess and improve employee satisfaction at a central level. The relatively high percentage reflects a common practice among these countries to monitor and address workplace satisfaction, which is crucial for organisational well-being and efficiency.

This data suggests that workplace satisfaction surveys are recognised as a strategic priority, with 66.67% of surveyed countries conducting them. This reflects a growing awareness of the link between employee well-being and organisational performance. The high percentage indicates a commitment

to fostering positive work environments, gathering employee feedback and addressing issues proactively. Additionally, it implies that these countries have established systems to regularly assess and improve workplace satisfaction, showcasing a mature approach to human resource management.

Based on the country examples, the *main focus areas* of employee satisfaction surveys are:

- Management practices: Leadership effectiveness, management satisfaction and organisational culture.
- Work environment: Physical and mental work conditions, job content and the overall work environment.
- Employee motivation and engagement: Motivation, engagement and commitment, including meaningful work, recognition and influence opportunities.
- Career development: Career prospects, professional development and training opportunities.
- Work–life balance: The balance between work and private life (flexible working hours and remote work options).
- Interpersonal relationships: Team dynamics, interpersonal relationships and organisational communication.
- Remuneration and benefits: Compensation, benefits and job security.
- Innovation and digitalisation: The impact of digital tools and the adoption of innovative practices.

Examining these areas is key to understanding and improving public administration employees' well-being, motivation and performance. It helps to highlight strengths and areas for improvement, ensuring a supportive work environment and efficient management.

We asked the respondents to provide a brief written explanation of their practice, which we present in short, summarised form.

Practices of the EUPAN countries

Austria: The Federal Employee Satisfaction and Motivation Survey, which had 27,759 participants (2023), showed that employees are generally satisfied with their work environment and motivated. However, there are concerns about work process efficiency, knowledge sharing and career development. Despite these issues, most employees plan to stay in their current departments and seek better communication.

Belgium: Employee surveys (2020–2023) in the Belgian federal administration are conducted every two to three years (at the request of each individual public service), covering nine key domains such as job content, work environment and career. These surveys typically have a response rate of 60–70%, and action plans are developed to address priorities identified in the surveys.

Bulgaria: The annual “Engagement Barometer” (2023) survey of the Institute of Public Administration has been conducted for six years. It focuses on leadership, goals, motivation, teamwork and remuneration among civil servants.

Croatia: Croatia conducted two key surveys on civil service management. The 2020 survey results are publicly available. The ongoing 2024 survey, part of an EU multi-country project (“EU Survey of Central Government Public Servants: Strengthening Evidence-based People Management Policies and Reforms” supported by the OECD [2023–2025]), aims to monitor civil servant well-being with a focus on working conditions and career development.

Cyprus: The survey aimed to assess employees’ perceptions of the efficiency and effectiveness of HR policies and tools within the public administration. Conducted electronically in 2020, the survey revealed that only a quarter of the respondents (2,256) believe that the available management tools are efficient and effective.

The Czech Republic: The Employee Satisfaction Survey (2024) of the Ministry of the Interior highlighted high satisfaction in work performance, management and workplace relations, while professional development and benefits were rated lower. The Czech civil service mandates annual surveys, though compliance varies across offices.

Denmark: Due to Denmark’s decentralised government structure, workplace satisfaction surveys are conducted decentrally. Local workplaces must legally conduct surveys of the physical and mental work environment (APV) at least every three years.

Finland: Finland has used a joint personnel survey since 2004 to measure employee satisfaction. In 2023, the survey covered 63% of government employees, with a 75% response rate. The results showed positive improvements across various areas like management, work content and remuneration. Over the past five years, all areas have shown improvement.

France: Over the past five years, multiple studies on working conditions have been conducted. The most recent FP+ consultation in 2023 involved over 110,000 civil servants, revealing a strong interest in reorganising working hours (73%) and developing digital tools for teleworking (45%). The typical respondent was a civil servant aged 36–49, in category A, and in a management position.

Ireland: The survey conducted by DPENDR and the CSO in September 2023 showed overall positive results, with a significant increase in newer staff, who now make up 52% of respondents. Civil servants generally feel optimistic about their work and development opportunities, but challenges remain in involvement, innovation, job demands and pay.

Latvia: Latvia's Public Administration Employee Engagement Survey (2022–2024), conducted every 18 months, measures employee engagement, burnout and motivation. The most recent survey was in 2022, with the next set of results expected in the autumn of 2024. The survey allows for international comparisons through OECD-standard questions.

Lithuania: Lithuania's Ministry of the Interior conducts an "Employee Opinion Survey" every two years. The latest survey, involving state agencies and institutions (ministries and institutions under the ministries, but not local government institutions), is currently ongoing, and results are expected by the end of 2024.

