



## Talent Management in the Slovenian Public Administration for Young Talented Individuals from Generation Z

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose** - Talent management is becoming an increasingly important area of research and implementation in organisations as is the importance of the organisation's internal resources, i.e. people. The purpose of the paper is to present the results and key findings of the research on how employees in Slovenian public administration rate the implementation and its effects of talent management activities to attract, develop and retain young talented individuals from generation Z.

**Aims(s)** - The aims of this paper were to evaluate the talent management activities for young talented individuals in Slovenian public administration and develop a model of Gen Z talent management.

**Design/methodology/approach** - Survey data was collected with the help of an online questionnaire and the questionnaire, which was designed for the empirical research, consisted of several sets of questions. The collected data was processed in the SPSS statistical program and Microsoft Excel.

**Findings** - The results of the survey show that the respondents do not rate attracting, development and retention of young talented individuals in public administration the best as the average rating of all sets is 3.0. Results show that some attraction and development activities have a positive impact ( $p < 0.05$ ) on the retention of young talented individuals in Slovenian public administration organisations.

**Limitations of the study** - The limitation was related to the fact that the survey was conducted only in the Slovenian public administration and not in the entire public sector. It would be reasonable to expand the research in the future to the entire public sector and abroad.

**Practical implications** - The paper is useful for practice mainly because it presents the possibility of using the developed model of Gen Z talent management in public administration.

**Originality/value** - The originality of the topic is reflected in the lack of empirical research on the topic of Gen Z talent management in public administrations and the first such research in Slovenian public administration.

### KEY WORDS

talent management, attracting, developing, retaining, young talented individuals, Gen Z, public administration.

JEL Code: H70, J26, J60, M12,

DOI: [10.46287/SFWH7638](https://doi.org/10.46287/SFWH7638)

## 1 INTRODUCTION

We live in an aging society, where the birth rate is falling; life span is getting longer; the consequence of this is a decreasing share of the active population in society and a sharp increase in the share of the elderly (Macur, 2022, Paccagnella, 2016). In parallel with this, the labour market is already reflecting a lack of quality employees due to the social and economic conditions in Europe, which encourages research and planned management of highly talented individuals (Boštjančič and Slana, 2018). Globalization and an increasingly competitive environment emphasize more and more the importance of the organisation's internal resources, i.e. people (Acar and Yener, 2016, Kohont, 2019), since people are also one of the most important factors of sustainable (economic) development (Baqutayan, 2014).

At the same time, the need for talent has become one of the biggest challenges for organisations of the 21st century as changes in both society and the broader environment increase the necessity of focusing on talented employees (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2020, Weske et al., 2020). In this paper, we address young talented individuals from generation Z, who are only one group among talented individuals' cohort.

Talent management is becoming an ever more powerful source of competitive advantage for organisations and countries, and at the same time plays an important part in understanding and caring for sustainable development; it is simultaneously the response of organisations to the challenges of the modern economy and public administration whereby employers must take a proactive role in developing their most talented employees (Annakis et al., 2014, Struss, 2020, Žibret, 2022). We see the concept of talent management as a process of attracting, developing and retaining the most talented individuals (Sarren and Mishra, 2016). Talent management, in the broadest sense, refers to a way of thinking and an attempt to ensure that everyone at all levels of the organisation performs to their full potential (Kafetzopoulos et al., 2022). Within the studied concept, we distinguish between two approaches: the inclusive approach includes all employees in the talent management process, which means that it does not distinguish between talented and non-talented employees. On the other hand, the exclusionary approach includes only those employees who demonstrate that they are above average and exceptional or are recognized as talented in the organisation (Cappelli and Keller, 2014).

Fisher (2018) states that demographic changes cause employment problems as there is a lack of young talent even in public administration; at the same time, Cordes and Vogel (2022) claim that public organisations increasingly compete with employers from other sectors for highly educated employees. It is typical for European public administrations that it is very difficult to attract talent, while they are simultaneously facing three challenges: (1) increasingly older employees in public administration, (2) difficulties in attracting young talented individuals and (3) lack of employee mobility, which means that public administrations do not have an adequate mobility policy, which in turn causes demotivation of young people, and at the same time can have a negative effect on attracting young talented individuals (European Commission, 2022). These young talented workers represent individuals from generation Z (Gen Z) on the labour market, which represents a particularly demanding group that has only been on the market for the last few years (Feldy, 2019). Everything highlighted above must also be taken into account when it comes to challenges related to young and the management of young talented workers in the Slovenian public administration. This is reason why we decided to conduct a comprehensive survey of public administration organisations in Slovenia and find out what the situation is in the field of Gen Z talent management.

Generation Z representing 30% of the total global population (OECD, 2021). As a milestone to determine whether someone is in Gen Z is Generation Z's birth year. In the literature, we can see differences in identifying Generation Z birth years (Jayatissa, 2023; Slepian et al., 2023; Robak and Albrychiewicz-Słocińska, 2019; Grow and Yang, 2018; Lanier, 2017). However, there is no consensus on the exact birth years that define the Generation Z. In this paper, we understand that Gen Z consists of individuals born between 1997 and 2012. Gen Z has a unique viewpoint of everything they encounter. Gen Z is known to be the first true "digital native" generation (Lanier, 2017). Born and raised in an environment of technological advancement, they always think ahead while taking important steps. Having an inclusive thinking Gen Z is unique and impressive. Therefore, they have higher expectations than previous generations, especially in terms of their career. For this reason, it is important for employers to understand and act on Gen Z's needs to get the best out of this tech-savvy generation of workers to achieve goals together (Jayatissa, 2023). According to Benitez-Marquez et al. (2022) this generation seems to be motivated by finding their dream job and opportunities to expand their skills (Magano et al., 2020), leading to believe they will switch jobs more frequently than other generations before them, and if they do not like something, they are ready to change immediately (Csiszárík-Kocsír and Garia-Fodor, 2018; Benitez-Marquez et al., 2022). Generation Z is arguably dependent on technology and relies on the internet and the smartphone for a large portion of daily communication, news, education and societal interaction. As a result, Gen Z is largely influenced by what they read online from bloggers and their peers on social media accounts (Slepian et al., 2023).

