

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: CHARACTERISTICS, REFORMS, AND STRATEGIES. EVIDENCE FROM ROMANIA IN THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT

Larisa POPA²⁰

School of Advanced Studies of the Romanian Academy, Doctoral School of Economic Sciences, National Institute for Economic Research “Costin C. Kirițescu”, Bucharest, Romania

Adriana MIRICĂ²¹

Faculty of Economic Studies, „Hyperion” University of Bucharest

ABSTRACT: *Human resource management (HRM) is a central determinant of administrative capacity, public-service quality and institutional resilience. Public administration differs from private organisations because recruitment, careers, remuneration and performance management operate within legal, political and accountability constraints, while public employees are expected to generate public value rather than profit. This paper analyses the characteristics, reforms and strategic priorities of HRM in public administration, with particular emphasis on Romania and reference to European and OECD practices. The study combines a structured literature review with descriptive analysis of OECD, European Commission and World Bank evidence. Romania’s general-government employment represented 17.36% of total employment in 2023, compared with 16.12% in 2007, showing that the quantitative size of public employment has remained broadly stable over the longer term while reform needs have shifted toward quality, competencies and performance. Recent reforms include a competency framework, national competency-based recruitment, strategic workforce planning, performance-management redesign and HR digitalisation. In the 2024 national recruitment rounds, 1,953 applications were submitted across entry-level, assistant and management categories, and 1,531 candidates passed eligibility screening. At the same time, the 2025 Digital Decade report and recent World Bank assessments identify persistent weaknesses in digital skills, institutional fragmentation, retention and professional development. The paper argues that sustainable public-sector HRM requires a transition from rule-centred personnel administration to integrated strategic HRM based on merit, competencies, data, learning, performance and digital capacity.*

Keywords: *Public Administration; Human Resource Management; Civil Service; Public-Sector Reform; Recruitment; Competencies; Performance Management; Digital Skills; Romania.*

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²⁰ PhD. Student Romanian Academy, larisa.popa23@yahoo.com.

²¹ PhD. Lecturer, adrianasturzoiu@yahoo.com

1. INTRODUCTION

Public administrations face increasingly complex demands generated by digital transformation, demographic ageing, fiscal constraints, climate and security risks, and rising expectations regarding the quality and accessibility of public services. The capacity of governments to respond to these pressures depends not only on legislation, budgets and technology, but also on the quality of the people who design policies, manage programmes and interact with citizens. Human resource management is therefore a core component of state capacity.

Unlike private-sector HRM, public-sector human resource management operates under a dense framework of administrative law, political accountability, transparency requirements and equal-treatment principles. Recruitment and promotion must reconcile merit with procedural fairness; remuneration must balance competitiveness with fiscal sustainability; and performance management must account for outputs that are often difficult to quantify. These characteristics make public HRM simultaneously a managerial and an institutional function (Perry & Hondeghem, 2008; OECD, 2023).

The international reform agenda has progressively moved from traditional personnel administration toward strategic human resource management. The newer model emphasises competency-based recruitment, workforce planning, mobility, continuous learning, performance management, leadership development, diversity and data-driven HR processes. Digital transformation adds another layer: governments need employees who can work with data, digital platforms and emerging technologies while maintaining legal safeguards, security and public trust (OECD, 2021; World Bank, 2025).

Romania offers a relevant case for analysing this transition. The country has pursued successive administrative-capacity reforms since EU accession, but institutional fragmentation, uneven HR practices, recruitment challenges and recurrent reorganisations have limited continuity. World Bank support and the Recovery and Resilience Plan have recently accelerated reforms centred on a general competency framework, national recruitment competitions, improved performance management, strategic planning and digitalisation of HR processes (World Bank, 2022; European Commission, 2026).

