

# LABOUR MIGRATION AND SKILLS SHORTAGES IN THE EUROPEAN PUBLIC SECTOR: SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

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## Abstract

*Labour migration and demographic ageing have increasingly affected the availability of human resources in the European public sector over the past decade. This paper analyses the relationship between intra-EU mobility, external migration, and the growing shortage of qualified personnel in public administration, healthcare, and education during the period 2010–2025.*

*The study relies on secondary statistical data provided by Eurostat, the OECD, and the European Commission, applying a comparative quantitative methodology based on migration flows, public sector vacancy rates, the age structure of employees, and participation in vocational training programmes.*

*The findings highlight significant regional disparities, particularly between Western European and Central and Eastern European Member States, where persistent outward migration has contributed to structural staff shortages and reduced institutional capacity. The analysis shows that highly skilled professionals, including medical personnel and civil servants, are overrepresented among emigrants, thereby exacerbating difficulties in the provision of public services in less developed regions.*

*The paper argues that low remuneration levels, limited career advancement opportunities, and insufficient investment in human resource development constitute key determinants of the “brain drain” phenomenon in the public sector. It advances public policy recommendations aimed at improving working conditions, strengthening retention mechanisms, and expanding continuing professional training frameworks in order to ensure the sustainability of public services.*

**Keywords:** labour migration, skills shortage, public sector, brain drain, European Union, human capital.

## 1. Introduction

During the period 2010-2025, labour migration has become one of the major structural factors influencing the sustainability of the public sector in the European Union. The free movement of persons within the Single Market, persistent wage disparities among Member States, and the accelerated process of demographic ageing have generated increasing pressures on administrative capacity and on the provision of essential public services.

The European public sector — particularly healthcare, education, and public administration — is simultaneously confronted with two converging phenomena:

- rising demand for public services, driven by demographic and social changes;
- declining availability of qualified personnel, caused by migration and retirement.

Eurostat data indicate an intensification of intra-EU mobility after 2010, particularly from Central and Eastern European countries towards Western European economies<sup>1</sup>. At the same time, European Commission reports on skills shortages highlight structural difficulties in filling vacant positions within the public sector<sup>2</sup>.

The phenomenon of “brain drain” — the migration of highly skilled professionals — has become a major concern for middle-income countries and for those characterised by relatively low wage levels in the public sector. The specialised literature indicates that the selective migration of human capital may negatively affect institutional capacity and the quality of public services.

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<sup>1</sup> Eurostat, Migration and Migrant Population Statistics, Luxembourg, 2010–2024 editions.

<sup>2</sup> European Commission, Labour Market and Wage Developments in Europe, Brussels, 2018-2023 editions.

This paper aims to analyse the relationship between labour mobility and skills shortages in the European public sector during the period 2010–2025, through a comparative approach between Western European and Central and Eastern European Member States.

The objectives of the research are:

- To identify migration trends relevant to the public sector;
- To analyse the shortage of qualified personnel in public administration, healthcare, and education;
- To assess the impact of migration on institutional capacity;
- To formulate public policy directions aimed at retaining human capital.

The study is based on the premise that labour migration is not merely an economic phenomenon, but a process with structural implications for governance and socio-economic cohesion within the European Union.

## 2. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Labour migration and skills shortages in the public sector are interconnected phenomena, explained through a combination of economic theories of migration, human capital models, and institutional perspectives on administrative capacity.

### 2.1. Economic Theories of Migration and Intra-EU Mobility

The classical literature on labour migration is grounded in wage differentials and economic opportunities across countries. The neoclassical model argues that individuals migrate in order to maximise income and utility in the presence of wage disparities between labour markets<sup>3</sup>.

Within the context of the European Union, the free movement of workers has reduced institutional barriers, thereby facilitating professional mobility. Human capital theory suggests that individuals with higher levels of education are more mobile, as they are better able to capitalise on wage differentials and professional opportunities<sup>4</sup>.