Luxembourg: Since 2020, Luxembourg has conducted standardised employee surveys across 36 administrations, with a 72% response rate. The 2024 survey focused on management practices and employee satisfaction, with a 69% response rate, highlighting the importance of leadership, communication and participation. Individual administrations use survey results to develop targeted improvement projects within their work programmes.

Poland: The "Your Civil Service" survey (2024) received over 23,000 responses, with respondents rating their job satisfaction at 4.36 out of 6 and their likelihood of recommending civil service at 4.14 out of 6. The survey results, currently under analysis, emphasise job stability, work–life balance and a sense of service as top reasons for valuing civil service work.

The Slovak Republic: The 2019 survey of nearly 9,000 central-level civil servants found that employees are generally satisfied with management, but satisfaction decreases with years of

service. While meaningful work and job security are key motivators, there is dissatisfaction with financial rewards and career development opportunities.

Switzerland: Switzerland conducts a triennial survey among central government employees (around 40,000), with the 2023 survey showing a 70% response rate. The survey (2023) indicated stable high satisfaction levels over the past decade, with improved work–life balance, remote working and leadership since 2020.

The Republic of Türkiye: A large-scale 2019 survey involving over 5 million public servants and 863,000 participants provided insights into the public sector workforce, contributing to evaluating the current state of public employment.

Serbia: The last (online) satisfaction survey was conducted in 2021 on a sample of 1,016 civil servants from state administration bodies. The overall range of satisfaction was 3.1 (on a scale from 1–5).

The European Commission: The latest Staff Survey conducted in 2023, with a record participation of over 23,500 employees (65% of the staff). Engagement remains high at 73%, and overall staff satisfaction has improved. The Commission maintains a solid employer brand among its staff.

Organisational development programme in the past five years

Q20 investigated whether there have been any organisational development programs at the central level in the past 5 years.

The data shows that 10 out of the 27 surveyed countries ($N = 27$) confirmed that an *organisational development programme* was implemented at the central level in the past five years (No: 59.26%; Yes: 37.04%; No Data: 3.7%). This means that a relatively small portion, precisely 37%, of the countries have undertaken central-level initiatives to improve organisational structures or processes.

The modest percentage indicates that organisational development at the central level may not be a widespread focus among the majority of these countries, it may also suggest potential areas for further growth or investment in this area.

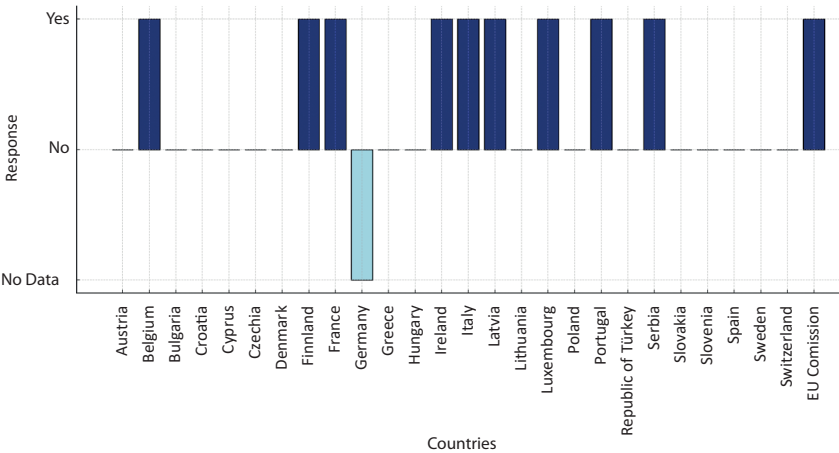


Figure 27
Organisational development programs
Source: Compiled by the author based on EUPAN

Cultural differences might influence the emphasis placed on organisational development. In some countries, there may be preference for more informal or decentralised approaches to organisational improvement (e.g. Denmark).

The percentage may reflect the continuity of policies. Countries experiencing frequent government transitions or political challenges may less likely implement long-term programmes, such as organisational development, resulting in fewer initiatives at the central level.

The data could also suggest differing national priorities. Some countries might focus more on other areas, such as infrastructure, healthcare, or education, leaving organisational development at the central level as a lower priority.

The relatively modest percentage (37%) may suggest that some of the surveyed countries require more resources, such as funding. Countries with stronger economies or greater resource access might be more inclined to invest in such initiatives.

These ratios may mirror a combination of these factors, highlighting the complexity of implementing organisational development programmes at the central level across different countries.

We asked the respondents to provide a brief written explanation of their practice, which we present in a summarised form.

Practices of the EUPAN countries

Belgium: Various organisational development programmes are being implemented, focusing on leadership development, integrity enhancement, workforce planning, innovation and inclusion initiatives.