The objective of this paper is to assess the specific characteristics of HRM in public administration, identify the main Romanian reform directions and formulate a strategic framework for a more professional, adaptive and performance-oriented civil service. The study addresses four questions: What distinguishes public-sector HRM from private-sector HRM? How has Romania's public employment and HRM reform architecture evolved? Which weaknesses continue to constrain implementation? Which strategies are most likely to strengthen administrative capacity in the medium term?

The contribution is twofold. Conceptually, the paper integrates public-service motivation, strategic HRM and digital-era governance into a common framework. Empirically, it combines OECD public-employment statistics with concrete evidence on Romania's competency-based recruitment reform and recent European and World Bank assessments. The analysis does not equate a larger or smaller public workforce with administrative quality; instead, it focuses on the capacity to attract, deploy, develop, motivate and retain employees whose competencies match institutional needs.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Traditional public personnel administration focused on compliance with rules governing entry, classification, pay, seniority and disciplinary procedures. This model supported impartiality and predictability but could also generate rigidity. Strategic HRM

broadens the focus by linking workforce decisions to organisational objectives and future capability needs. In public administration, the strategic perspective requires alignment between institutional mandates, workforce composition, competency profiles, learning and performance (OECD, 2023; World Bank, 2022).

The resource-based view provides one theoretical justification for strategic HRM: organisational performance depends partly on valuable and difficult-to-replicate capabilities embedded in employees and routines (Barney, 1991). In government, however, the relevant outcome is public value rather than competitive advantage. HR systems should therefore support legality, impartiality, policy capability, service quality and citizen trust as well as efficiency.

Public employees can be motivated by both extrinsic rewards and intrinsic or prosocial motives. Perry and Wise (1990) introduced public-service motivation as a predisposition to respond to motives grounded in public institutions and public interest. Subsequent research shows that mission, meaningful work and service orientation can influence attraction, retention and performance, but these motives do not eliminate the importance of fair pay, career opportunities, competent management and organisational support (Perry & Hondeghem, 2008).

Public organisations also face multiple principals and objectives. Political leaders, citizens, courts, audit institutions and service users may evaluate performance differently. This complicates individual performance measurement and increases the importance of procedural fairness. Consequently, HR reform cannot simply import private-sector instruments; it must adapt them to public accountability and administrative-law requirements.

Merit-based recruitment is a foundational element of professional civil services. The OECD (2021, 2023) associates merit, openness and competency-based selection with stronger capability and integrity. Competency frameworks translate broad administrative values and occupational requirements into observable knowledge, skills and behaviours. They can create a common language across recruitment, appraisal, learning and career development.

Romania's recent reform trajectory reflects this approach. World Bank technical assistance supported a general competency framework and new recruitment and evaluation models. The reform aims to move from formal qualification screening toward transparent selection based on competencies matched to job requirements, while enabling strategic workforce planning and more coherent career management (World Bank, 2022).

Performance management in government is difficult because many outputs are collective, long-term or non-market. Effective systems therefore combine clear objectives, managerial dialogue, competency assessment and developmental feedback rather than relying exclusively on numerical targets. Poorly designed systems can produce formal compliance, grade inflation or gaming; well-designed systems can clarify expectations and connect performance with development (OECD, 2023).

Remuneration is equally important. Public-sector pay systems must preserve internal equity and fiscal control while remaining sufficiently competitive for scarce skills. Fragmented allowances or ad hoc increases can weaken transparency and mobility. Strategic reform therefore requires job evaluation, coherent pay architecture and careful use of variable or performance-related elements rather than isolated salary adjustments (World Bank, 2022).

Continuous learning has become essential because public-sector jobs are changing rapidly. Policy analysis, procurement, cybersecurity, data management, project management and citizen-centred service design require capabilities that cannot be secured through initial education alone. Learning systems should therefore move from episodic training toward continuous development linked to competency gaps and career paths.

Leadership is a complementary capability. Senior civil servants translate political priorities into organisational action, manage cross-sector coordination and create conditions for employee engagement. Leadership development is particularly important during reform

because employees must understand not only new procedures but also the purpose and behavioural expectations associated with them.