Such selective mobility leads to skilled migration, with direct implications for the public sector in countries of origin.

### 2.2. Brain Drain and Its Effects on Institutional Development

The concept of “brain drain” refers to the net migration of highly skilled individuals from one country to another. Docquier and Rapoport argue that the selective migration of human capital may generate ambivalent effects: on the one hand, it can lead to remittances and knowledge transfer; on the other hand, it may reduce administrative capacity and the development potential of countries of origin<sup>5</sup>.

In the case of the public sector, the effects tend to be more pronounced than in the private sector, because:

- professional training is often financed through public funds;
- skills are difficult to substitute in the short term;
- the services provided are essential in nature (healthcare, education, public administration).

The migration of medical personnel from Central and Eastern Europe to Western European Member States represents a relevant example of this phenomenon.

### 2.3. Skills Shortages and Institutional Capacity

A skills shortage occurs when demand for specific qualifications exceeds the available supply in the labour market. The OECD defines a skills shortage as a situation in which employers experience persistent difficulties in filling vacancies due to the lack of suitable candidates<sup>6</sup>.

In the public sector, skills shortages are influenced by:

- wage levels;
- contractual stability;

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<sup>3</sup> George J. Borjas, *Labor Economics*, 5th edition, New York: McGraw-Hill, 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Gary S. Becker, *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis*, 3rd edition, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.

<sup>5</sup> Frédéric Docquier, Hillel Rapoport, “Globalization, Brain Drain, and Development”, *Journal of Economic Literature* 50, nr. 3 (2012): 681–730.

<sup>6</sup> OECD, *Skills Outlook 2021: Learning for Life*, Paris: OECD Publishing, 2021.

- opportunities for career advancement;
- working conditions;
- demographic dynamics.

The ageing of the workforce in European public administration increases the risk of a structural shortage, particularly in Member States with high emigration rates.

## 2.4. Migration and the Sustainability of Public Services

The capacity of the state to deliver public services depends on the availability and quality of human capital. European Commission studies on public administration show that institutional performance is closely correlated with the professionalisation and stability of public sector personnel<sup>7</sup>.

Persistent migration of professionals may lead to:

- longer vacancy durations;
- increased workload for existing staff;
- declining quality of public services;
- reduced citizens' trust in public institutions.

Therefore, the analysis of the relationship between migration and skills shortages must be conducted from a systemic perspective, incorporating both economic factors and the institutional dimension.

## 2.5. Analytical Premises of the Research

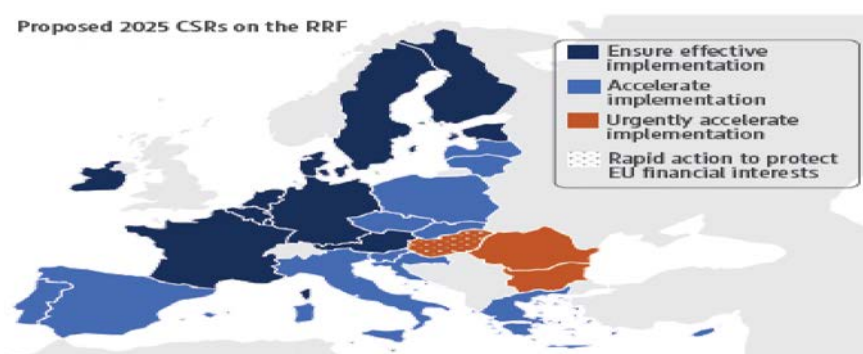
Based on the literature reviewed, the research is grounded on the following premises:

- intra-EU mobility is selective and favours the migration of highly skilled individuals;
- Member States characterised by significant wage differentials in the public sector are more exposed to the brain drain phenomenon;
- skills shortages affect administrative capacity and the quality of public services;
- differences between Western Europe and Central and Eastern Europe are influenced by demographic structure and the level of investment in human resources.