Finland: Organisational development programmes are specific to individual agencies and are not conducted at the central level.

France: The Occupational Health Plan (2022–2025) aims to improve social dialogue, quality of life, working conditions and the prevention system in the civil service.

Ireland: The Irish Civil Service has implemented an Organisational Capability Review Programme. Action 20 of the Civil Service Renewal Plan (2014) called for establishing this programme to foster a culture of regular evaluations of the capability of Departments and Offices in achieving their objectives. The programme has been in operation since 2016.

Latvia: The Learning and Development Plan (2021–2027) seeks to transform public administration into a learning organisation. Priorities include decent work, innovation, leadership, digital transformation and professionalisation of human resources.

Luxembourg: The “FP2025” initiative focuses on continuous improvement across nine areas of organisational development, including strategy, workforce planning and leadership.

Italy: The Public Employment Reform (2023) established a comprehensive framework for strategic HR management, performance appraisal and training, focusing on digital skills and the uniform implementation of policies across all government levels.

Portugal: The Strategy for Innovation and Modernisation (2020–2023) emphasises administrative modernisation through leadership development, performance management, technological governance and decentralisation of public services.

Serbia: The National Academy for Public Administration (NAPA) prepares and implements training programs for civil servants.

The European Commission: A Corporate Organisational Change unit (2022) and the Centre for Organisational Transformation (2023) support fundamental changes like flexible working and AI integration. Inter-service teams coordinate projects, providing guidance, training and communication. Key lessons include proactive communication and leadership. The Centre also offers consultancy and training in change management and participatory methods.

SUMMARY

This branch of the research aimed to understand how the psychological contract evolves and its effect on job satisfaction and commitment while exploring unique administrative patterns. During the international questionnaire-based research, we examined EUPAN countries' practices regarding satisfaction surveys and organisational development programmes (Q19–20). Regular workplace satisfaction surveys are positively associated with improved management practices and organisational culture in public administration. Many of the respondents have a well-established practice of regularly conducting satisfaction surveys. This indicates a commitment to fostering positive work environments, gathering employee feedback and addressing issues proactively. The culture and structure of the civil service system affect the likelihood of implementing formalised organisational development programmes, with some countries preferring more informal or decentralised approaches.

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PERSONNEL DECISION SUPPORT (Q21–23)

Theoretical framework

A recent survey suggests (Lattice 2024) that when it comes to demonstrating the impact of HR to other business stakeholders, European HR teams are ahead of the curve compared to their counterparts in other non-European

countries. There is no doubt that European HR solutions are very advanced (European Commission 2022; PAKSI-PETRÓ 2023), but it is questionable to what extent these solutions have been adapted by public administrations in the EUPAN countries and whether they are able to contribute to strategic decision-making and the achievement of administrative objectives using a wide range of HR strategy tools.

Decision support systems at central level

In relation to the existence of a human resources strategy, countries were also asked which decision support systems are used in central administrations for strategic personnel planning (Q21 Indicate what procedures are used in your organisation's strategic personnel planning!). In order to make the answers easier to analyse, we have also provided the answer options beforehand. The frequency of the responses is illustrated in Figure 28 (N = 24, multiple answers were possible).

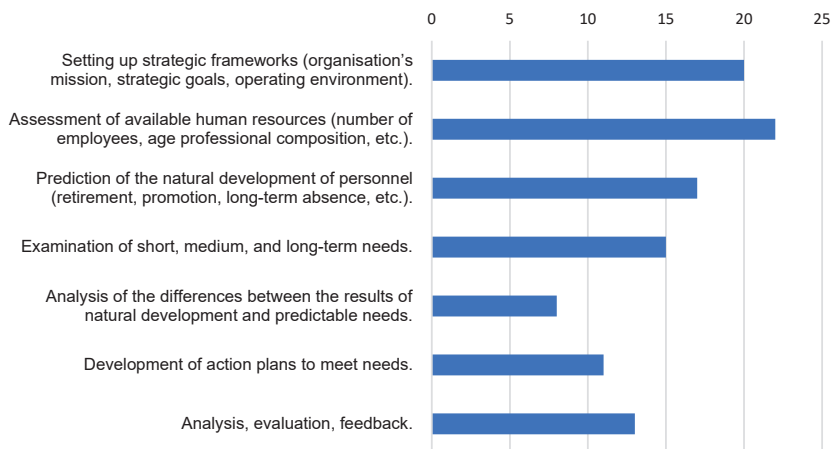


Figure 28

Frequency of categories used in strategic personnel planning in the central public administrations

