

Reinforcing attractiveness and retention in public administrations

Toolbox of the social dialogue committee for central government administrations

Attractiveness and retention: what is at stake for central government administrations?

Central government administrations across the EU face the same challenges of attractivity and retention of staff, as set out in the Strasbourg Declaration adopted on 17 March 2022 by the European ministers in charge of public sector transformation and the civil service.

Discussions in the European sectoral social dialogue committee for central government administrations made it possible to examine in greater depth the responses deployed by the public administrations, which cover:

- the implementation of change based on a shared assessment of the factors for low attractivity and retention with trade unions and workers;
- the implementation of communication and image strategies;
- attention to specific audiences (young people, shortage occupations);
- attention to workers interest e.g. work/life balance, coherence between mission of general interest and actual quality of service delivery, equality issues;
- the construction of territorial approaches to attractiveness for central governments administrations located outside the capitals;
- attention to the retention of staff already in post as part of retention objectives based on surveys of staff.

Presentation of the toolbox

On this basis, the committee wishes to provide human resources professionals and trade unions with a toolbox to address the issue of attractiveness and retention in its entirety by structuring the discussions in three areas:

- Axis 1: identify the challenges and factors of attractiveness specific to each service and job;
- Axis 2: develop strategies for promoting candidates for recruitment;
- Axis 3: act in favour of the retention of workers already in post.

For each of the three axes, the toolbox offers:

- a summary of the challenges to be overcome;
- a presentation of the types of possible responses;
- examples of actions to be implemented.

Working axis

Axis 1: identifying the challenges and factors of attractiveness specific to each service and job

Findings:

The lack of attractiveness of public services has been identified but remains difficult to objectify. It is necessary to refine our knowledge of the public employment situation and to identify the factors responsible for the attractiveness deficit in order to be able to propose the most appropriate corrective measures.

Goals:

- Identify the workforce and skills needs of public employers
- Refine knowledge of attractiveness factors
- Build an evolving and forward-looking vision of attractiveness issues

Possible answers types and examples of actions to be implemented:

1.1 Identify challenges to attractiveness

- Conducting qualitative surveys of employers and staff
- Identify target audiences

1.2 Mapping jobs and sectors with the greatest difficulties

- Initiate prospective studies to anticipate changes in occupations and sectors, in conjunction with the academic world
- Exploiting data on job advertisements
- Anticipate the trades and sectors that are potentially under pressure in the next 5-10 years, based on demographic trends

1.3 Deepening the knowledge of employment areas

- Study the labour markets by territory

1.4 Construct objective indicators to monitor the evolution of attractiveness (workforce, working conditions, remuneration, etc.)

- Construct indicators of attractiveness within central government administrations (including taking into account their territorial locations) and at European level

1.5 Benchmarking good practices

- Conduct and share European and international comparative studies (OECD, EUPAN...)

Axis 2: Building promotional strategies for recruitment candidates

Axis 2.1: Employer identity

Findings:

Several administrations have initiated the construction of employer identity, integrating a reflection on the image of the administrations as employers and the target audiences and then the operational implementation of the identity.

Goals:

Increasing the visibility and attractiveness of public jobs to people outside and inside the administration

Possible answers types and examples of actions to be implemented:

- 2.1.1 Identify what constitutes the identity of the administrations concerned as employers
 - Conducting surveys with a panel of users, recruitment candidates, public servants and trade union representatives
 - To study the strengths and weaknesses of the discourse of employing administrations compared to other employers and workers' reality on the ground
- 2.1.2 Building a common/identity for future internal and external communication
 - Define a common base promoting the strengths of public administrations (i.e: general interest, content of the jobs, exemplarity, ability to act in the face of the challenges of the times such as climate change, digitalisation, social inequalities, diversity of professions, pay and working conditions, etc.)
 - Build a plan to achieve and communicate on the above
- 2.1.3 Decline the identity within the administrations concerned
 - Collect the communication elements specific to each administration - both internal and external
 - Bring them into line with the identity to be conveyed
- 2.1.4 Promote the identity through targeted communication actions
 - Participation in job fairs, student fairs, etc.
 - Deploying a mass media communication campaign

Axis 2.2 : Specific groups

Findings:

Certain specific groups (young people, jobs in short supply, etc.) require a special approach to the issue of attractiveness because of:

- stronger competition with the private sector, including on working conditions and pay;
- a negative image of the administration.

