



## Strategies for attracting and retaining a qualified public sector workforce and leaving no one behind \*

### Summary

In order for governments to be able to perform a broad spectrum of functions and deliver public services, a dedicated and skilled public sector workforce is required. That in turn requires various human resources strategies to attract and retain workers of all ages and backgrounds, including younger generations. Promotion of a wide-ranging social dialogue among all stakeholders could also help to strengthen public sector responsiveness to the needs of society, thereby reinforcing a core motivation of public sector workers and accelerating delivery of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

### Building a capable public sector workforce and making the public sector attractive to everyone

The Committee reiterated that, in order for Governments to be able to perform a broad spectrum of functions and deliver public services in line with national sustainable development plans and objectives, a dedicated and skilled public sector workforce was required. That in turn required effective human resources strategies for attracting and retaining public sector workers of all ages and backgrounds across government and in diverse occupational groups. The weight given to various factors in the design of such strategies would depend on national and local priorities and resources, as well

as labour market conditions that varied from place to place and over time.

Despite differences in national and local contexts, many good practices could be recommended to national planners, civil service commissions, human resources departments and others involved in ensuring that public sector capabilities were aligned with a country's needs and aspirations, including those of its younger generations. Applying the revised 2025 standards of excellence for public administration education and training, for example, could help to develop a pipeline of qualified individuals committed

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\* This brief is an excerpt from the report of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration on its twenty-fourth session held from 7 to 11 April 2025. See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2025, Supplement No. 24 ([E/2025/44-E/C.16/2025/9](https://publicadministration.desa.un.org/intergovernmental-support/cepa)). The Committee is a technical advisory body of the Council tasked with providing policy advice and recommendations on issues related to governance and public administration for sustainable development. For more information on the Committee's work, please visit <https://publicadministration.desa.un.org/intergovernmental-support/cepa>.

to public service values, the operationalization of the principles of effective governance for sustainable development, and digital transformation.

With regard to conditions of service, the Committee highlighted the merits of adopting various strategies for attracting and retaining a qualified public sector workforce and leaving no one behind, such as:

- Establishing competitive compensation and recognition systems. Governments should aim to provide competitive compensation packages and benefits, alongside transparent reward structures consisting of both financial incentives and career growth opportunities. Recognizing the importance of validation and motivation and rewarding contributions could foster loyalty and commitment.
- Enhancing opportunities for work-life balance. Governments should consider policies that promoted flexibility, such as remote work options, flexible schedules and openness to mobility, which could be especially attractive to young workers. Such measures could also improve employee satisfaction and productivity.
- Creating a variety of opportunities for professional growth. Structured programmes for learning and skills development, mentoring, leadership training and merit-based recruitment and promotion were important examples. Succession planning was also needed to identify and prepare future leaders. Providing clear career pathways to rapid growth and meaningful responsibility was key to retaining highly qualified and motivated individuals, whether they be younger workers or more senior public employees.
- Promoting a purpose-driven workplace culture. Public sector entities should emphasize their role in societal improvement and the alignment of their missions with public values. If opportunities for contributing to significant societal challenges and their root causes, such as climate change and social

equity, were highlighted, that could resonate deeply with younger workers and others and help to attract the best and brightest to public service.

- Adapting human resources management systems to evolving conditions. Governments must continuously modernize and adapt their human resources practices. Unified and data-driven human resources management systems could offer valuable insights into workforce dynamics and lead to new strategies that addressed generational differences, among other concerns.
- Right-sizing the public sector workforce. Governments should adopt a forward-looking approach, continuously monitoring the size and composition of the public sector workforce and judiciously recalibrating workforce capacities and skills in accordance with evolving needs on the basis of cost-benefit analyses and sustainable development impact assessments. That could help to avoid ad hoc crisis management decisions, which might have implications beyond financial costs.
- Ensuring diversity, equity and inclusion. Promoting diversity, equity and inclusion, including through inclusive workplaces, addressing biases and ensuring equal opportunities, could also help to motivate and retain qualified individuals with a wider range of skills and experience.

The Committee stressed, in addition, that promoting a wide-ranging social dialogue among all stakeholders could enhance the responsiveness of the public sector to the needs of society, thereby reinforcing a core motivation of public sector workers and accelerating delivery of the 2030 Agenda. Effective social dialogue required an investment of dedicated effort, as well as the active engagement of workers, employers and government, including entities responsible for national human resources development policies. For that to happen, an enabling environment needed to

be established that provided subnational governments in particular with the authority and resources needed to institutionalize related initiatives.

The success of social dialogue often depended on strong political will at all levels; a firm commitment to engaging in social dialogue with workers' representatives on the basis of international and national labour standards; a legal framework that accounted for the subnational dimension; and ongoing institutional arrangements, such as a subnational tripartite consultative committee. Other factors included sufficient resources to conduct exchanges in a professional and effective manner, committed and ethical representatives of workers (e.g. through associations and unions) and promotion of

equitable access to the requisite information and data by all concerned.

Partnerships between subnational governments and the International Labour Organization, Public Services International and other actors could contribute to the mainstreaming of international labour standards at the subnational level while building subnational capacities. The sharing of best practices remained a valuable way of encouraging interaction among all relevant stakeholders and advancing decent work for all.

► **The Committee's deliberations are supported by expert papers prepared by the members in advance of the session. For more in-depth analysis of this issue, see United Nations official document [E/C.16/2025/6](#).**

## Action by the Economic and Social Council

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On 30 July 2025, the Council adopted resolution 2025/31 on the report of the Committee on its twenty-fourth session (as contained in [E/2025/L.23](#)). By this resolution, the Council:

***Recognizes* that a dedicated and skilled public sector workforce is required for Governments to perform a broad spectrum of functions and deliver public services in line with national sustainable development plans and objectives, and encourages national planners, civil service commissions, human resources departments and others to take steps to align workforce capacities and skills with evolving needs, attract and retain public sector workers of all ages and backgrounds across government and in diverse occupational groups, while promoting geographical and gender balance, and to promote a wide-ranging social dialogue among all stakeholders with a view to reinforcing a core motivation of public sector workers and accelerating delivery of the 2030 Agenda;**

***Takes note* of the 2025 revision to the standards of excellence for public administration education and training, and invites schools and institutes of public administration to update their curricula to reflect new developments in public administration, inter alia, based on a commitment to public service values, mainstreaming the principles of effective governance for sustainable development and promoting digital transformation.**