The purpose of the paper is to present the results and key findings of the research on how employees in Slovenian public administration rate the implementation and its effects of talent management activities to attract, develop and retain young talented individuals from generation Z. Given that such research has

not yet been conducted in the Slovenian public administration. Therefore, the results and practical recommendations are useful for Slovenian public administration. The aims of this paper are to evaluate the talent management activities for young talented individuals in Slovenian public administration and develop a model of Gen Z talent management.

The paper is structured in the following way. The initial part presents an introduction, a review of the theory of talent management. This is followed by a presentation of the methodology, which presents the research procedures, the target group that was included in the research and the instrument we used to collect the data. Then we present the results of a survey. The last part of the paper presents the discussion and the conclusion.

## 2 REVIEW OF THEORY

The study of the field of talent management showed that the field does not have a consistent definition (see Reis et al., 2021; Cronsell and Lindahl, 2020; Jooss et al., 2019; King and Vaiman, 2019; Kohont, 2019; Kravariti and Johnston, 2019; Meyers et al., 2019; Sparrow, 2019). Cappelli and Keller (2014) and Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2013) point out that each author has their own idea of what is encompassed under the term talent management and what is not. One of the reasons for the inconsistent definition of the field can be attributed to the fact that it is a fairly new field that scientists and experts have only been working on for the last three decades (Gallardo-Gallardo, 2020; Kozjek and Franca, 2020; Claus, 2019; Kohont, 2019; Kravariti and Johnston, 2019). Sparrow (2019) states that talent management is about systematically attracting, identifying, developing, including/retaining and onboarding of individuals whose potential allows them to make an immediate or long-term positive impact on the organisation's performance. King and Vaiman (2019) claim that the concept deals with the systematic identification of positions that are the key competitive advantage of an organisation.

The talent management process consists of a few interdependent steps, which experts understand and include in the implementation process in different ways. The OECD (2021) includes recognising, attracting (or identifying), developing, retaining and deploying talent among the said steps. Shava and Door-gapersad (2021) add talent planning, inclusion and deployment, while Sparrow (2019) completes the process with the onboarding of talented individuals. According to some authors (Jawali et al., 2021; Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2020; Kohont, 2019; Jindal and Shaikh, 2017), there are three key steps, namely (1) attraction, (2) development and (3) retention.

Regardless of the fact that the field of talent management does not have a consistent definition, there are research sources in the literature for this field and some of them are presented in the paper below. In the survey conducted by Boštjančič and Slana (2018), it was found that most organisations attract talented employees with scholarships, both secondary school and university students; this is followed by planned brand management, cooperation with universities where employees occasionally give lectures and professors recommend students for work, as well as provision of internship and apprenticeship positions. The survey by Smirnova (2022) also focused on how organisations in Sweden attract and retain talent. The results showed that attracting talent is achieved with a "good, attractive, positive" employer brand and creation of a reputation, while retention is achieved by using the option of changing positions or job rotation.

Adeosun and Ohiani (2020) also researched in more detail the attracting and recruiting of quality talent from the perspective of organisations. The results showed that organisations use salary, brand of the organisation and job security as key factors in attracting and recruiting. In addition, the strategy and area of development of digitization are also crucial. The techniques of using social and traditional media as well as online and in person interviews have also been proven to help in the selection of quality talent. Singh and Satpathy (2017) also researched the attitudes of employees towards the implementation of HR practices and their attitude towards employee attraction and retention. The results of the research showed that the brand of the organisation, the option of working from home, freedom at work, flexible working hours, and compensation and benefits are important for attracting talent. When it comes to retaining talent, employees also highlighted various allowances, bonuses and incentives as the most important factors.

Younas and Bari (2020) investigated the effect of talent management practices (mentoring, strategic management, social media and knowledge sharing) with the intention of retaining generation Y

employees in organisations. It was found that mentoring practices, strategic management and social media have a positive effect on the intention to stay in business or retain talented employees, while knowledge sharing has no significant effect on the intention to retain employees in the organisation. Also, the results of the impact of talent management on employee retention by Kohestany and Yaghoubi (2017), showed that the impact exists, which means that an increase in talent management variables (corporate social responsibility, employee pride, management support, performance management, rewards and health factors) affects the retention of talented employees and vice versa.

The research about how employees in Slovenian public administration rate the implementation and its effects of talent management activities to attract, develop and retain young talented individuals from generation Z is non-existent. Given the discussion above, the current research fills the gap. Based on the previously mentioned literature, we hypothesise the following:

- Hypothesis 1: Activities to attract young talented individuals affect their retention in public administration.
- Hypothesis 2: Activities to develop young talented individuals affect their retention in public administration.

