



Recruiting managerial and professional staff in Europe

15 inspirational ideas to help tackle recruitment difficulties

■ European job markets for managerial and professional staff beset by serious recruitment difficulties

- The EU 27 plus the UK have almost 35 million managerial and professional employees in the private sector, half of whom are in 3 countries: the UK, Germany and France.
- The shortage sectors, occupations and competences turn out to be the same in the six European countries included in the study (Estonia, France, Germany, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom).
- The feedback from these six countries has enabled us to identify a number of inspirational ideas to stimulate the deliberations of recruiters of managerial and professional staff in France and beyond.

■ Fifteen inspirational ideas to help improve managerial and professional recruitment practices

- Invest at as early a stage as possible in the relationship with initial education and training providers.
- Involve co-workers as much as possible in promoting the employer's brand.
- Organise talent spotting and role changes internally.
- Highlight the company's unique characteristics in terms of values.
- Make the remuneration package more attractive, over and above the actual salary.
- Show some flexibility within the work environment.
- Review actual job contents in order to diversify remits.
- Get away from the beaten track in drawing up job advertisements.
- Adopt direct approaches, which are more personalised and substantive.
- Use role-play scenarios in order to improve the assessment of soft skills.
- Optimise recruitment deadlines in order to offer a better candidate experience.
- Consider using artificial intelligence for greater agility.
- Put in place a strengthened induction process prior to commencement of job.
- Improve the employee experience in order to enhance staff loyalty.
- Maintain links with candidates in anticipation of future needs.

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Methodology

The analyses presented in this study are based on two sources.

1. A statistical overview of managerial and professional employment in the private sector in Europe based on data drawn from Eurostat's Labour Force Survey. Managerial and professional staff were identified by combining groups 1: "Managers" and 2: "Professionals" of the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-8). The 2019 data were used in order to include the UK in this statistical exercise. The countries in question are members of EU 27 plus the UK, i.e. all EU member states between 2013 and 2020.

2. A qualitative survey of managerial and professional recruitment practices in SMEs and large companies in 6 European countries: Estonia, France, Germany, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. The emphasis was on previously unknown or innovative practices throughout the various stages of the recruitment process.

The field work was carried out between September and October 2022 by Kantar Public.

Individual interviews were conducted with different target groups:

- 24 interviews with experts on topics linked to the job market and recruitment consultants (4 in each country);
- 18 interviews with recruiters in SMEs (3 in each country);
- 20 interviews with recruiters in large companies (between 3 and 4 in each country).

The profiles underwent a blending process on the basis of sector of activity and geographical location.



Above and beyond the basics, to innovate and trial new means of recruiting more effectively and alleviating the current recruitment difficulties.

This study sheds new light on European managerial and professional staff, drawing on the latest data available for EU 27 plus the United Kingdom, above and beyond the differences highlighted in the concept of managerial and professional employee (*cadre*) between the European countries and the distinctively French status of *cadre*.

Drawing on interviews conducted in 6 European countries, including France, this study presents 15 inspirational ideas to help improve managerial and professional recruitment practices in a context in which companies are experiencing considerable difficulties, regardless of their size and country. These inspirational ideas are essentially extensions of practices that already exist throughout the recruitment process rather than true innovations or breaks with current practices.

We'll wager that potential recruiters will know how to make good use of this study, which constitutes a guide to short-, medium- and long-term operational solutions that will stimulate their deliberations and thereby improve their recruitment practices. 👍👍

Pierre Lamblin
Director of data and studies

**European job markets for
managerial and professional
staff are all beset by serious
recruitment difficulties**

Cadre: a distinctively French designation that has equivalents in the other European countries

Cadre is a distinctively French employment status

In France, the emergence of the *cadre* category and the status associated with it go back to the establishment of the Agirc¹ supplementary pension scheme in 1947 (now merged with the Arrco). The definition of the term *cadre* depends essentially on industry-level negotiations around the job classification systems that have evolved over the years. The primary purpose of these classifications is to determine salaries as well as other pecuniary benefits in exchange for certain obligations or working conditions, such as the “forfait jours” (a special arrangement where working time, and hence remuneration, is computed in days rather than hours) and the contractual obligations to produce results².