Digital transformation changes both what public employees do and how HR functions operate. OECD work on digital government emphasises that technology must be accompanied by organisational and workforce capabilities. Digital HR platforms can improve workforce data, recruitment, learning and mobility, but they cannot compensate for unclear responsibilities or weak management.

A 2025 World Bank assessment of Romania identifies difficulties in attracting and retaining skilled personnel, rigid salary and career structures, limited professional-development opportunities and weak integration between HR modernisation and digital-transformation objectives. Digital competencies are often defined too narrowly as basic IT literacy rather than differentiated by job profile and function (World Bank, 2025). This finding supports a shift toward role-specific digital competency models.

The literature supports four analytical propositions.

P1: merit- and competency-based recruitment strengthens person-job fit and administrative capability.

P2: performance management has stronger effects when linked to learning, career development and managerial accountability.

P3: digital transformation improves public-sector performance only when technology investment is matched by workforce competencies and organisational redesign.

P4: HRM reform is more sustainable when recruitment, pay, workforce planning, learning, performance and HR data are treated as an integrated system rather than separate administrative procedures.

3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The paper uses a qualitative-descriptive methodology supported by comparative statistics. Quantitative evidence comes primarily from the OECD Government at a Glance 2025 database, the European Commission's Recovery and Resilience Facility monitoring, the 2025 Digital Decade Country Report, and World Bank reports on Romanian public-administration HRM. The statistical analysis focuses on public-employment dynamics and the implementation of competency-based recruitment. Institutional evidence is used to evaluate reform content and remaining implementation gaps.

Table 1. Analytical dimensions and indicators

Dimension	Indicator/evidence	Period	Main source
Public workforce	General-government employment as % of total employment	2007–2023	OECD (2025)
Recruitment reform	Applications and eligible candidates in national competition	2024	European Commission (RRF)
Competency reform	General competency framework and recruitment/evaluation tools	2022–2025	World Bank
Digital HR capacity	Digital competency gaps and HR-digital alignment	2025	World Bank

Dimension	Indicator/evidence	Period	Main source
Digital services public	Progress and remaining digitalisation needs	2025	European Commission
Strategic HRM	Workforce planning, careers, performance, pay, HR data	current reform cycle	World Bank; European Commission

Source: Author's synthesis based on OECD (2025), European Commission (2025, 2026) and World Bank (2022, 2025).

Table 1 reflects the paper's system perspective. Workforce size is treated as a contextual indicator rather than a performance measure. The core evaluation concerns the quality of HR architecture: whether recruitment, competencies, development, performance, remuneration and data are mutually reinforcing. Because the available evidence does not permit causal estimation, the analysis is interpretive and benchmark-based.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Public employment: stability in size, changing capability requirements

The quantitative starting point is the evolution of employment in general government. OECD data show that Romania's public-employment share has fluctuated within a relatively narrow band over the last decade. This suggests that the main contemporary reform problem is not simply workforce expansion or contraction, but the composition, deployment and capabilities of public employees.

Table 2. Employment in general government in Romania

Year	% of total employment	Change vs 2007 (pp)
2007	16.12	0.00
2010	18.14	+2.02
2014	15.85	-0.27
2018	16.09	-0.03
2020	16.95	+0.83
2021	16.66	+0.54
2022	16.67	+0.55
2023	17.36	+1.24

Source: OECD (2025), Government at a Glance 2025, Public Employment and Representation database.

Note: General government includes central, subnational and social-security institutions classified within sector S13. Percentage-point changes are author calculations.

Table 2 shows a peak of 18.14% in 2010, followed by a decline to 15.85% in 2014 and a gradual increase to 17.36% in 2023. The 2023 level was only 1.24 percentage points above 2007. This relatively modest long-run change reinforces the argument that administrative reform should not be reduced to debates about headcount. The critical question is whether employment is allocated to the functions and skills demanded by contemporary government.