These premises will be tested empirically in the subsequent chapters.

In order to synthesise the theoretical relationships discussed above, the following conceptual model is proposed, highlighting the link between labour migration, skills shortages in the public sector, institutional capacity, and the socio-economic impact generated at national and regional levels.

**Figure 1. Conceptual Model of the Relationship between Migration, Skills Shortage, Institutional Capacity, and Socio-Economic Impact**



Source: authors' elaboration based on the literature (Borjas, 2010; Becker, 1993; Docquier & Rapoport, 2012; OECD, 2021)

This conceptual model provides the analytical framework necessary for the empirical examination of the relationship between labour mobility and the sustainability of the European public sector during the period 2010-2025.

<sup>7</sup> European Commission, Quality of Public Administration – A Toolbox for Practitioners, Brussels, 2017.

### 3. Methodological Framework

#### 3.1. Methodological Approach

The research adopts a comparative quantitative approach based on the secondary analysis of aggregated statistical data at the level of European Union Member States during the period 2010–2025. The selected timeframe allows for the examination of both the dynamics of intra-EU migration following the consolidation of the free movement of workers and the post-crisis and post-pandemic effects on the public sector.

The comparative analysis focuses on two groups of countries:

- Western Europe: Germany, France, the Netherlands, Sweden;
- Central and Eastern Europe: Romania, Bulgaria, Poland, Hungary.

The selection is justified by consistent differences in migration flows, public sector wage levels, and demographic structure, as reflected in official European statistics<sup>8</sup>.

The conceptual model presented in Chapter 2 is operationalised into an empirical framework that examines the relationships between:

- migration flows (independent variable);
- skills shortages in the public sector (intermediate variable);
- institutional capacity and socio-economic impact (dependent variables).

#### 3.2. Data Sources

The data used in this study are drawn from official European databases and institutional reports:

- Eurostat – Migration and Migrant Population Statistics: intra-EU and extra-EU migration flows;
- Eurostat – Job Vacancy Statistics: job vacancy rates;
- OECD – International Migration Outlook: labour mobility and skilled migration<sup>9</sup>;
- European Commission – Public Administration Reports: institutional capacity and administrative reforms<sup>10</sup>;
- OECD – Skills Outlook 2021: participation in continuing vocational education and training.

These sources provide statistical comparability and methodological continuity for the period under analysis.

#### 3.3. Operationalization of Variables

**Table 1. Operationalisation of Variables**

| Type of Variable | Variable               | Indicator Used                                                     | Source              |
|------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Independent      | Labour migration       | Emigration rate of the working-age population; net migration flows | Eurostat            |
| Intermediate     | Skills shortage        | Job vacancy rate in the public sector                              | Eurostat            |
| Intermediate     | Workforce ageing       | Share of employees aged 55+ in the public sector                   | Eurostat            |
| Mediating        | Vocational training    | % participation in lifelong learning                               | OECD / Eurostat     |
| Dependent        | Institutional capacity | Indicators of administrative performance                           | European Commission |

*Source: authors' elaboration based on Eurostat (Migration and LFS data), OECD and European Commission reports*

The operationalisation of variables allows for the examination of the relationship between labour mobility and the structural shortage of qualified personnel in the public sector.

<sup>8</sup> Eurostat, Migration and Migrant Population Statistics, Luxembourg, 2010–2024 editions.

<sup>9</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>10</sup> European Commission, Quality of Public Administration – A Toolbox for Practitioners, Brussels, 2017.

### 3.4. Methods of Analysis

The analysis employs:

- Longitudinal descriptive analysis (2010–2025);
- Comparative analysis between Western Europe and Central and Eastern Europe;
- Correlation analysis between:
  - emigration rates and public sector vacancy rates;
  - age structure and skills shortages;
  - participation in training and staff retention rates.