In 2020, the social partners in France unanimously concluded a national cross-industry agreement on *cadres*. In this agreement, the jobs held by *cadres* are defined by the following characteristics:

- “Requires an aptitude for functions of a predominantly intellectual nature, entailing the application to a high level of the faculties of judgement derived from theoretical, technical, and professional learning, knowledge and expertise [...]”
- Involves functions determining or giving rise to deliberation and/or action on the

... but equivalents of the *cadre* category exist in the other European countries

In Europe, the concept of *cadre* cannot be translated literally into other languages. Nevertheless, it does have some relatively close equivalents. In most European countries, managerial and professional staff are differentiated from other employees by virtue of the power delegated to them by central management, their decision-making autonomy and the influence they exert in a sphere of crucial importance to the company⁵.

This common definition encompasses a range of different legal regimes. In France, managerial and professional employees in

part of other employees and thereby exerting a significant influence in the economic, social, societal and/or environmental spheres;

- *Confers on the job holder a sufficient measure of initiative and/or autonomy, the extent of which depends on the responsibilities and/or delegated power with which he or she is entrusted;*
- *Confers on the job holder a real responsibility to contribute to the company's operations and development [...]”³*

This definition reflects a change in work organisation since the middle of the 20th century. The function of the *cadre* as an expert, without any managerial or supervisory role, has developed and now coexists with the traditional managerial functions. This distinction emerged in sociological surveys from the 1990s onwards and is rooted in the distinction between managers and professionals that is commonly made in the English-speaking countries. Professionals rely on their specialist skills as the basis for their occupational legitimacy, while managers derive their legitimacy from their supervisory activities⁴.

¹ AGIRC: Association Générale des institutions de retraite des cadres/ General Association of Supplementary Pension Institutions for Managers. ARRCO: Association pour le régime de retraite complémentaire des salariés/ Association for the Supplementary Pension Scheme for Employees.

² Kerbourc'h, J-Y., “Les cadres et l'emploi, aspects légaux, conventionnels et statistiques”, France Stratégie, 2020.

³ “Accord national interprofessionnel du 28 février 2020 portant diverses orientations pour les cadres”, p. 1-2.

⁴ Bouffartigue, P., *Cadres : la grande rupture*, Ed. La Découverte, 2001.

⁵ Loup Wolff, “Les cadres aujourd'hui : quelles spécificités ?” Executive summary, France Stratégie, 2020.

(non-systematic) managerial authority, a considerable degree of autonomy and extensive decision-making power: *“Managerial and professional staff are employees who play a particular role within a company. They are differentiated from employers but also from other employees. They act as the link between management and staff. Thus they play a key role in defining the company’s development strategy and in achieving its goals, with the support of all the resources available within the company.”*

In the six European countries included in the present study, the concept of managerial and professional staff exists in a range of slightly different forms. In Germany, there are three levels of employee equating to French *cadre* status, namely middle and senior managers and directors. However, there are significant differences in the definition of each category and the associated responsibilities depending on the size of the

company and the number of management levels in its organisational structure.

In the UK, the notion of executive, which is the closest to that of *cadre*, denotes employees who exercise certain responsibilities and have decision-making powers. Executives are not defined by a specific legal regime but often have particular clauses in their employment contracts, such as longer notice periods or a non-compete clause.

Another example is to be found in Spain, where there are two categories that could correspond to the notion of *cadre*, namely “Management personnel in companies and public administration” and “Technicians and scientific and intellectual professionals”. However, only managerial employees have their own legal regime. This regime contains provisions such as confidentiality and non-compete clauses and an absence of advance notice in the event of a breach of contract.

Almost 35 million managerial and professional employees in the private sector in Europe

A statistical definition for the purpose of international comparisons

For the purpose of international comparisons, the managerial and professional category can be defined statistically on the basis of the *Labour Force Survey* (LFS) data published by **Eurostat**, the European Commission’s statistical office, which is based on the **International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-8)**. This classification separates occupations into ten major groups, the first two of which can be linked to the notion of *cadre*⁶: (1) Managers; (2): Professionals.

This separation into groups makes it possible to define the managerial and professional category in the broad sense, even though it does not correspond precisely to the “national” definitions. Thus managerial and professional employees are characterised by the high level of qualification required for the jobs they hold⁷. This common definition provides the basis for evaluating the managerial and professional population in each European country.

Half of European managerial and professional employees concentrated in three countries

According to the Eurostat data and the definition of managerial and professional staff based on the first two ISCO-8 major groups, there were almost 35 million such employees in the EU 27 plus the UK⁸ in 2019⁹.

employees (52%): in descending order, the UK, Germany and France. Next come Poland, Spain and the Netherlands. It can also be noted that half of the member states of EU 27 plus the UK account for 9 out of 10 of all managerial and professional employees.