### 3 METHODS

#### 3.1 PROCEDURE AND PARTICIPANTS

The procedure was divided into two phases, where we used mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative). In Phase 1, we reviewed the core literature, grounded research model with hypotheses and theorizing the association among the constructs. In Phase 2, we conducted survey with employees in public administration in Slovenia and analysed survey data.

Research data was collected with the help of an online questionnaire, which was created with 1ka online tool. The target group of the survey was composed of employees in public administration in Slovenia. The public administration is treated as all those organisations that are part of the process of decision-making about public matters or participate in management of public matters. Public administration therefore encompasses state administration (government offices, government departments and administrative units), local community administration and holders of public authorisations (Buzeti, 2021). Government departments include ministries and bodies within ministries.

We carried out research in Slovenian public administration with online questionnaire that took place in June 2023. In our research, we gathered answers/data from 910 respondents in public administration, which represents a 2.0% share of the entire population of employees in public administration. The sample from our research is represented by officials (50.8%), professional-technical personnel (19.1%), officials (heads) in leading positions (19%) and other respondents (11.1%). In this paper, we treat officials as those public employees who perform public tasks for authorities. Public tasks for authorities are tasks that are directly connected with enforcement of authority, or protection of the public interest. Public officials who perform supporting tasks are professional-technical public employees. Supporting tasks are tasks in the field of personnel management and material-financial operation, financial and similar tasks, and other tasks that must be performed for the smooth operation of public tasks of the authority. Table 1 shows the distribution of employees by the type of organization and number of employees in public administration in Slovenia.

Table 1. Survey sample and population

	Sample		Population	
	Frequency (f)	Percent share (%)	Frequency (f)	Percent share (%)
Government offices	29	3.2%	1.099	2.4%
Ministries	174	19.1%	5.835	12.7%
Bodies within ministries	206	22.6%	22.877	49.7%
Administrative units	154	16.9%	2.400	5.2%
Local community administration	208	22.9%	5.728	12.4%
Holders of public authorisations	118	13.0%	8.091	17.6%

Others	21	2.3%	0	0%
Total	910	100%	46.030	100%

Source: own data

According to the most recent data, the public administration employs 46,030 civil servants; approximately 2.0% or 910 respondents in public administration organisations responded to the questionnaire (Table 1). The largest share of respondents was represented by employees from municipalities or self-governing local communities (22.9% of all respondents), respondents in bodies within ministries (22.6%) and 19.1% of all respondents in ministries where the questionnaire was fully answered. The above were followed by respondents at administrative units as they represented 16.9% of all respondents in the survey, and 13,0% respondents answered from organisations that belong to holders of public authorisations. The smallest shares of respondents are those from government offices as 3,2% of all respondents and 2.3% respondents who probably did not know exactly, to which group of public administration organisations they belonged, participated in the survey.

The questionnaire was completed by mostly women, namely 79.5%, which indicates the generally known fact that women predominate among those working in the public sector. The largest share of respondents was represented by respondents aged between 46 and 50, which represents 21.8% of all respondents, while the smallest number of respondents represented the youngest (5.9%) and the oldest age group (5.1%). Respondents with (prior) university education (34.4%) predominated among the respondents, while those with a doctorate (1.1%) and with a specialization (1.0%) were the fewest among those who answered the questionnaire.

### 3.2 MEASURES

Aiming to study the implementation of the concept of talent management in the Slovenian public administration and of how employees rate the implementation and effects of the activities of attracting, developing and retaining young talented individuals from generation Z, we employed the quantitative research method. The survey questionnaire was intended for all employees in the Slovenian public administration.

The survey questionnaire consists of two basic sets:

- The first set of the survey questionnaire includes five closed-ended questions about the general or demographic characteristics of the respondents, such as gender, age, highest formal education achieved, the public administration organisation in which they are employed and the work area or function they occupy or perform.
- The second set of questions deals with the field of talent management. It contains 45 closed-ended questions or statements divided into three subsections, namely attracting, developing and retaining young talented individuals in public administration organisations. The respondents rated individual statements on the basis of a five-point Likert scale of agreement (1 - Strongly disagree, 2 - Disagree, 3 - Neither agree nor disagree, 4 - Agree and 5 - Strongly agree). Each of the three subsections consists of fifteen questions or statements that have already been used in their research by the OECD (2021), Pediček (2022), Pičulin (2020), Boštjančič and Slana (2018), Podrepšek and Virag (2017), Pavić (2016), Petrovski (2014) and Jenko (2012),

The collected research data were first edited in Microsoft Excel and statistically analysed in SPSS. The hypotheses of the article were verified based on a regression analysis.

## 4 RESULTS

### 4.1 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

In this section, descriptive statistics are presented for individual elements of talent management: (1) attracting young talented individuals, (2) developing young talented individuals and (3) retaining young talented individuals.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for attracting young talented individuals

	AV	SD
The organisation is building an attractive brand (good reputation, organisational culture).	3.0	1.2
The organisation uses employee success stories (brand ambassadors).	2.6	1.1
The organisation enables flexible forms of work (condensed work week, hybrid work, work from home, short-time work).	3.1	1.3
The organisation attracts new (young) employees through online social networks.	2.3	1.2
The organisation cooperates with educational institutions (secondary schools and faculties/ universities).	3.2	1.3
The organisation provides work-based training opportunities.	3.4	1.2
The organisation provides internships.	3.7	1.2
The organisation provides scholarships.	2.2	1.2
The organisation offers various financial benefits (allowances/bonuses, health insurance, pension plan and paid vacation).	2.7	1.4
The organisation provides employment stability.	4.2	0.8
The organisation provides adequate/competitive remuneration for work.	2.7	1.1
The organisation attracts new (young) employees from an international environment.	1.9	1.0
The organisation provides opportunities for diversity of work and mobility.	2.8	1.1
The organisation provides opportunities for learning, development and career advancement.	3.3	1.1
The organisation facilitates a balance between private and professional life.	3.6	1.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>1.1</b>