The methodological approach is consistent with the methodology applied in OECD reports on international migration and labour markets.

The objective is not to estimate a causal econometric model, but rather to identify persistent structural relationships and regional differences.

### 3.5. Methodological Limitations

The study is subject to the following limitations:

- nationally aggregated data may conceal internal regional disparities;
- not all Member States provide detailed statistics on public sector vacancies;
- indicators of institutional capacity are partly composite in nature and difficult to compare perfectly across countries;
- correlation analysis does not automatically imply causal relationships.

Nevertheless, the adopted methodology allows for the formulation of relevant conclusions regarding the relationship between labour migration and the sustainability of the European public sector.

## 4. The Evolution of Labour Migration in the European Union (2010–2025)

### 4.1. The Dynamics of Intra-EU Migration

During the period 2010–2025, labour mobility within the European Union increased significantly, influenced by the free movement of workers, wage differentials, and structural imbalances among Member States.

Eurostat data show that the number of EU citizens living and working in another Member State has grown steadily since 2010, with an acceleration during the period 2014–2019<sup>11</sup>. The economic crisis in several Southern European countries and the persistent disparities between Western Europe and Central and Eastern Europe contributed to the intensification of migration flows.

The COVID-19 pandemic led to a temporary slowdown in mobility in 2020; however, the upward trend resumed thereafter.

Intra-EU migration remains predominantly economically driven, directed towards countries characterised by:

- higher wage levels;
- more favourable working conditions;
- broader professional opportunities.

### 4.2. Skilled Migration and the Brain Drain Phenomenon

A central aspect of the analysis concerns skilled migration, particularly in sectors essential to the public sector, such as healthcare and education.

The OECD emphasises that the international mobility of tertiary-educated individuals is higher than that of the general population<sup>12</sup>. In the case of Central and Eastern European Member States, the proportion of higher education graduates who emigrate is significantly above the EU average.

<sup>11</sup> Eurostat, Migration and Migrant Population Statistics, Luxembourg, 2010–2024 editions.

<sup>12</sup> OECD, International Migration Outlook, Paris, 2010–2023 editions.

The “brain drain” phenomenon is particularly visible in the healthcare sector. European Commission reports indicate that several Eastern European countries have recorded net losses of medical personnel in favour of Western European economies<sup>13</sup>.

The migration of highly skilled personnel generates cumulative effects:

- the reduction of the domestic skills base;
- increased recruitment costs;
- growing pressures on public systems.

#### 4.3. Comparative Analysis: Western Europe – Central and Eastern Europe

**Table 2. Comparative Migration Trends (2010–2024)**

| Indicator                                | Western Europe | Central and Eastern Europe |
|------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------|
| Net migration balance                    | Positive       | Negative                   |
| Emigration of the working-age population | Low            | High                       |
| Skilled migration                        | Net inflow     | Net outflow                |
| Emigrated medical personnel              | Limited        | Significant                |

*Source: authors’ elaboration based on Eurostat and OECD data.*

Western European countries function as attraction poles for skilled labour, benefiting from wage differentials and institutional stability. By contrast, Central and Eastern European Member States are affected by negative net migration, particularly among young people and highly skilled professionals.

This asymmetry contributes to the widening gap in administrative capacity and in the provision of public services.

#### 4.4. Preliminary Implications for the Public Sector

Persistent migration of skilled labour directly affects the sustainability of the public sector through:

- an increase in the number of vacant positions;
- the ageing of the remaining workforce;
- difficulties in implementing administrative reforms;
- increased reliance on temporary solutions or outsourcing.

Particularly in the fields of healthcare and public administration, the loss of qualified human capital reduces institutional capacity and may undermine citizens’ trust in public services.

This development justifies a more in-depth analysis of the relationship between migration and skills shortages in the following chapter.