The OECD stresses that cross-country public-employment shares also reflect institutional choices: education, health and social services may be delivered directly by government in one country and by publicly financed private or non-profit providers in another. Accordingly, public-employment ratios should not be interpreted as direct measures of efficiency (OECD, 2025).

4.2. The transition toward competency-based recruitment

Recruitment reform is one of the clearest operational changes in Romanian HRM. The Recovery and Resilience Plan introduced national competency-based competitions designed to create a more transparent and standardised entry mechanism. The 2024 rounds provide useful implementation evidence.

Table 3. Romania's 2024 national civil-service recruitment competition

Category	Applications	Eligible/admitted	Eligibility rate
Entry-level	1,174	1,020	86.9%
Assistant	627	415	66.2%
Director/deputy director	152	97	63.8%
Total	1,953	1,532*	78.4%*

Source: European Commission, Recovery and Resilience Facility project C14-R3, Developing performance human resources management in the public sector.

Note: *The European Commission project page reports 1,531 total admitted candidates, while the three category figures displayed on the same page sum to 1,532. The category-level values are reproduced as published; the discrepancy should be checked against ANFP administrative records before econometric use.

Table 3 indicates substantial interest in the new recruitment process, particularly for entry-level positions. Eligibility rates decline for higher categories, which may reflect stricter experience or documentation requirements. More importantly, the reform creates a common testing stage and regional testing infrastructure, thereby reducing some institution-by-institution variation. Its long-term value, however, will depend on whether the subsequent job-selection phase preserves merit, whether competency assessments predict job performance and whether institutions use recruitment planning strategically.

The reform also illustrates why implementation data matter. The small inconsistency between the published category totals and the stated aggregate total is itself a reminder that HR digitalisation should improve data quality, traceability and interoperability. Reliable workforce data are a prerequisite for evidence-based recruitment and planning.

4.3. Reform architecture: from fragmented personnel practices to integrated HRM

World Bank and European Commission evidence shows that Romania's reform agenda extends beyond recruitment. The emerging architecture combines competencies, workforce planning, performance management, learning, pay policy and HR digitalisation. Table 4 summarises the logic of this transition.

Table 4. Main HRM reform pillars in Romanian public administration

Reform pillar	Traditional weakness	Current reform direction	Expected outcome
Recruitment	Fragmented, procedure-centred selection	National competency-based competition	Merit and better person-job fit
Competencies	Qualifications not consistently linked to roles	General competency framework	Common standards across HR processes

Reform pillar	Traditional weakness	Current reform direction	Expected outcome	HR
Workforce planning	Reactive vacancy filling	Strategic planning based on current/forecast needs	Better allocation and succession	
Performance	Formal appraisal	Improved performance-management model	Feedback and accountability	
Learning & development	Training weakly linked to gaps	Competency-based development	Continuous capability building	
HR data	Fragmented information	Digitalisation and centralised data	Evidence-based HR decisions	
Pay/careers	Rigid or uneven structures	More coherent pay and career architecture	Retention, fairness and mobility	

Source: Author's synthesis based on World Bank (2022, 2025) and European Commission RRF documentation.

Table 4 shows that the reform is systemic in design. A competency framework can only improve performance if it is used consistently in job design, recruitment, appraisal and learning. Similarly, workforce planning requires reliable HR data, while career development depends on transparent links between competencies, performance and progression. Reform failure can therefore occur even when individual instruments are technically sound but implemented in isolation.

4.4. Digital competencies and the new capability gap

Digital transformation is redefining administrative work. Romania has continued to invest in digital public services, but the European Commission's 2025 Digital Decade assessment calls for sustained resources and better streamlining of multiple projects. At the workforce level, the World Bank identifies a deeper issue: digital competencies are not yet systematically defined and integrated into HR processes.