Source: own data

Table 2 shows the average values and standard deviations for degree to which participants agree to the statements regarding to attracting young talented individuals, with average scores ranging from 1.9 to 4.2. The statement "The organisation provides job stability" was rated with the highest average score (4.2). The lowest average score (1.9) was given by respondents to the statement "The organisation attracts new employees from an international environment". The average score for degree to which participants agree to the statements of the attracting of young talented individuals is 3.0.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for development of young talented individuals

	AV	SD
The organisation provides mentoring for young employees.	3.4	1.1
The organisation provides personal skills training ("coaching").	2.7	1.1
The organisation provides job rotation opportunities.	2.8	1.1
The organisation holds meetings to resolve problems.	3.4	1.1
The organisation enables substitution for absent (young) employees.	3.5	1.0
The organisation provides opportunities for cooperation in various projects.	3.4	1.0
The organisation enables "job shadowing" (a young employee closely follows another in the latter's daily activities at the workplace and is thus trained in the job concerned).	2.5	1.1
The organisation provides various education and training opportunities.	3.9	0.9
The superiors in the organisation create a list of (young) talented employees.	2.4	1.1
The superiors in the organisation plan their successors.	2.5	1.2
The organisation enables the exchange of employees between organisations (e.g. between administrative units, ministries).	2.4	1.1
The organisation provides opportunities for teamwork.	3.4	1.0
The organisation enables (young) employee mobility.	3.0	1.1
The organisation enables (young) employee networking.	3.0	1.1
The organisation facilitates (young) employees' career management (individual career plans, internal career paths).	2.4	1.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>1.1</b>

AV – average value, SD – standard deviation

Source: own data

Table 3 shows the average values and standard deviations for degree to which participants agree to the statements regarding to the development young talented individuals, with the average scores ranging from 2.4 to 3.9. The statement "The organisation provides various education and training opportunities" was scored with the highest average score (3.9). The lowest average score (2.4) was given by respondents to three statements. The average score for degree to which participants agree to the statements for the development of young talented individuals is 3.0.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for retention of young talented individuals

	AV	SD
The organisation encourages (young) employees through the importance of the work entrusted to the latter (work is interesting and directly related to their interests; roles include responsibility and autonomy).	3.0	1.0
The organisation promotes the development of positive interpersonal relationships between (young) employees (colleagues).	3.3	1.1
The organisation encourages the development of positive interpersonal relationships between (young) employees and management.	3.2	1.1
The organisation facilitates promotions and career development.	3.2	1.1
The organisation motivates (young) employees with financial incentives (financial rewards).	2.5	1.2
The organisation motivates (young) employees with non-financial incentives (accolades, flexible working hours, training programmes).	2.8	1.2
The organisation informs (young) employees about the efficiency and effectiveness of the work performed and provision of feedback.	3.0	1.1
The organisation has updated hardware and technology.	3.3	1.1
Management in the organisation is people-oriented.	3.1	1.2
The organisation is considered socially responsible.	3.5	1.0
The organisation ensures good physical working conditions (work premises organised in accordance with safety requirements, appropriate work equipment and work aids).	3.7	1.1
The organisation ensures good psycho-social working conditions (good mutual relations, motivation, clear instructions, working hours).	3.3	1.1
The organisation encourages (young) employees to perform their work in a high-quality and efficient manner.	3.3	1.1
The organisation systematically monitors the progress of its (young) employees.	3.0	1.2
The organisation has a clear vision that is known by all employees (they know what is happening in the organisation; they are familiar with the goals and tasks).	3.0	1.2
TOTAL	3.1	1.1

AV – average value, SD – standard deviation

Source: own data

Table 4 shows the average values and standard deviations for degree to which participants agree to the statements regarding to retention of young talented individuals, with average scores ranging from 2.5 to 3.7. The statement "The organisation ensures good physical working conditions (work premises organised in accordance with safety requirements, appropriate work equipment and work aids)" was rated with the highest average score (3.7). The respondents gave the lowest average score (2.5) to the statement "The organisation motivates employees with financial incentives (financial rewards)". The average score for degree to which participants agree to the statements for the retention of young talented individuals is 3.1.

Based on the descriptive analysis of the variables of all three talent management elements (Table 2-4), we find that the respondents rated degree of agreement to the statements regarding retention of young talented individuals with the highest average score (3.1), while they rated the young talented individual's attraction and development sets with an average score of 3.0. The results show that the degree of satisfaction with activities connected to talent management is not the best rated in practice, which may be associated with the fact that talent management in Slovenian public administration is still in the "beginning stages" or development stage.

## 4.2 REGRESSION ANALYSIS

In order to determine the impact of the individual variables of the studied sets, namely attracting, developing and retaining young talent in public administration organisations in Slovenia, a linear regression analysis was performed. The remainder of the paper therefore shows the results of the analysis, i.e. the impact of attracting, developing and retaining young talented individuals in public administration organisations, bearing in mind that the impact was measured in two steps:

1. the impact of individual activities related to attracting young talented individuals on their retention in the Slovenia public administration and
2. the impact of individual activities related to developing young talented individuals on their retention in Slovenian public administration.