### 5. Skills Shortages in the European Public Sector

#### 5.1. Job Vacancy Rates in the Public Sector

Skills shortages in the public sector are directly reflected in rising vacancy rates and persistent difficulties in filling essential positions. According to Eurostat Job Vacancy Statistics, the job vacancy rate has increased steadily in several Member States during the period 2015–2023<sup>14</sup>.

Although aggregated data include both the public and private sectors, national reports and comparative analyses indicate that public administration, healthcare systems, and education face significant challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified personnel.

Central and Eastern European Member States record higher levels of public sector vacancies, particularly in peripheral regions and in fields requiring high qualifications.

<sup>13</sup> European Commission, *Health at a Glance: Europe 2022 – State of Health in the EU Cycle*, Brussels, 2022.

<sup>14</sup> Eurostat, *Job Vacancy Statistics*, Luxembourg, 2015–2023 editions.

## 5.2. Workforce Ageing and Retirement Risk

A major structural factor underlying skills shortages is the ageing of the public sector workforce. Eurostat data on the age structure of employees indicate a high share of personnel aged over 55 in public administration and education<sup>15</sup>.

Workforce ageing has two major implications:

- an increased risk of the simultaneous retirement of a significant number of employees;
- the loss of institutional experience and tacit knowledge.

In Member States characterised by negative net migration, generational replacement is more difficult, as the domestic supply of qualified personnel is limited.

## 5.3. Sectoral Shortages: Healthcare, Education, and Public Administration

Healthcare. The healthcare sector is among the most affected by skills shortages. The report *Health at a Glance: Europe 2022* highlights the shortage of medical personnel in several Member States, as well as the migration of doctors and nurses towards economies offering higher remuneration<sup>16</sup>.

The COVID-19 pandemic intensified pressures on healthcare systems, exposing pre-existing structural vulnerabilities.

Education. In the field of education, teacher shortages are associated both with workforce ageing and with the declining attractiveness of the profession in certain Member States. The OECD indicates that in several European countries a significant proportion of teachers are approaching retirement age<sup>17</sup>.

Public administration. In public administration, recruitment difficulties are linked to wage differentials compared to the private sector, limited career advancement opportunities, and perceptions of institutional rigidity.

The European Commission emphasises that the performance of public administration is dependent on the professionalisation and stability of human resources<sup>18</sup>.

## 5.4. Comparative Analysis: Western Europe – Central and Eastern Europe

In order to highlight the structural differences between Western Europe and Central and Eastern Europe with regard to public sector skills shortages, the table below summarises the main trends identified during the period under analysis.

**Table 3. Comparative Trends in Public Sector Skills Shortages**

| Indicator                              | Western Europe | Central and Eastern Europe |
|----------------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------|
| Job vacancy rate                       | Moderate       | High                       |
| Share of employees aged 55+            | High           | High                       |
| Migration of skilled personnel         | Net inflow     | Net outflow                |
| Public sector recruitment difficulties | Present        | More pronounced            |

*Source: authors' elaboration based on Eurostat, OECD, and European Commission data.*

The differences between the two regions are amplified by negative net migration in Central and Eastern European countries, which reduces the capacity to replace retiring staff and exacerbates the structural shortage.

This combination of negative net migration, workforce ageing, and recruitment difficulties generates a structural skills deficit that affects, in the medium and long term, the capacity of states to ensure the continuity and quality of essential public services.

<sup>15</sup> Eurostat, *Employment by Age and Economic Activity (LFS)*, Luxembourg, 2010–2024.

<sup>16</sup> European Commission, *Health at a Glance: Europe 2022 – State of Health in the EU Cycle*, Brussels, 2022.

<sup>17</sup> OECD, *Education at a Glance 2022*, Paris: OECD Publishing, 2022.

<sup>18</sup> European Commission, *Quality of Public Administration – A Toolbox for Practitioners*, Brussels, 2017.

