

23rd session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration

Written statement by University of Economics in Katowice, Poland

Agenda item 7: Public sector workforce matters

Public Service Manifesto

The subject of the importance of the public sector workforce, that is, the employees of a wide range of public institutions, is the foundation of global development and the agility of modern organizations, including raising their efficiency, responding to the challenges of the present and creating a resilient attitude towards future threats. Given the dynamic volatility of the market and political and even global security situation, we know that we are dealing with challenges now, which will be increasingly prevalent in the future. On the basis of scientific work and practice, we can state without a shadow of a doubt that a motivated, competent, and diverse organizational workforce is the key to the multifaceted success of organizations and a condition for the development of entire societies. Public administration, in turn, is a service that should be performed by people who understand its mission, but also an advanced system that has its good and bad. This statement examines the most important ones, testifying to the position, problems, solutions, and future of administrative personnel.

Considering the examples of various public organizations, especially in the context of the apparent inadequacies and shortcomings of public management, the primary need of public sector employees is to be heard. There is no better way to build a relationship between an organization and an employee or to gain knowledge of an individual's needs and goals than through mutual communication that focuses on what the employee has to say and what he or she wants to change. This would solve many problems, such as too much job turnover, the departure of top professionals, or lack of motivation to work. The ability to listen is a niche that public managers should fill, yet it is so accessible that the organization does not require significant changes. This simple soft skills tool will increase organizational effectiveness, job satisfaction, and familiarity with the organization.

On the one hand, the public sector is a distinctive branch of the economy: it can be a source of much professional inspiration, employs people highly skilled in very diverse fields of knowledge, coordinates the conduct of key policies of the state, local governments and their agencies, and makes key decisions for societies, including the implementation of extensive political programs that change our environment in real terms. What is more, is that it does so under strict procedures and legal guidelines that reduce the sense of arbitrariness and increase the difficulty, making members of this sector challenging and the sector itself a demanding place to work. It is also an industry that is considered stable, which in the current dynamic global environment is a factor expected by employees around the world.

On the other hand, the public sector today is not always an attractive place to work. As a rule, employees in this sector earn less than their counterparts in the private sector. The sector, in

the context of public management, is plagued by several shortcomings and disadvantages that have a negative impact on the overall evaluation of the sector, including organizational silos, micromanagement, or the existence of functional structures that result from the primacy of law in public administration. A huge challenge is hierarchization, which is increasingly regarded as a relic of the past in today's environment. Each of these aspects discourages potential leaders from the sector, lowers job satisfaction, and is a source of stereotypes that actually remain true in some areas of public administration.

Public employees are a thread that is often, yet wrongly, overlooked in the discussion of broad inclusion in the life of organizations. The workforce of public organizations is one of the stakeholder groups that should be taken into account and listened to by decision-makers. It should also have a real impact on the activities of public organizations as part of liberalizing policies to increase the inclusiveness of society. This should happen just as much as the voice of senior management or other key stakeholders, such as customers, residents, or other interest groups, is recognized. The fact that stakeholders are internal should not detract from external stakeholders. On the contrary, they have an advantage over them - they are closer to the organization, have more data, and are closer to the organization's problems, which can translate into their richer knowledge and the provision of better, more tailored solutions to specific problems.

Public administration professionals are not just enforcers and implementers of policies and goals imposed by the higher-ups of the organization's decision-makers or politicians. The paradigm shift in thinking is precisely to see them also in an advisory, recommendatory, and even managerial role using the broad participatory instrumentation that management science today provides to business practitioners. In the face of profound changes in organizational philosophy, public specialists should not act solely on behalf of decision-makers. The existing center of power is spread across a much broader spectrum of stakeholders, including employees. This is particularly important in public administration, which, as a rule, responds to the needs of local communities and pursues public goals. In this sense, socialization and openness to employees are leitmotives that should be visible in this sector.

However, it is important to distinguish between managers and employees: each of these groups deserves respect, the development of their own skills, and the desire to unite them not only in the performance of their official duties but also as the entire community of an organization, carrying out its mission. Both work for the common good and the outcome of the organization. Despite the differences, including hierarchical differences in the face of changes in organizations around the world, one should positively assess the emphasis visible in economic theory and practice on flattening the organizational structure and the project approach, which can lead to a reduction of differences between different groups of employees and mutual cooperation and interaction. In today's understanding of organizational philosophy, the boss is a leader, and the employee is a partner. Understanding the benefits of building a bridge between managers and employees is a hallmark of modern managed organizations.

One of the challenges of the public sector is the need for continuous, multifaceted improvement of public organizations to attract talent to abandon careers in business for careers in public administration. The other is to retain those already in the sector who are productive, dedicated employees and have the credentials to be sector leaders. It is important to keep in mind the balance between one and the other and avoid favoring any employee group. Public administration has its own specific character and unique (because social) goals to achieve, so it should attract the best in its fields, but also create leaders among current employees. Adequate knowledge, support and competence allow some employees to discover themselves and develop their full potential and, in some cases, discover in themselves the skills needed by the organization, including those leadership skills that until now have remained in the shadows.

Certainly, the new generations in the market, including Generation Z and the younger millennials, make the problems of public sector employees even more apparent, and at the same time, the need to improve the sector. The public sector, if it wants to be competitive with commercial sectors, should change even more dynamically and listen to the needs of young employees who work differently but can push the organization forward. The ability of decision-makers to interact with younger generations and to benefit from their recommendations and proposals is crucial. In the context of creating a working environment and working tools, it is undesirable to allow a gap between the public and private sectors. Ideas such as the possibility to work remotely, flexible working hours, creating a "company purpose," and mentoring from the most experienced employees are examples of ideas that can help organizations sustain the interest of young employees or those who will just cross the thresholds of the organization.

In summary, there is a lot of talk about sustainability, organizational resilience in the face of pervasive multidimensional chaos, and increasing diversity in public administration. Relatively little, on the other hand, is said about those who need to do this, namely public employees themselves. The public sector is characterized by extremely important tasks, often with a broader range than individual private companies. Mission is the key word that accompanies all public administration. However, employees are responsible for numerous tasks, burdened with legal obligations, and needing to keep up with what is new in management. Without them, we will not be able to increase efficiency, involve individual stakeholders in the conduct of current policies, or strive to equalize inequalities of all kinds. Let us keep this in mind when politicians and policymakers talk about better public administration. Public employees are a prerequisite for the realization of these plans, but the most valuable and the only one through which this can be done. Therefore, in this statement, I state once again - public employees matter.