The first model of the linear regression analysis investigates or verifies the impact of the activity of attracting young talented individuals (independent variable) on their retention (dependent variable) in the Slovenian public administration. Here, the value of the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) is 0.673, which means that the independent variables (activities related to attracting young talented individuals) of the model explain 67.30% of the variability of the dependent variable (retention of young talented individuals).

Table 3: Regression analysis for the impact of the activities related to attracting young talented individuals on their retention

	B	SE	$\beta$	t	Sig.
Constant	5.379	1.448		3.714	< 0.001
The organisation is building an attractive brand (good reputation, organisational culture).	3.316	0.346	0.308	9.570	< 0.001
The organisation uses employee success stories (brand ambassadors).	0.647	0.354	0.057	1.827	0.068
The organisation enables flexible forms of work (condensed work week, hybrid work, work from home, short-time work).	0.058	0.234	0.006	0.248	0.804
The organisation attracts new (young) employees through online social networks.	-0.159	0.276	-0.014	-0.577	0.564
The organisation cooperates with educational institutions (secondary schools and faculties/universities).	0.728	0.279	0.070	2.612	0.009
The organisation provides work-based training opportunities.	0.662	0.302	0.062	2.190	0.029
The organisation provides internships.	0.459	0.252	0.042	1.819	0.069
The organisation provides scholarships.	-0.468	0.249	-0.044	-1.879	0.061
The organisation offers various financial benefits (allowances/bonuses, health insurance, pension plan and paid vacation).	0.035	0.218	0.004	0.160	0.873
The organisation provides employment stability.	0.596	0.343	0.038	1.736	0.083
The organisation provides adequate/competitive remuneration for work.	0.967	0.285	0.085	3.396	<0.001
The organisation attracts new (young) employees from an international environment.	-0.077	0.334	-0.006	-0.230	0.818
The organisation provides opportunities for diversity of work and mobility.	1.067	0.317	0.093	3.362	<0.001
The organisation provides opportunities for learning, development and career advancement.	2.929	0.344	0.247	8.519	<0.001
The organisation facilitates a balance between private and professional life.	2.052	0.310	0.152	6.610	<0.001

B – unstandardized regression coefficient, SE – standard error,  $\beta$  – standardized regression coefficient, Sig. – level of statistical significance (p-value).

Source: own data

It is evident from the data shown (Table 5) that seven attraction activities have a positive impact ( $p < 0.05$ ) on the retention of young talented individuals, with the activity "The organisation builds an attractive brand (good reputation, organisational culture)" having the greatest impact ( $\beta = 0.308$ ), followed by the activities "The organisation provides opportunities for learning, development and career advancement" ( $\beta = 0.247$ ) and "The organisation provides a balance between private and professional life" ( $\beta = 0.152$ ). The activity "The organisation offers various financial benefits (allowances/bonuses, health insurance,



pension plan and paid vacation)" has the smallest positive impact on the dependent variable ( $\beta = 0.004$ ). The analysis result can be understood as follows: it is possible to use appropriate methods of attracting (young) talent to convince young jobseekers to get a job in the selected organisation, therefore the results of the regression analysis are even more important for the public administration since they the Slovenian public administration is already facing the challenge of increasingly older employees and a shortage of young civil servants. Based on the results in Table 5, we cannot confirm the first hypothesis. However, some individual activities were found to have a statistically significant impact.

The second linear regression analysis model investigates or verifies the impact of the activities related to developing young talents (independent variable) on their retention (dependent variable) in the public administration. Here, the value of the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) is 0.745, which means that the independent variables (activities related to developing young talented individuals) of the model explain 74.50% of the variability of the dependent variable (retention of young talented individuals).

Table 4: Regression analysis for the impact of the activities related to developing young talented individuals on their retention

	B	SE	B	t	Sig.
Constant	3.262	1.114		2.928	0.003
The organisation provides mentoring for young employees.	1.231	0.277	0.104	4.453	<0.001
The organisation provides personal skills training ("coaching").	0.599	0.276	0.051	2.172	0.030
The organisation provides job rotation opportunities.	0.288	0.261	0.025	1.102	0.271
The organisation holds meetings to resolve problems.	2.154	0.275	0.186	7.834	<0.001
The organisation enables substitution for absent (young) employees.	1.102	0.275	0.088	4.006	<0.001
The organisation provides opportunities for cooperation in various projects.	1.035	0.305	0.082	3.397	<0.001
The organisation enables "job shadowing" (a young employee closely follows another in the latter's daily activities at the workplace and is thus trained in the job concerned).	0.392	0.273	0.034	1.437	0.151
The organisation provides various education and training opportunities.	1.279	0.325	0.085	3.935	<0.001
The superiors in the organisation create a list of (young) talented employees.	1.378	0.304	0.117	4.530	<0.001
The superiors in the organisation plan their successors.	0.908	0.261	0.082	3.484	<0.001
The organisation enables the exchange of employees between organisations (e.g. between administrative units, ministries).	-1.019	0.224	-0.090	-4.547	<0.001
The organisation provides opportunities for teamwork.	0.743	0.302	0.059	2.459	0.014
The organisation enables (young) employee mobility.	0.642	0.295	0.053	2.178	0.030
The organisation enables (young) employee networking.	1.484	0.319	0.123	4.657	<0.001
The organisation facilitates (young) employees' career management (individual career plans, internal career paths).	1.856	0.308	0.154	6.033	<0.001

B - unstandardized regression coefficient, SE - standard error,  $\beta$  - standardized regression coefficient, Sig. - level of statistical significance (p-value).