Table 5. Digital-HRM challenges identified for Romania

Challenge	Observed issue	Strategic implication
Attraction and retention	Difficulty competing for skilled personnel	Target scarce-skill recruitment and career offers
Career/pay rigidity	Structures may not reward specialised capability	Improve job architecture and mobility
Professional development	Limited learning opportunities	Continuous role-specific upskilling
Digital competency definitions	Often reduced to basic IT literacy	Differentiate competencies by role/function
HR-digital alignment	Weak strategic linkage	Integrate digital strategy with workforce planning
Institutional fragmentation	Reform initiatives not always coherent	Strengthen central coordination and common standards

Source: World Bank (2025), Assessment of the Digital Competencies Needed in the Romanian Civil Service; European Commission (2025), Romania Digital Decade Country Report.

The findings in Table 5 demonstrate that digitalisation is primarily an organisational and human-capital challenge rather than a technology procurement exercise. A tax administrator, policy analyst, procurement specialist and senior manager require different digital competencies. A mature HR system should therefore identify role-specific proficiency levels and embed them in recruitment, learning and performance processes.

This conclusion is consistent with broader digital-government research, which emphasises that data, technology, skills and agile organisational processes are complementary. Digital systems can reduce administrative burden and improve accessibility, but benefits remain limited if employees cannot redesign workflows or if legacy procedures are merely transferred online.

4.5. Public-service delivery and the continuing implementation gap

Recent European Commission assessment shows that Romanian public-service delivery has improved in some areas, particularly digitalisation, but excessive paperwork, fragmented procedures and limited interoperability continue to weaken quality. These constraints have a direct HR dimension: employees operate within processes that may generate duplication, while managers have limited ability to redeploy staff from low-value administrative tasks toward analysis and citizen-facing services.

Table 6. Selected implementation pressures affecting HRM reform

Area	Evidence	HRM consequence
Administrative burden	Fragmented procedures and excessive paperwork	Time diverted from higher-value tasks
Interoperability	Limited integration across government levels	Duplicated work and data handling
Regulatory burden	66% of surveyed businesses view regulation as obstacle to long-term investment	Pressure for better policy and service capability
Digital public services	Investment has increased but projects need streamlining	Need for programme, product and digital skills
RRP implementation	HRM reform milestones tied to national recruitment and competency systems	Need for implementation capacity and continuity

Source: European Commission (2025/2026), Romania Country Report, Digital Decade Country Report and Recovery and Resilience Facility documentation.

Note: The 66% figure refers to the business-regulation perception cited in the European Commission country assessment; it is not an employee survey.

Table 6 indicates that HR reform cannot be separated from administrative-process reform. Recruiting highly capable staff into organisations with fragmented workflows may produce frustration rather than productivity. Conversely, process simplification without appropriate skills can fail during implementation. HRM and administrative digitalisation should therefore be sequenced together.

4.6. Assessment of the analytical propositions

Having examined the main dimensions of Romania's public-sector human resource management reform, the analysis can now be consolidated through an assessment of the

analytical propositions underpinning the study. Table 7 synthesises the evidence concerning competency-based recruitment, the integration of performance management with employee development, the human-capital requirements of digital transformation, and the systemic interdependence of HRM functions. Rather than implying causal confirmation, the assessment evaluates the extent to which each proposition is supported by the institutional reforms and empirical evidence documented by the OECD, World Bank and European Commission. This distinction is particularly important given the relatively recent implementation of several reform measures, which allows for an assessment of their institutional coherence and implementation progress but not yet of their long-term effects on organisational performance, workforce productivity or public-service quality.

Table 7. Assessment of the analytical propositions

Proposition	Evidence	Assessment
P1 Competency-based recruitment strengthens capability	Framework and national competition implemented; substantial candidate pool	Strong institutional support; outcomes require longitudinal evaluation
P2 Performance works best when linked to development	Reform connects competency framework, appraisal and L&D	Conceptually supported; implementation remains key
P3 Digital transformation requires workforce capability	WB identifies role-specific digital competency gaps	Strongly supported
P4 HR reforms must operate as a system	Recruitment, data, pay, planning and performance are interdependent	Strongly supported by reform architecture

Source: Author's assessment based on OECD, World Bank and European Commission evidence.

