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**RETENTION POSSIBILITIES OF Y GENERATION STAFF
IN THE HUNGARIAN CENTRAL STATISTICAL OFFICE**

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I. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays and most probably in the next few years as well, many organisations of the public sector - including statistical offices - need to face the challenges of aging staff, unbalanced age distribution, high fluctuation and that many of the young ones are leaving their jobs after only few years of work. Effects of these human resource management challenges may even become more dramatic when they are strengthened with decreasing interest of talented jobseekers in career possibilities that statistical offices offer them. However, to guarantee the good quality of functioning it would be crucial to provide sound supply of qualified staff for statistical offices, regarding which attracting and retaining Y generation employees is a key issue. I am convinced that it is unavoidable to understand this (and also the following) new generation of statisticians and especially the way to treat them if we want them to be engaged as our future core staff.

In order not to fall even more behind on this field in competition with private sector organisations and to find possible solutions for the above mentioned challenges I analysed Hungarian and international literature on this particular subject of human resource management and I also conducted a research among Y generation staff of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (HCSO). In my paper I shortly summarize the main characteristics and expectations of Y generation employees at work and I present some interesting results of my survey among more than 200 staff members of HCSO under 35 years and interviews with 12 exiting colleagues also under 35 years. Moreover, I also report on my conclusions and those HRM actions that we have suggested and implemented in HCSO based on results of the research and that may as well be considerable for any other national statistical organisations.

I suppose that my research and the HRM actions proposed shall provide useful contribution to discussions related to employee engagement, especially of Y generation staff in the context of modernisation and may also help us to be more prepared for onboarding “Z” generation employees, who are already entering national statistical offices.

II. MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF GEN Y @ WORK

We all experience generational differences in our own lives and social relations. Many researches have proved that people who belong to different generations have different general characteristics, values, attitudes, etc. We know that they also have different demands and habits as employees. Human resource management experts of national statistical institutes also ought to recognise and understand these differences and as a consequence propose proper HRM actions.

In case we do not deal duly with these questions the generational differences may cause serious conflicts among staff, whereas to reach our strategic goals the strongest possible co-operation would be desirable between them. Another important aspect is the competition on the labour market: attractiveness of NSIs will only increase if we can convince workers of new generations that we are the employer of their dreams. All in all, the question is: **will we have a new generation of statisticians?**

There are many factors that sources underline when it comes to special characteristics of Generation Y at a workplace. I would like to draw attention to the importance of four of them: mobility, self-development, work-life balance and communication.

II. 1. Mobility

We might as well experience that it is getting normal for Y generation people to change jobs like clothes: they do not stay anywhere for long but try to gain experience at many different workplaces and they do not hesitate to seize the better opportunity when it comes. It seems like that it is not considered so valuable for them to stay loyal to only one employer for a lifetime. (however we might notice differences between people choosing careers in the public and in the private sector) Gaining international experiences and learning languages abroad is also getting more and more popular, a Gen Y student tends to spend at least one semester in a different country at a foreign university or to work a few years in a foreign country.

II. 2. Self-development

For a young, well-educated employee „life long learning” is a natural thing. They might have more than one diploma and speak foreign languages, in order not to be an expert in only one field and be able to communicate with people from different countries.

Computer skills are like self-evident for them since they could have made themselves familiar with different IT tools since their childhood.

II.3. Work-life balance

Many studies show results proving that for a significant number of young employees the balance of work and their private life (including social life and family life) is even more important than to have a well-paid job. On the other hand they plan families and childbearing at a later age, which allows that building a career is also a priority for them. They try to achieve the most in the first few years at work and this refers to women as well. That is one of the reasons why they tend to look for flexible work environments and prefer distance work or home-office solutions.

IV. Communication

Y generation is also referred to as e.g. „E-Generation”, or „Facebook-Generation” in different sources, which all emphasises that they have a need for constant communication: young people spend more and more hours per day online, by using social media, internet, emailing besides using their cell phones to communicate with each other. It is something that was definitely not so typical about 20 years before. Studies show us that it has become an important aspect even for job-seekers, whether it is permitted to be active on social media at work or not.

Considering all the above mentioned characteristics I've collected those most important factors that an ideal employer shall provide for young workers. Few sources summerize these factors like „cool factors”, since Y generation people want to work at a „cool” workplace. So young people will probably look for the following attractive factors in our national statistical institutes:

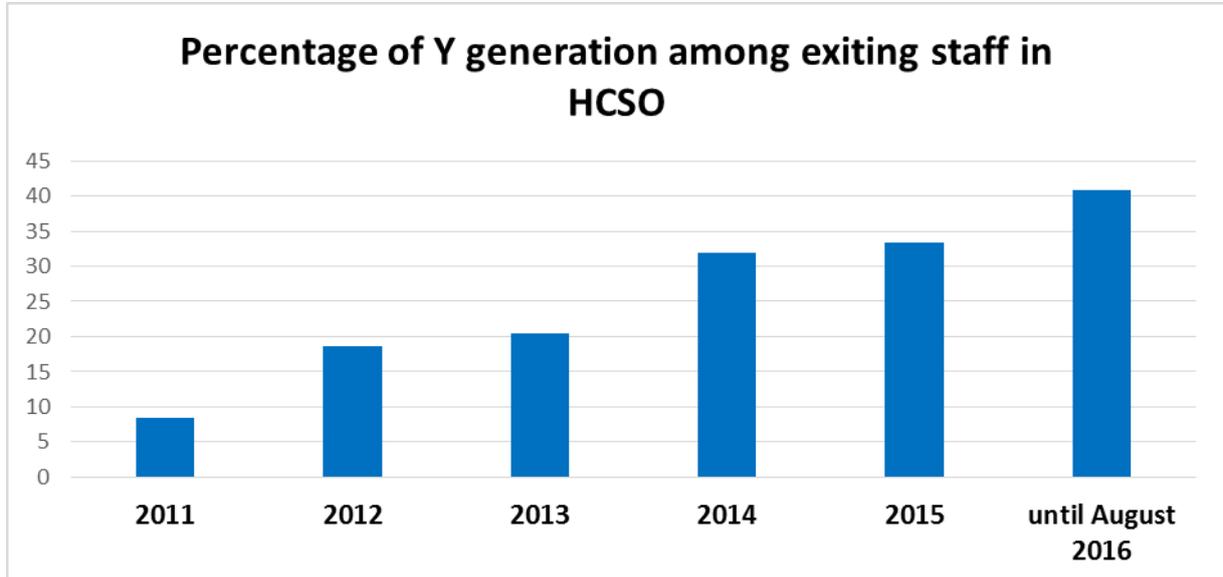
- flexible, ergonomic, entertaining, digitally well-equipped and „green” work environment
- work-life balance, home-office and distance work possibilities
- ability of constant communication, teamwork and open-office, social media usage
- lots of feedback from managers and forums to share their own views
- mentoring, clear and transparent career-prospects, self-development possibilities
- diverse and creative incentives, competitions, recognition of good performance
- good values to follow and CSR activities of the employer

III. RESEARCH RESULTS – „WHAT DOES THE Y SAY?“ IN HCSO

After recognising preferences of Y generation regarding their workplaces the next question is whether our NSI provides them the above mentioned „cool factors” or not?

I checked relevant HR-data in HCSO and I also asked our young staff themselves about what they think: among 202 (under 35-year-old) staff I conducted a survey in 2015 for which I had 124 replies and I analysed results of 12 exit interviews with Y generation staff leaving HCSO but I only include part of the results in this paper.

A remarkable result of my analysis is shown on the diagram below. It is clearly visible how the percentage of Y generation among all (including even the retiring) exiting staff have been increasing in the past years. Percentage of exiting staff who belong to Y generation are shown on the Y axis of the diagram. These data are more significant if we consider that only 1/6 of all HCSO staff are less than 35 years old.



The following diagrams show some interesting results of my staff survey to which I would not add any comments here but draw conclusions in the next chapter of my paper.

1. What are the most attractive factors of a workplace in general?



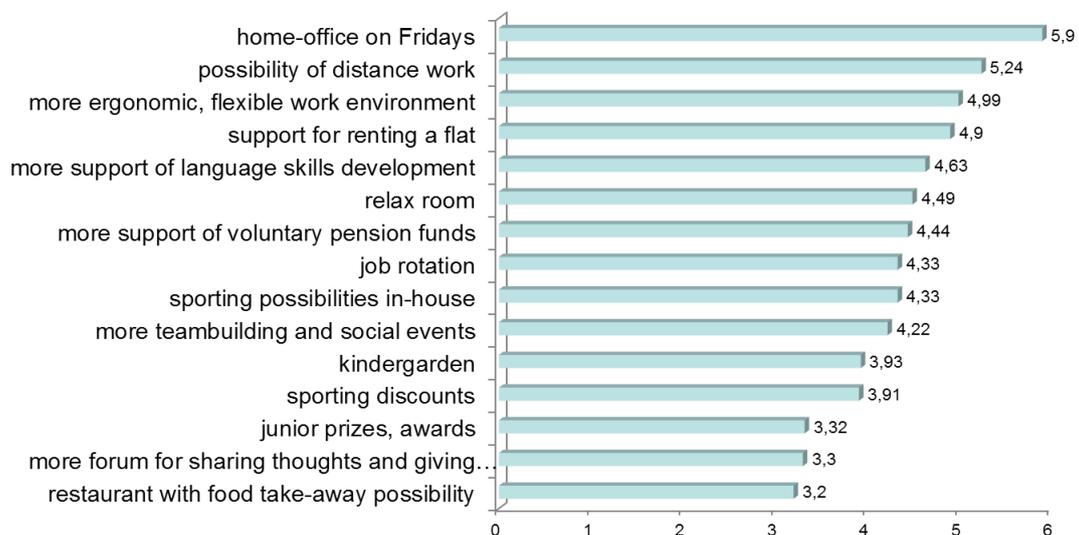
2. What are the most attractive factors in HCSO for you?