Goals:

Increasing the visibility and attractiveness of public jobs to these groups

Possible answers types and examples of actions to be implemented:

- 2.2.1 Renewing the image of the administration among young people
 - Conducting surveys with a panel of users, recruitment candidates and public employees
 - Study the strengths and weaknesses of the discourse of employing administrations in comparison with other recruiters
- 2.2.2 Building a specific approach for jobs short supply
 - Identify current/potential jobs in tension (such as IT specialists, labour inspectors, tax inspectors, climate change experts, law experts) through a prospective approach
 - Develop a detailed knowledge of the job market for each job
 - Implement targeted actions on certain profiles, taking into account the specificities of the job market in these sectors

- Linking the attractiveness policy with a logic of retention

Axis 3 : Acting in favour of staff retention

Axis 3.1 : Acting in favour of staff retention by supporting building fulfilling career paths

Findings:

Strengthening attractiveness also implies being able to retain all staff as well as newly recruited talent, by ensuring that the "employer promise" is respected and that more senior staff can support newcomers. This means welcoming and integrating new employees, supporting the development of skills and building attractive careers for all profiles within the civil service.

Goals:

- Improving the reception, integration and personalised support of newcomers (on-boarding)
- Securing intergenerational cooperation and team working
- Encouraging and facilitating mobility between and within public administrations
- Facilitating the development of skills

Possible answers types and examples of actions to be implemented:

3.1.1 Improving the reception and integration of newcomers

- Anticipate and prepare the arrival of new staff
- Prevent early departures
- Set up an integration programme for new employees
- Plan a personalised support system for new employees
- Bring together all these methods, tools and measures in an "on-boarding toolbox"

3.1.2 Promoting and facilitating mobility

- Conduct a reflection on recruitment involving HR professionals, managers, staff and their representatives
- Encourage the dissemination of recruitment offers within public administrations
- Broaden support for employees, taking into account their personal situation
- Valuing mobility, including within other administrations, during a career and for access to promotion
- Communicate on the diversity of professions within public administrations
- Encourage the upward harmonisation of remuneration between public administrations to avoid competition
- Develop specific measures in unattractive areas to encourage mobility between administrations
- Implement off-boarding processes, monitor and evaluate

3.1.3 Facilitating the development of skills

- Develop lifelong learning during working hours
- Promote diversified training offers (face-to-face, digital, etc.) also during working time
- Develop skills framework on the basis of common foundations
- Promote public in-house expertise

Axis 3.2 : Acting in favour of staff retention by acting on working conditions

Findings:

Attracting and retaining newly recruited talent also means offering staff fulfilling working conditions by activating the various levers (pay and material benefits, respect for work/life balance, managerial quality and strengthening of working groups, respect and promotion of trade union rights etc.)

Goals:

- Acting on financial and material benefits for public employees
- Promoting work-life balance
- Strengthen the quality of life at work

Possible answers types and examples of actions to be implemented:

3.2.1 Acting on financial and material benefits for public employees

- Mobilize the appropriate compensation schemes to combat the lack of attractiveness
- Develop social measures (housing, child care, payment of certain benefits, etc.)
- Promote fairness and transparency in remuneration

3.2.2 Promoting work-life balance

- Facilitate the deployment of new ways of working for the benefit of a better work/life balance by making use of spatial/time flexibilities and (voluntary) teleworking in line with the [European Social Partner agreement on digitalisation](#) for central/federal government administrations (2022)
- Implement the right to disconnect, paying particular attention to the most exposed groups

3.2.3 Strengthen the quality of life at work in a spirit of symmetry of attention between workers and users

- Deploying occupational health plans, integrating them into social dialogue
- Encourage caring, clear and fair management, and support managers
- Ensure that work groups are strengthened and implementing actions in favour of the animation of work collectives
- Promote professional equality in all its aspects
- Promote social dialogue, including collective bargaining.