Three countries account for more than half of all managerial and professional

⁶ The other major groups in the ISCO-8 are: 3. Technicians and associate professionals; 4. Clerical support workers; 5. Service and sales workers; 6. Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers; 7. Craft related trades workers; 8. Plant and machine operators, and assemblers; 9. Elementary occupations; 10. Armed forces occupations.

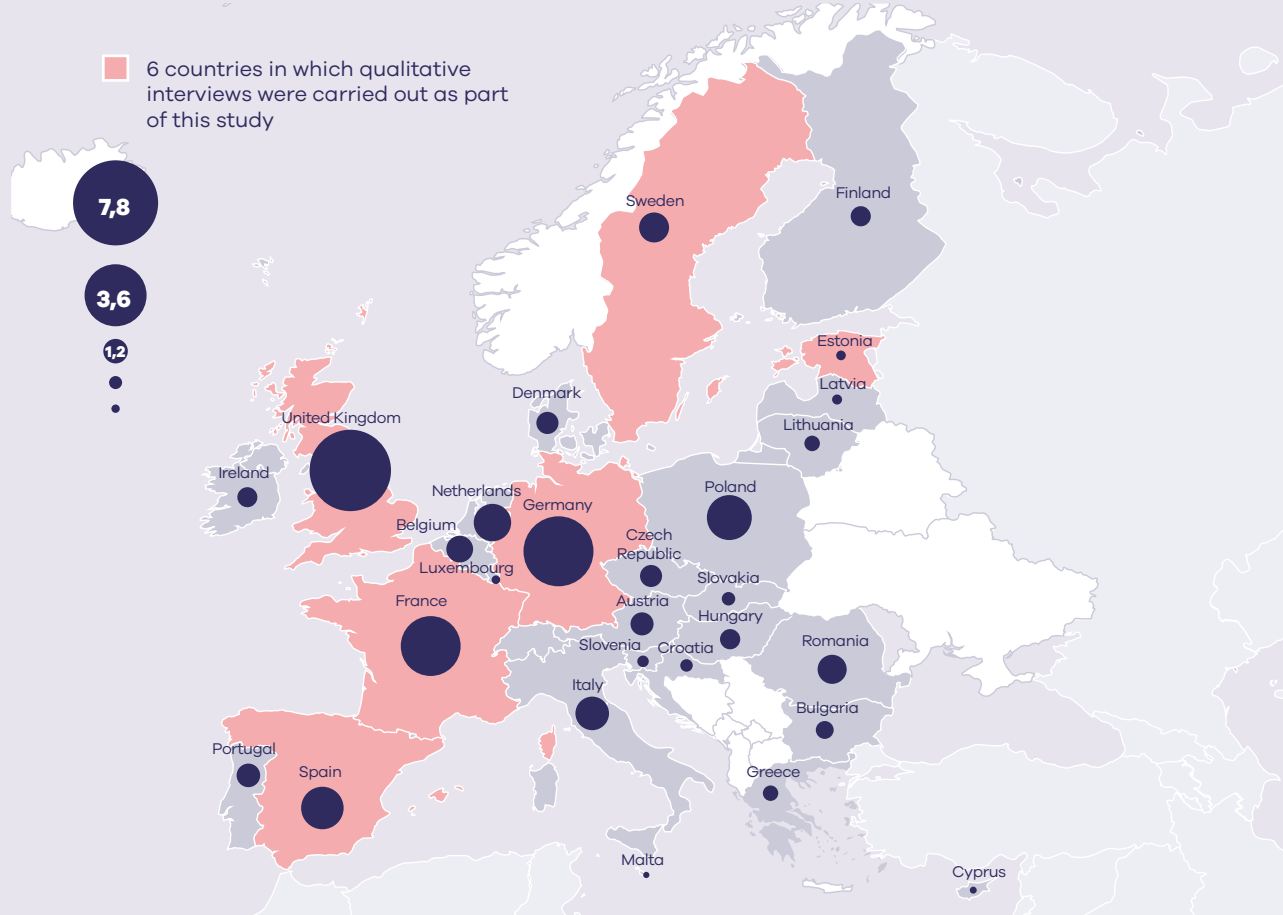
⁷ Loup Wolff, “*Les différents visages de l’encadrement en Europe*”, Centre d’études de l’emploi, 2015.

⁸ All EU member states between 2013 and 2020.

⁹ Last year in which the UK was included as in the Eurostat data.