3. Which of our currently used recognitions is the most successful for retention?



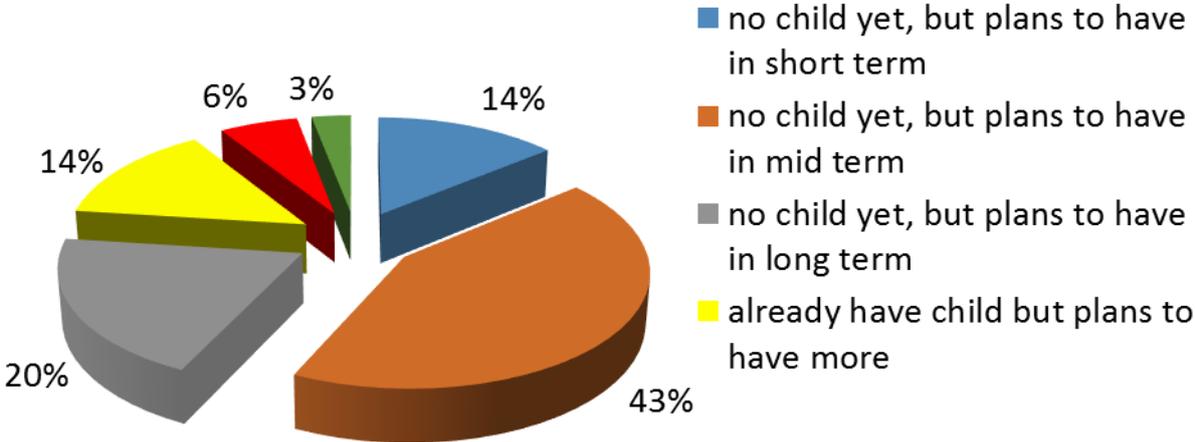
4. Which possible new type of recognition, service or HR management tool would be the most successful for retention?



5. What are your career plans?

Plans	short-term	mid-term	long-term
career related to my current job	75	48	34
career in HCSO but in a different job	7	14	15
moving to another public adm. organisation	12	2	4
moving to a private sector organisation	12	26	32
career abroad	2	9	6
no career plans yet	27	21	33

5. What are your plans regarding family?



Altogether 91% of Y generation staff members plan to have a(nother) child.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY

Considering the results of my research the most important general consequence I would draw is to **collect more feedback from our staff**. We need staff surveys and not only exit interviews (when any actions for retention is already too late) but even a kind of “retention interviews” after 1 or 2 years of work. Without enough and proper quality information that comes from staff themselves (or by simply ignoring what they want) we will not successfully retain our employees.

1. It is clear for me that we shall put **more emphasis on work-life balance**: supporting distance work and building flexible work environments, applying for example desk-sharing or other methods.
2. We shall put **more emphasis on talent management**: recognition of outstanding performance and applying more financial incentives (but at the same time consider which one has short or long term effect on retention), introducing competitions, job rotation, reverse-mentoring, organising teambuilding events, etc.
3. We need to realise the importance of **developing a family-friendly organisation** as we can see in HCSO 91% of Y generation staff members plan to have a(nother) child in the following years. Many employers will be able to pay more for our talents but they may not offer a suitable work environment for them when they become wives, husbands and parents.
4. **Many young ones do not have exact career plans yet**, which means that we still have the chance of retention in these cases. We should not miss these opportunities saying that „no matter what we do, they will go anyway, because they have already decided about their future”.

In HCSO we drew up the most important points regarding retention of young employees in key institutional documents like *Strategy 2020* and *HRM Strategy 2014-2020* but we need to consider that there are lots of aspects we can not influence like for example legal environment (country rules and regulations) or tendencies of the national labour market, etc.

However, we try to do our best in practice as well:

- regularly monitoring fluctuation and conducting exit interviews
- giving permissions for distance work in specific cases
- including obligations in study contracts and housing loan contracts
- publishing more attractive job advertisements, having intensive relations with academia
- providing career orientation program for newcomers (with rotation pilot project in 2015)
- winning the „Family-Friendly Organisation” Award 2015 in Hungary
- managing a database of junior experts and leaders

Finally, I am convinced that NSIs simply can not ignore the specific needs of Y generation and we need to work on engaging young talents even if they generally will not tend to stay with us for decades. In the meanwhile, we should keep in mind that Generation „Z” is already “knocking at the door”...the best way to be ready for them is to understand and manage the “Y” successfully.

Budapest, 17th August 2016

Resources:

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