Source: Compiled by the author based on EUPAN

As can be seen in Figure 28, the most frequently used category was the assessment of available human resources (number of employees, age, professional composition) option, with 21 mentions in total. Although five countries did not tick this option, there is reason to believe that some form of *Analysis and assessment of available human resources* is present in these countries. The second most frequent item selected by respondents was setting up strategic frameworks (organisation's mission, strategic goals, operating environment). Although the definition of strategic frameworks is one of the essential elements of planning, the responses suggest that the development of action plans to meet needs and the provision of feedback (analysis, evaluation, feedback) are less than half as frequent in EUPAN countries' responses as the definition of strategic frameworks. This may be due to the fact that HRM strategic planning processes are still in the midst of developing the framework (as in the case of Poland, which is preparing its HRM strategy) or to the fact that the development of action plans and the *Analysis and evaluation* of the results of their implementation are part of another process (e.g. HR controlling) outside the HR strategic planning process. Exploring this finding thus requires further research.

Another interesting correlation that can be drawn from the responses is that while *Prediction of the natural development of personnel (retirement, promotion, long-term absence, etc.)* and *Examination of short, medium, and long-term needs* are both important elements of the HR strategy toolbox of the responding countries, with 17 and 15 mentions respectively, *Analysis of the differences between the results of natural development and predictable needs* is much less present in the toolbox, with only eight countries mentioning such an exercise. In our view, this may indicate that while data-based forecasts are typically used in planning HR processes in central administrations, there is less capacity to analyse them and explore the causes and correlations in a deeper and more conscious way.

The survey also provided an opportunity to ask what factors characterise strategic HR planning. (Q22 On a 6-point scale, please indicate to what extent the following factors characterise your organisation's strategic personnel planning [1: does not characterise it at all; 6: completely characterises it]). In

order to assess the importance of these factors, the response options could be ticked on a scale. Based on the responses received ($N = 21$), the highest average score of 4.2 was given to the statement *Workforce planning is aligned with the organisation's strategic objectives*. In contrast, the statement that *the leaders' approach is characterised by strategic thinking* received an average score of 4.1. Respondents least agreed with the statement *Responses to the changes in the labour market are quick and flexible*. This received an average score of 2.8, suggesting that central administrations are less quick and flexible in adapting to changes in the labour market.

When comparing the responses to this question by country, we find that *the Republic of Türkiye, Finland, France, Ireland and Latvia* are the most prominent ones in terms of the strength of the factors. However, the responses are nuanced by the fact that several countries left this question blank, and respondents did not fill in all the boxes.

Using similar tools to the previous question, the research investigated the extent to which data and evidence-based decision-making are a feature of the organisations in the countries surveyed. (Q23 On a 6-point scale, please indicate to what extent the following statements characterise your organisation's data- and fact-based decision-making [1: does not characterise it at all; 6: completely characterises it]). The number of responding countries was also slightly higher for this question than for the previous one ($N = 24$ compared to $N = 21$), and the average number of responses was also higher than for the previous question. While the lowest average for the previous question was 2.8, the average for this question is between 4 and 5 for all answers. The highest average score of all the answers was for *Data tables available for management decisions*, with 4.9. This is partly because low scores for this question were almost non-existent, with the majority of responses in the range of 5 to 6 and a total of 16 countries indicating that using data tables for decision-making is almost or entirely typical. Also, a typical activity is *Reporting on personnel*, which is prepared regularly. This received an average score of 4.7 from the responding countries, slightly behind the 4.3 for *Data used for workforce planning and the public is regularly informed*. With regard to the latter value, two of the countries

indicated a value of 1, which means that, in their case, this activity is not at all familiar, and the public is not regularly informed about facts and figures on personal affairs. The lowest average score for this question was given to the option *Data is used for social dialogue*, with respondents giving an average score of 4.0 for using data in social dialogue.

In a country-by-country comparison, *Austria* was the top respondent, followed closely by *Spain*, *Denmark*, *Ireland* and *Switzerland*. It is also worth noting that many countries left the response options blank, and respondents needed to fill in all the fields, although the response rate for this question was higher than for the previous one.

SUMMARY

Summarising the answers to Q21, Q22 and Q23, it can be concluded that the responding EUPAN countries have made significant progress in assessing human resources, forecasting expected changes in the short, medium and long term, and developing strategic frameworks for HRM, but that there is still room for improvement in consciously analysing the context of these changes and strengthening their practical application. The challenge of adapting quickly and flexibly to changing labour market conditions appears particularly striking. At the same time, responding administrations are well-placed to develop and implement a data and evidence-based decision-making system. In the responding countries, this approach is expected. Although there are areas (e.g. social dialogue) where data-driven decision-making is still less common, the widespread use of data and facts suggests good administrative decision-making.

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