## 6. The Socio-Economic Impact of Skills Shortages in the Public Sector

### 6.1. Institutional Capacity and Administrative Performance

Skills shortages in the public sector directly affect the institutional capacity of the state. Administrative capacity is defined as the ability of public institutions to design and implement effective policies, manage public resources, and deliver high-quality services.

The European Commission emphasises that the performance of public administration is closely linked to the professionalisation and stability of human resources<sup>19</sup>. A lack of qualified personnel may lead to:

- delays in the implementation of reforms;
- reduced absorption of European funds;
- declining decision-making efficiency;
- increasing administrative costs.

In Member States characterised by negative net migration and accelerated workforce ageing, these vulnerabilities are more pronounced.

### 6.2. Public Service Quality and Population Access

Skills shortages directly affect the quality and accessibility of essential public services, particularly in healthcare and education.

The report *Health at a Glance: Europe 2022* highlights that shortages of medical personnel contribute to longer waiting times and additional pressure on healthcare infrastructure. In rural or peripheral regions, these shortages are often more pronounced.

In the field of education, the OECD indicates that insufficient teaching staff may negatively affect educational outcomes and the equity of the education system<sup>20</sup>. The migration of teachers and the declining attractiveness of the profession further exacerbate these challenges in certain Member States.

Therefore, skills shortages do not constitute merely an administrative issue, but one with a direct impact on population welfare.

### 6.3. Regional Inequalities and Social Cohesion

The selective migration of human capital contributes to the widening of regional disparities. More developed regions attract qualified personnel, while peripheral areas lose essential human resources.

The World Bank emphasises that institutional performance and the quality of public services are key determinants of economic development and inequality reduction<sup>21</sup>. Skills shortages in the public sector may generate a vicious circle:

- declining service quality;
- reduced economic attractiveness of the region;
- intensified migration;
- erosion of the local tax base.

This dynamic affects social cohesion and convergence among European Union Member States.

### 6.4. Indirect Macroeconomic Effects

In the medium and long term, skills shortages in the public sector may influence overall economic performance. Efficient public services support the investment climate, investor confidence, and economic stability.

Studies on governance and economic growth show that effective institutions and high-performing public administration are essential drivers of sustainable economic development<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> European Commission, *Quality of Public Administration – A Toolbox for Practitioners*, Brussels, 2017.

<sup>20</sup> OECD, *Education at a Glance 2022*, Paris: OECD Publishing, 2022.

<sup>21</sup> World Bank, *World Development Report 2017: Governance and the Law*, Washington, D.C., 2017.

<sup>22</sup> Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson, James A. Robinson, "Institutions as a Fundamental Cause of Long-Run Growth", in *Handbook of Economic Growth*, Vol. 1A, Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2005.

Therefore, the persistent migration of qualified human capital and the structural shortage of personnel in the public sector may have indirect effects on the competitiveness and economic stability of Member States.

## **7. Public Policy Implications and Human Capital Retention Mechanisms**

### **7.1. Wage Policies and Retention Incentives**

Wage differentials represent one of the main determinants of labour migration from the public sector. The literature on international mobility shows that persistent remuneration gaps stimulate the selective migration of qualified personnel<sup>23</sup>.

For Member States affected by negative net migration, the adjustment of public sector wage policies constitutes an essential retention instrument. Measures may include:

- targeted wage increases in critical sectors (healthcare and education);
- incentives for filling positions in rural or disadvantaged areas;
- bonus schemes rewarding continuity and performance.

However, wage increases must be integrated into a sustainable fiscal strategy in order to avoid excessive pressure on public budgets.

### **7.2. Professional Development and Lifelong Learning**

Investment in continuing professional development can reduce the likelihood of migration and increase the attractiveness of careers in the public sector. The OECD emphasises that skills development and opportunities for career progression are key determinants of staff retention<sup>24</sup>.

Particularly in public administration, the digitalisation of services requires the continuous upgrading of competences. Lifelong learning programmes contribute to:

- increased institutional efficiency;
- strengthened professionalisation;
- enhanced job satisfaction.