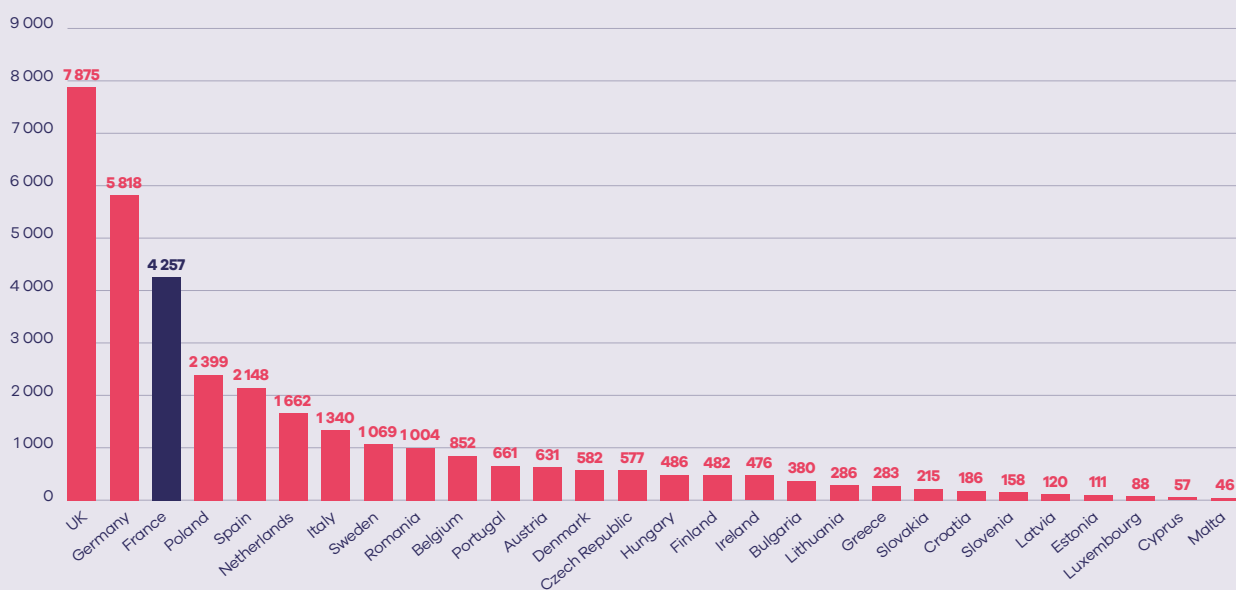
Almost 35 million managerial and professional employees in the private sector in Europe

Number of managerial and professional workers in the private sector (in millions)



Scope: private-sector employees, EU 27 plus the UK – Source: Eurostat, LFS 2019

Number of managerial and professional employees in the private sector (in thousands)



Scope: private-sector employees, EU 27 plus the UK – Source: Eurostat, LFS 2019

Portrait of European managerial and professional employees

The supervisor to employee ratio varies considerably from country to country

Across the countries of EU 27 plus the UK, the supervisor to employee ratio, that is the share of managerial and professional employees in all employees, was 21% in the private sector in 2019. However, this average ratio conceals some very considerable differences between the European countries. The ratio in Luxembourg is as high as 44% compared with just 9% in Italy. At 23%, France is slightly above the European average of 21%.

Among the countries that exceed the European average, some such as Luxembourg, Lithuania, Estonia and Malta stand out. These four countries each have fewer than 200,000 managerial and professional employees in the private sector but the supervisor to employee ratio is higher than the European average, which

is evidence of the existence of specific managerial labour markets, in finance in the case of Luxembourg and in electronics in Estonia.

Furthermore, within the managerial and professional category as defined on the basis of Eurostat's LFS data, it is possible to separate out those who are managers (category 1 - Managers) from those who, on the face of it, are not (category 2 - Professionals). The share of managers is 25% across Europe as a whole but here too there are considerable differences between countries. In the UK and in France, almost one third of the managerial and professional category in the private sector are actually managers, while the share is closer to 20% in countries such as Germany and Spain.

Managerial and professional employees in Europe are predominantly male and over 35 years of age

The service sector is the largest employer of managerial and professional staff in the EU 27 plus the UK, accounting on average for almost 7 out of every 10 such employees. Manufacturing industry is the second largest employer of managerial and professional staff, accounting for almost 2 out of every 10 such employees. In Germany, the share of managerial and professional staff working in manufacturing industry is as high as 26%.

