

## CEPA 24<sup>th</sup> session -Dedicated observer consultation

### Strategies for changing mindsets in the public sector, retaining talent and attracting younger workers (item 8)

Remarks by Ms. Katalin Ágnes Uzsák, Deputy State Secretary, Ministry of Public Administration and Regional Development, Hungary

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Excellencies, distinguished delegates, colleagues,

It is an honor to address, within the framework of CEPA, some of the most pressing challenges in governance today: attracting, retaining, and managing talent in public administration.

I appreciate the excellent background paper for providing a strong foundation that resonates with many of our perspectives. Complementing these strategic reflections, I would like to share with you the main findings of our recent international research project, conducted under Hungary's Presidency of the European Public Administration Network (EUPAN), offering fresh empirical insights regarding competent, motivated, and future-ready public workforce.

Based on data from 26 EUPAN member states and the European Commission, the study reveals the average age of staff in central public administration is 46.8 years, and only 17.2% of employees are under age 35. Some countries report that over half of their civil servants will reach retirement age within 10–15 years. Despite the urgency, only 30% of participating countries have adopted a formal ageing or succession strategy.

Given these challenges, how do we move forward?

**Mentoring** is a high-potential yet underutilized tool in public administration, essential for fostering intergenerational collaboration. Despite investments in learning and employer branding, structured mentorship programs remain rare, even as intergenerational knowledge transfer is widely recognized as vital for long-term organizational resilience.

Mentoring bridges knowledge gaps, as experienced civil servants guide younger colleagues, fostering dialogue and learning. Hungary's Public Administration Scholarship Program pairs trainees with mentors, supporting knowledge transfer and fresh perspectives, while aiding recruitment and retention.

**Modernizing training is vital**, requiring a shift to AI-driven learning, micro-credentialing, and flexible programs. Coaching aids senior officials, while sabbaticals prevent burnout. Flexible learning supports a multigenerational workforce's diverse needs.

**Attracting and retaining talent is not just an HR issue**—it is fundamental to strong governance. Our findings align with the CEPA report's emphasis on strategic workforce planning, diversity, and digital tools, yet they also highlight a significant implementation gap. Closing this gap requires dedicated leadership and funding, institutional capacity, and intergenerational policy innovation—supported by data-driven HR strategies that are continuously evaluated and refined.

A resilient, future-ready civil service must not only embrace innovation but also ensure it serves all generations with purpose and fairness. The tools are available—now is the time to act, with dedication and foresight, to build a civil service that is strong and inclusive for the generations to come.

It has been an honor to share these insights with such a distinguished audience. Thank you for your attention.