Member States that consistently invest in the development of public human resources demonstrate a greater capacity to retain qualified personnel.

### **7.3. Public Management Reform and Career Attractiveness**

The attractiveness of the public sector is not determined solely by wage levels, but also by working conditions, job stability, and career advancement prospects.

The European Commission highlights the importance of civil service professionalisation, performance evaluation, and transparency in recruitment for strengthening administrative capacity<sup>25</sup>.

Reforms aimed at:

- modernising public management;
- digitalising administrative procedures;
- reducing bureaucracy;
- promoting meritocracy;
- may contribute to enhancing the attractiveness of public careers and mitigating migration trends.

### **7.4. European-Level Measures to Reduce Imbalances**

Labour mobility within the European Union is a fundamental right; however, its asymmetric effects on Member States require a coordinated approach.

European strategies on skills and professional mobility aim to enhance labour market resilience and reduce skills shortages<sup>26</sup>. At the same time, Structural Funds and the Recovery and Resilience Facility provide opportunities for investment in human capital and public administration reform.

<sup>23</sup> George J. Borjas, *Labor Economics*, 5th edition, New York: McGraw-Hill, 2010.

<sup>24</sup> OECD, *Skills Outlook 2021: Learning for Life*, Paris: OECD Publishing, 2021.

<sup>25</sup> European Commission, *Quality of Public Administration – A Toolbox for Practitioners*, Brussels, 2017.

<sup>26</sup> European Commission, *European Skills Agenda for Sustainable Competitiveness, Social Fairness and Resilience*, Brussels, 2020.

For Central and Eastern European Member States, the effective use of these instruments may contribute to:

- modernising public systems;
- increasing the attractiveness of careers in the public sector;
- reducing the structural migration of qualified personnel.

An integrated approach, combining national retention policies with European support for skills development, is essential to ensure the sustainability of public services.

## 8. Conclusions

This study has analysed the relationship between labour migration and skills shortages in the European public sector during the period 2010–2025, highlighting the socio-economic implications of this phenomenon for institutional capacity and the sustainability of public services.

The theoretical and comparative analysis shows that intra-EU labour mobility is selective in nature, favouring the migration of highly qualified individuals from Member States characterised by significant wage differentials and limited professional opportunities towards more developed economies. In particular, in Central and Eastern Europe, the migration of medical personnel, teachers, and public officials has contributed to the intensification of structural skills shortages.

The findings indicate that skills shortages in the public sector are driven by the interaction of three main factors:

- negative net migration of qualified personnel;
- accelerated workforce ageing in public administration, education, and healthcare;
- the relatively low attractiveness of public sector careers in certain Member States.

The socio-economic impact of this deficit is reflected in diminished administrative capacity, difficulties in the provision of public services, and the widening of regional disparities. In the fields of healthcare and education, shortages of qualified personnel may directly affect service quality and the equity of population access.

The differences between Western Europe and Central and Eastern Europe are largely explained by structural asymmetries in wage levels, investment in human resources, and institutional capacity. States functioning as attraction poles for skilled labour benefit from the strengthening of their human capital base, whereas countries experiencing negative net migration face structural vulnerabilities.

The research highlights that labour mobility, although a fundamental right within the European Union, may generate imbalanced effects on the public sector in the absence of adequate retention and compensatory mechanisms.

To ensure the sustainability of public services, the following measures are required:

- competitive wage policies in critical sectors;
- systematic investment in continuing professional development;
- reforms aimed at the professionalisation and modernisation of public administration;
- effective use of European funding instruments to strengthen human capital.

In conclusion, labour migration and skills shortages in the public sector do not represent merely a labour market issue, but a structural challenge for European governance and socio-economic cohesion. The capacity of Member States to manage these trends will directly influence the quality of public services and the level of European convergence in the decades ahead.

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