The evidence strongly supports the systemic character of HRM reform. The weakest empirical link concerns final outcomes: recent Romanian reforms are still being implemented, so it is too early to attribute changes in service quality or productivity directly to the new recruitment and competency systems. Future evaluation should follow cohorts of recruits, compare performance and retention, and measure whether competency-based tools improve organisational outcomes.

5. DISCUSSIONS

The Romanian case illustrates a broader shift in public administration from staffing control toward capability management. Public employment has not changed dramatically as a share of total employment, but the content of administrative work has changed. Digital services, EU fund management, strategic procurement, cybersecurity, regulatory analysis and crisis management require specialised capabilities that traditional seniority- and qualification-based systems may not identify effectively.

The competency framework and national recruitment model therefore represent a meaningful institutional innovation. Their potential advantage is consistency: common standards can reduce arbitrary variation across institutions and create a clearer link between job requirements and candidate capabilities. However, centralisation also creates risks if testing becomes overly generic. The national stage should establish common merit standards, while job-specific selection must remain sufficiently sensitive to occupational requirements.

Performance management is the second critical area. Public organisations often retain formal appraisal systems that differentiate weakly among employees. Reform should focus on managerial conversations, objective setting, behavioural competencies and development needs rather than simply introducing more indicators. Performance information is most useful when it informs learning, mobility, succession and recognition.

Digital competencies constitute the most dynamic challenge. The 2025 World Bank diagnosis is particularly important because it rejects the assumption that digital skills are synonymous with basic software use. Advanced public administration increasingly requires data literacy, digital-service design, cybersecurity awareness, AI governance and the capacity to manage technology suppliers. These capabilities must be differentiated by role and seniority.

Finally, reform sustainability depends on institutional continuity. Frequent reorganisations can disrupt workforce planning, career paths and accountability. Strategic HRM requires multiannual capability planning that survives organisational changes. The central HR authority must therefore combine standard setting with strong data capacity and support for line managers.

6. STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR HRM REFORM

Building on the empirical findings and the assessment of the analytical propositions, the identified challenges can be translated into a coherent medium-term framework for human resource management reform in Romanian public administration. Effective modernisation requires moving beyond isolated HR interventions towards an integrated approach in which recruitment, workforce planning, competency development, performance management, career mobility, leadership and data-driven decision-making operate as mutually reinforcing components. Table 8 therefore proposes a strategic framework for the 2026–2030 period, linking the main HRM priorities identified in the analysis with specific policy actions and measurable monitoring indicators. The framework places particular emphasis on institutional capability and measurable outcomes, providing a basis for evaluating reform not only in terms of formal implementation, but also in terms of its capacity to attract, develop, deploy and retain the competencies required for an increasingly digital and performance-oriented public administration.

Table 8. Proposed strategic HRM framework for Romanian public administration

Strategic priority	2026–2030 action	Suggested monitoring indicator
Merit recruitment	Consolidate national competition and validate competency tests	Time-to-hire; applicant quality; probation success
Strategic workforce planning	Annual/multiannual capability plans by institution	Critical-skill vacancies; retirement risk; internal mobility
Digital competencies	Role-specific framework and mandatory learning pathways	Competency attainment by job family
Performance management	Link objectives, competencies, feedback and development	Quality of objectives; completion of development plans
Learning ecosystem	Create continuous, modular and digital learning offers	Training participation and post-training application

Strategic priority	2026–2030 action	Suggested monitoring indicator
Career and mobility	Transparent lateral and vertical pathways	Internal mobility; retention of high-demand skills
HR analytics	Interoperable central workforce data	Data completeness; forecasting accuracy
Leadership	Structured senior-management development	Leadership assessment; employee engagement
Employer attractiveness	Modern recruitment communication and employee value proposition	Applicants per vacancy; early-career retention

Source: Author's proposal based on OECD (2021, 2023, 2025), World Bank (2022, 2025) and European Commission reform priorities.