Source: own data

It is evident from the data shown (Table 6) that thirteen development activities have a positive impact ( $p < 0.05$ ) on the retention of young talented individuals, with the activity "The organisation holds meetings to solve problems" having the greatest impact ( $\beta = 0.186$ ), followed by the activities "The organisation enables (young) employee career management (individual career plans, internal career paths" ( $\beta = 0.154$ ) and "The organisation enables (young) employee networking" ( $\beta = 0.123$ ). The smallest positive impact on the dependent variable is exhibited by the activity "The organisation enables job rotation" ( $\beta = 0.025$ ). The result of this type of regression analysis can be understood in the context of the literature, which states that talent development is the central phase of the talent management process which involves developing individual skills, knowledge and abilities and the related professional and personal growth of people. Based on the results in Table 6, we cannot confirm the second hypothesis. However, some individual activities were found to have a statistically significant impact.

## 5 DISCUSSION

The questions of how the field of Gen Z talent management is developed in the Slovenian public administration, how young talented individuals are recognized and acquired, what activities are carried out in the field of developing and retaining young talented individuals in the Slovenian public administration were challenging questions that lead us to research the field of the management of young talented individuals in public administration in Slovenia.

The survey that we carried out in the Slovenian public administration showed that the field of talent management for the young talented individuals from generation Z is not the best developed and that, according to the respondents, the most effective methods of attracting young talented individuals are "providing internship opportunities" and "stability of employment", the most effective methods for developing them are "substitution of absent (young) employees" and "education and training" and the most effective method for retaining young talented individuals is "good physical working conditions" and "social responsibility of the organisation". The degree to which participants agree to the statements regarding to attracting young talented individuals was rated with an average score of 3.0. The results of the survey can be compared with some selected previous research, e.g. Boštjančič and Slana (2018), Smirnova (2022), Singh and Satpathy (2017) and Adeosun and Ohiani (2020). Although the latter showed that the organisations included in their research use building an attractive brand as the most effective method of attracting (young) employees, the OECD 2020 survey (OECD, 2021) on the other hand showed that public administration is an attractive employer precisely because it provides employment stability, which was also shown by the results of our survey. Based on the results, it can be argued that building an attractive brand in the Slovenian public administration is currently only in the initial stage of development, and decision-makers at the highest levels will have to make public administration more attractive to young job seekers from generation Z as quickly and as efficiently as possible. It is by all means expedient to focus on attracting young talented individuals from the international environment as they bring different views and innovative ideas to the work environment thus enabling efficient operation of the state apparatus. It should be pointed out that previous research carried out in private sector organisations was presented as there is a lack of research in practice in the field of talent management in public administration or the public sector, which represents an important limitation of research as good practices from the private sector cannot be fully transferred to the public sector.

The degree to which participants agree to the statements regarding to development young talented individuals was also rated with an average score of 3.0. The results of the survey in this area can be compared with the results of the survey by Boštjančič and Slana (2018) and Pediček (2022). Both surveys also showed that most organisations use education and training to develop their best employees, which suggests that it is a rather effective and widespread method. In view of the above, public administration organisations should continue to carry out diverse education and training for employees and young talented individuals because the employees thus improve, upgrade and broaden the spectrum of their knowledge and necessary competences. The area of young talent individuals' retention was rated with an average score of 3.1. The statement "The organisation motivates employees with financial incentives (salary, financial rewards)" was rated with the lowest average score (2.5). The results of a previous survey by the authors Singh and Satpathy (2017) showed that the respondents stayed in the organisation precisely because of financial incentives, such as bonuses, allowances, incentives and perks for the decision to stay, which is contrary to the results of our survey. The latter show that such activity is the worst rated in public administration organisations and points to the possibility of significant improvement. We believe that it is necessary to continue to ensure good physical conditions for work in the public administration in this area and to carry out social responsibility activities, which are extremely important to the younger generations. Good social conditions for work should by no means be overlooked.

The results of the survey show that building an attractive brand (good reputation, organisational culture), cooperation with educational institutions (secondary schools and colleges/universities), providing work-based training opportunities, adequate/competitive pay for work, opportunities for diversity of work and mobility, opportunities for learning, development and career advancement as well as the balance between private and professional life have a positive effect on the intention of young talented individuals to stay in public administration organisations. The research carried out by Madurani and Pasaribu

(2022), Younas and Bari (2020), Kohestany and Yaghoubi (2017) and Singh and Satpathy (2017) has proven that the activities of attracting employees affect their retention in organisations (albeit in the private sector).

Based on the results of the survey, we also concluded that some development activities have a positive impact ( $p < 0.05$ ) on the retention of young talented individuals. However, we cannot confirm the second hypothesis that development has effect on the retention of young talented individuals in Slovenian public administration. Regardless, that we cannot confirm that development has effect on the retention of young talented individuals, some individual activities were found to have a statistically significant impact. The result that the development of employees affects their decision to stay in the organisation was also presented in research carried out by Kohestany and Yaghoubi (2017), Madurani and Pasaribu (2022) and Singh and Satpathy (2017).

