

Securing Skills & Talent

The management challenge behind the workforce challenge

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A short contribution for the session “Building the Water Workforce of Tomorrow”

The sector has meaning — but not always magnetism

Why many young professionals see water as important, but not exciting enough.

PART 1 - ATTRACTIVENESS GAP

Five signals young people read very quickly

- 01

Conservative by default
Change is slow; innovation feels optional.
- 02

Political interference
Non-transparent decisions undermine professional pride.
- 03

Weak management culture
Merit becomes unclear; fairness becomes fragile.
- 04

Low entrepreneurial energy
Work can feel less dynamic than it could be.
- 05

Corruption risk
Beyond money, it causes moral damage and cynicism.



Main message

The issue is not only salary. It is culture, fairness and professional energy.

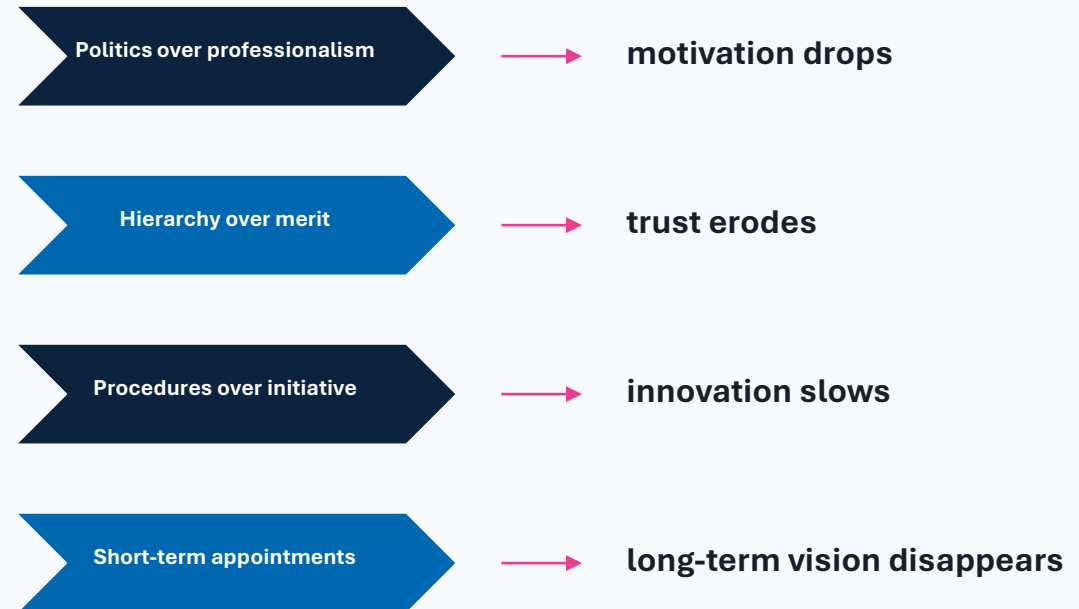
A meaningful sector must also feel like a place where initiative can grow.

What makes young professionals leave?

When the public mission is not matched by everyday professional practice.



A simple chain reaction



Old retention research points to a simple human truth

✓ **Gallup reminder:** people leave when they feel unseen.
Appreciation ranked above pay; money was only mid-list.
For water utilities: salary matters, but culture decides whether young talent stays.

Case from Bulgaria: Water Sector Development Foundation

A practical response: make the profession visible, modern and open to future professionals.



wsdfoundation.org

A platform for people, knowledge and professional values.

What the example stands for

- Visibility** Showing water as a modern profession, not only public-service routine.
- Community** Connecting young people with practitioners, mentors and institutions.
- Practice** Real problems, field visits, applied learning and professional exposure.
- Values** Merit, openness, ethics and responsibility as professional identity.

The Foundation turns “we need young people” into concrete encounters with the sector.

What we do for future professionals

From inspiration to belonging: activities that make the sector more attractive and credible.



Foundation as a bridge

The ambition is not only to train. It is to create a professional community where young people can see purpose, standards and opportunity.

Early exposure

schools, universities, site visits

Mentoring

practitioners and role models

Practical learning

real cases and field problems

Professional values

merit, ethics and public trust

Workforce resilience starts with organizations and initiatives that young professionals can believe in.