Table 8 translates the analysis into a medium-term strategy. The emphasis is on measurable capability outcomes rather than procedural completion. For example, the success of recruitment reform should not be assessed only by the number of competitions organised, but also by time-to-hire, quality of applicants, probation outcomes and retention. Similarly, training should be evaluated by competency acquisition and workplace application rather than attendance alone.

HR analytics should become the infrastructure connecting these priorities. A central workforce database can support retirement forecasting, vacancy planning, pay analysis, mobility and diversity monitoring. Data governance must nevertheless protect personal information and ensure that automated tools remain transparent and accountable.

7. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Romania should preserve the direction of competency-based reform while strengthening its empirical validation. Competency profiles and assessment instruments should be periodically reviewed against evidence on actual job performance and adapted to the specific requirements of different occupational families.

Digital competencies should also be embedded across the entire employee lifecycle rather than treated as a separate component of professional development. Recruitment criteria, induction programmes, continuous learning, managerial expectations and promotion mechanisms should reflect the level and type of digital capability required for each position.

An equally important priority is the professionalisation of HR units within public institutions. Strategic human resource management requires expertise extending beyond traditional personnel administration to include workforce planning, organisational development, learning and development, HR analytics and change management. Strengthening these capabilities would enable HR functions to assume a more strategic role in supporting institutional performance and administrative modernisation.

Remuneration and career-management reforms should complement these measures by improving the public administration's capacity to retain employees with scarce and strategically important skills, while preserving transparency, internal equity and fiscal sustainability. At the same time, the public-sector employee value proposition should not rely exclusively on financial incentives. Meaningful work, opportunities for continuous learning, career and mobility prospects, flexible working arrangements where appropriate, and high-quality management can contribute substantially to employee attraction, motivation and retention.

Performance-management reform should place greater emphasis on its developmental function. Managers require appropriate capabilities in setting meaningful objectives, providing constructive feedback, conducting difficult performance conversations and managing individual and team performance. In the absence of such managerial capabilities, formal appraisal procedures and performance ratings risk becoming predominantly administrative exercises rather than effective mechanisms for improving individual and organisational performance.

The effectiveness of HRM reform should ultimately be assessed in relation to broader organisational and public-service outcomes. Indicators such as citizen satisfaction, service-processing times, regulatory quality, uptake of digital public services and organisational productivity can complement conventional HR metrics and provide a stronger basis for determining whether changes in recruitment, competency management, learning, performance and career systems generate measurable public value.

8. CONCLUSIONS

Human resource management is a strategic determinant of public-administration performance. The Romanian experience shows that the reform agenda has moved decisively beyond traditional personnel administration toward competencies, national merit-based recruitment, strategic planning, performance management and digital HR processes.

OECD data indicate that general-government employment represented 17.36% of total employment in 2023, only moderately above the 2007 level. This suggests that the central challenge is not simply the size of public employment, but the quality, allocation and adaptability of the workforce. The 2024 national recruitment rounds and the competency framework provide concrete evidence of institutional change.

Nevertheless, implementation gaps remain. Digital competency needs are insufficiently differentiated, career and pay structures can limit attraction and retention, professional development remains uneven, and fragmented administrative processes reduce the return on human capital. Reform therefore needs to operate as an integrated system.

The paper concludes that Romania's next stage of public-sector HRM reform should focus on evidence-based recruitment, role-specific digital capabilities, continuous learning, leadership, workforce analytics and transparent career mobility. Future research should use administrative microdata and longitudinal employee surveys to evaluate whether these reforms improve recruitment quality, retention, employee engagement, organisational productivity and citizen-facing service outcomes.

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