The results of the impact of some activities of attraction and development on the retention of young talented individuals are important for the understanding of talent management in public administration as they represent a good basis for public administration stakeholders for the preparation of actual measures to solve and fill personnel gaps in terms of young talented individuals. Regardless of what measures end up being designed by organisations in public administration and state decision-makers responsible for the development of public administration in the field of talent management, below we present some of our views and proposed measures for the development in the field of Gen Z talent management in public administration, which were developed on the basis of the results of our own research and prior research as well as on the basis of the state of affairs in practice and the examples of good practices in some countries of the European Union. The latter proposed measures represent an important contribution to practice and the profession or practical implications because the proposed measures and the model are an important value or contribution to the development of practices in the field of talent management in public administration.

The practical implication of the paper is related to the developed model of Gen Z talent management in public administration. It would make sense to establish a comprehensive model of talent management in public administration in the Slovenian public administration, which would consist of four substantive sections or steps, namely (1) recognition, (2) attraction, (3) development and (4) retention of young talented individuals. Although the literature mainly talks about three (key) steps or parts of the talent management process (i.e. attracting, developing and retaining), the results of our survey and practice have lead us to include activities in the talent management process within our proposed model that form the so-called "pre-stage", namely young talented individuals recognition or identification.

In the model of Gen Z talent management in Slovenian public administration, a phase is added unlike in some previous models, i.e. the phase of talent identification because we believe that talent and talented individuals must first be identified and only then can we attract them. With this aim, talent identification is part of the entire process of Gen Z talent management in public administration. The identification of young talented individuals takes place already in the early childhood of individuals, more precisely in primary and secondary schools; both parents in the family environment and schools, i.e. teachers and people who are active in the field of extracurricular activities in the educational process, are responsible for identifying such individuals. Juriševič (2011) explains that talented students are identified in European countries through teacher and school psychologist assessments, student school assessments, exams and work during lessons, data from parents and the community, and tests of intellectual abilities and creativity. In Slovenia, identification and work with talented students in primary and secondary schools is based on two documents: (1) Concept: Discovering and working with talented students in the nine-year primary school (1999) and (2) Concept for educational work with gifted students in secondary education (2007) (Juriševič, 2011).

The identification of young talented individuals does not only take place in primary and secondary schools, but also in higher education institutions where very talented students achieve outstanding results in certain fields; they usually stand out from the average on their own initiative by participating in various projects and competitions; they usually also complete their studies with a doctoral degree (Mar, 2023). Talented students are also identified by their role as. It is therefore important for public administration organisations to also be aware of the importance of early identification of young talented individuals and

to begin building a suitable relationship with them as quickly as possible as well as to monitor them and carry out other assistance and cooperation-related activities.

Below, we present some measures for all four sets (stages) of the Gen Z talent management model in public administration. In order to identify young talented individuals in the public administration as quickly as possible, it makes sense to implement the following improvements or measures:

- The public administration must start with the identification of young talented individuals already in the process of education in primary and secondary schools and faculties as well as within the scope of the education system (special groups and tasks) to identify young talented individuals, monitor them and establish contact with them.
- A competence model needs to be created to help HR experts identify and assess the (young) individual's competences and thus develop them correctly, quickly and effectively so that they can take on higher positions in the organisation.
- It is necessary to carry out psychological tests (through questionnaires to discover hidden potential) at the initial job interviews and among the already employed.
- It is necessary to constantly conduct development and annual interviews where the leader, young talented individuals and other employees determine the achieved and planned goals, personal and professional development, work performance and the need for training as well as to highlight their plans, goals, expectations and wishes.

In order to attract young talented individuals to public administration organisations, it is first and foremost necessary to build a more attractive brand of the public administration as a good employer, consequently increasing its reputation in society, and find those motivational factors that would make young talented individuals decide to work in the public administration. The research by Adeosun and Ohiani (2020) and by Singh and Satpathy (2017) showed that brand of the organisation, salary, the option of working from home, freedom at work, flexible working hours, and compensation and benefits and job security as key factors in attracting and recruiting. In view of the above, it therefore makes sense to:

- Establish a single competency model and a single-entry point with centralized recruitment of officials for work in the public (state) administration where the criteria for employment are knowledge, competence and skills.
- Use online social media and digital platforms to promote and build the "brand of the public administration" (a good example of this is the Slovenian army), publish vacancies for internships, work-based training and student jobs since these digital age tools enable reaching a greater number of young talented candidates, especially in those areas where they face recruitment challenges.
- Increase the number of internship vacancies, enable work-based training for students and various student jobs where young talented individuals meet with a work environment for the first time and experience employment in public administration; this would at the same time give employers the opportunity to check whether these potential candidates are suitable for a permanent position in the future.
- Establish a scholarship policy in the public administration (introduction of company scholarships); especially for filling personnel gaps in areas with a shortage of young talented individuals.
- Enable job flexibility as increasingly advanced information and communication technology has made it possible to work outside the physical space of offices, i.e. work from home or telecommuting.
- Allow flexibility of working hours such as a condensed working week and the potential option of short-time work.
- Overhaul the salary system and eliminate disparities between basic salaries in the public sector.

In order to ensure maximum successful of young talented individuals' development, it therefore makes sense to provide as much mentoring, personal skills training ("coaching") and job shadowing as possible to young talented individuals as they thus (1) develop interpersonal relationships with colleagues and superiors and (2) get to know the work they will do in the future. It is also important to make a set of talented individuals and plan successors who will take over the most important functions in the organisation in the future as this method helps the organisation achieve its goals in a timely manner; talented individuals (employees) are ready to take over the position; work proceeds smoothly; and the method also

improves employee morale, raises their motivation, satisfaction and willingness to invest more time and effort in the organisation and work.

All activities in all sets of the Gen Z talent management model in the public administration are extremely important and go hand in hand, but the retention of young talented individuals is crucial because – in the event of the departure of talented individuals – this represents a "big personnel slip" for the organisation and at the same time an extremely a big "cost" because the organisation loses everything that the it has invested in such employees or made possible for them. The specialised knowledge and experience that such employees have are also lost. In order to reduce the number of talented individuals leaving public administration as much as possible, it makes sense to:

- Provide as many education and training opportunities as possible, which are in line with their preferences and needs for the development of competences and talents.
- Put in place options for various types of financial and non-financial incentives for (young) talented individuals.
- Ensure a pleasant working environment with good physical (well-arranged workspaces, provided work equipment and aids) and psycho-social working conditions as well as put in place policies and care for the mental (and physical) health of employees.
- Enable flexible forms of work, such as working from home, hybrid work and condensed working week as all of the above can improve the balance between professional and private life (free time for family and friends, engaging in hobbies, promoting productivity and having a positive effect on mental health and quality of life).
- Establish a working environment where young talented individuals and all others can speak freely about their views, suggestions, ideas and problems they perceive, and where they feel they are also heard.
- Young people increasingly favour organisations that operate sustainably which is why it is important for public administration organisations to become more active in assuming a role in various sustainable challenges and social responsibility or become bearers of commitments such as care for environmental sustainability and the climate, sustainable development and green transition, and inform employees on an ongoing basis about socially responsible activities.

The competition for young talented individuals in the labour market is becoming ever more serious, which is why proactive practices of identifying, attracting, developing and retaining young talented individuals are all the more important and desirable. The road to a quality process for the management of young talented individuals in public administration is a long one, but we believe that now is the time and opportunity for the field of talent management in Slovenia to be properly arranged. Many young talented individuals remain undiscovered precisely because the field is not suitably arranged. However, it is precisely these young talented individuals who can come up with innovative solutions and ideas for the challenges that both public administrations and economies in general are facing. In this context, it is also necessary to be aware that the environment of public administration in Slovenia is not currently considered the most attractive employment environment to young talented individuals because of the prevailing opinion in society of it being a typical bureaucratic apparatus with no possibility for personal and professional growth. In order to create a lasting competitive advantage in the labour market, it would make sense for public administration to first and foremost strengthen its positive appeal as a career choice for the younger generation.

## 6 CONCLUSION

It is necessary to treat young talented individuals very thoughtfully as they are highly qualified people who are aware of their value and are at the same time constantly sought after for employment in the extremely competitive labour market and are therefore the subject of competition by different organisations. In any case, when dealing especially with young talented individuals, it is necessary to increasingly take into account the specificities of generation Z and its associated values, views, needs and commitment to certain areas. Job stability and salary for young talented individuals is no longer a sufficient reason to get a job here. A big role is also played by the balance between professional and private life, flexible forms of work, the variety of work and how interesting it is, the good reputation of the organisation, the

possibility of various flexible forms of work and working hours, demonstrated concern for the development and health of employees, social responsibility of the employer and activities in the field of sustainable development, etc.

With the purpose to evaluate the talent management activities for young talented individuals in Slovenian public administration and develop a model of Gen Z talent management we conducted the survey in among public servants within Slovenian public administration. Our research showed that the respondents do not rate attracting, development and retention of young talented individuals in public administration the best as the average rating of all sets is 3.0. Results show that some attraction and development activities have a positive impact on the retention of young talented individuals in Slovenian public administration organisations.

The preparation and implementation of the survey in the public administration was accompanied by some limitations and problems. The problems included in particular the lack of research in this field in public administration, which would allow us to compare the results of research in public administration. Nevertheless, we can be extremely satisfied with the response of the participants in our survey. The limitation was related to the fact that the survey was conducted only in the Slovenian public administration and not in the entire public sector. By expanding the research and including employees in the entire public sector and the public administration of some European Union countries, we would gain an even better insight into the understanding of the management of young talented individuals in the public administration and the public sector. The survey was also not conducted among young people at faculties and secondary schools, and it would therefore be reasonable in the future to ask young people using an appropriate questionnaire about their views and thoughts about employment in the public administration and the conditions that the public administration should provide in order for them to get jobs in the public administration. By this we mean especially young talented individuals. A limitation of the survey is also the fact that the field of talent management in Slovenian public administration is still in the initial phase of development so the concept as such is not (yet) understood or known by employees in public administration organisations or is not (yet) implemented in organisations, which is reflected in the results of the survey. In addition, we used only quantitative method for conducting survey.

Regardless, the paper represents a good starting point for further research into the field of (Gen Z) talent management in Slovenian public administration and broader. Therefore, we suggest that qualitative method (e.g. interview) may be used to obtain data in the future. Additionally, for the future research we suggest that it would be reasonable to expand the research to the entire public sector in Slovenia and abroad and check potential impacts and effects of implementing the suggested model of Gen Z talent management in public administration in Slovenia and abroad.

#### **Conflict of interest**

The authors have stated that there are no potential conflicts of interest regarding the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

#### **Financial support**

This article is funded by the Slovenian Research Agency, no. P2-0426, entitled Digital Transformation for Smart Public Governance.

#### **Acknowledgments**

We extend our gratitude to all the participants who generously devoted their time and efforts to contribute to this study.

#### **Data availability statement**

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, J.B., upon reasonable request.

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