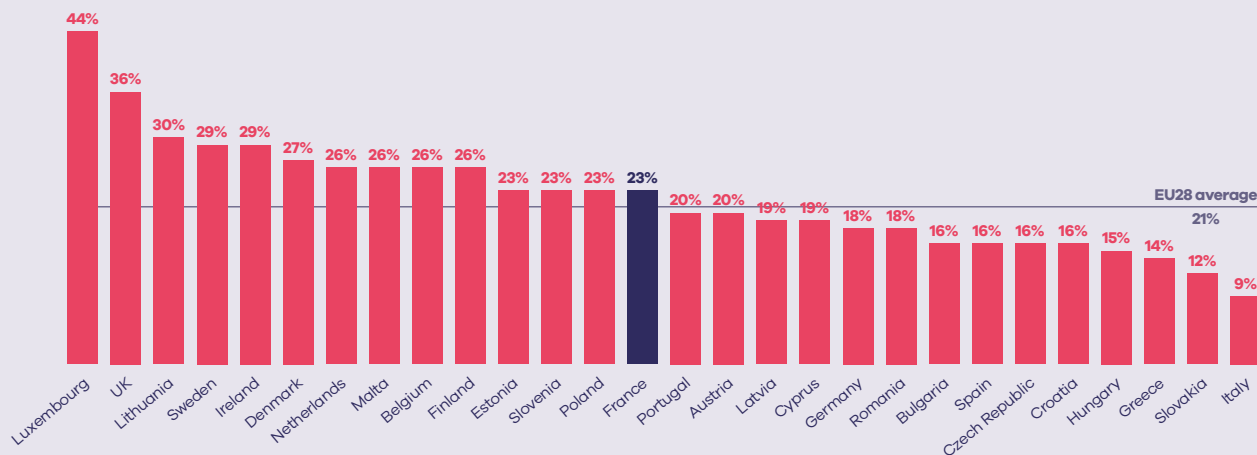
On average across European countries, the majority of managerial and professional employees are men (56%). In some countries however, gender parity in the managerial and professional category is a reality. This is the case, for example, in Estonia, Spain

and Sweden. The male-female distribution is less evenly balanced if only managers are considered. No less than 66% of managers are men, and this imbalance is observed in all the countries. In Estonia, for example, where 53% of managerial and professional employees are women, only 43% of managers are women.

Overall, one third of managerial and professional employees in the private sector in Europe are under 35 years of age. Only 16% are 55 or over. Here too, there are considerable differences between the countries: the share of those aged 55 and over is 16% in the UK and 15% in France but rises to 19% in Germany.

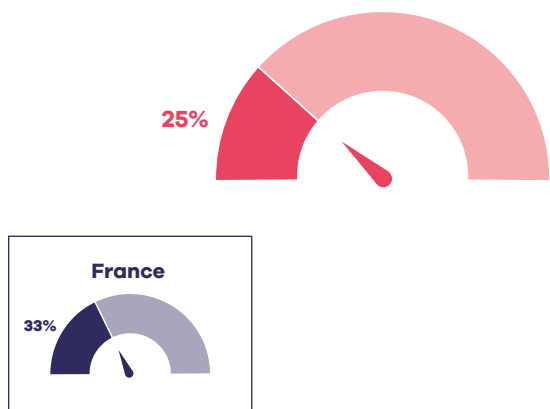
Portrait of European managerial and professional employees in the private sector

Share of managerial and professional employees in private-sector employees

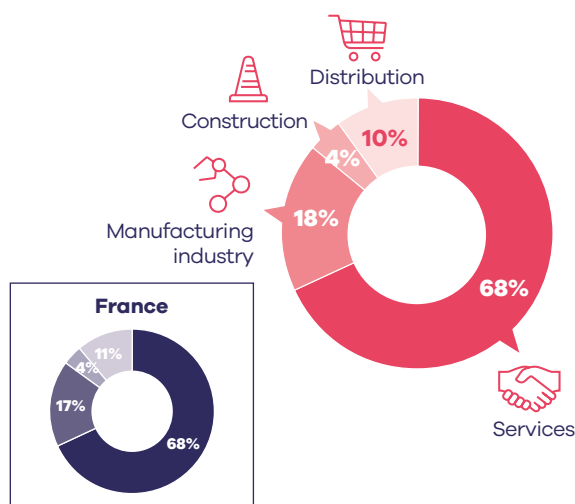


Scope: private-sector employees, EU 27 plus the UK
Source: Eurostat, LFS 2019

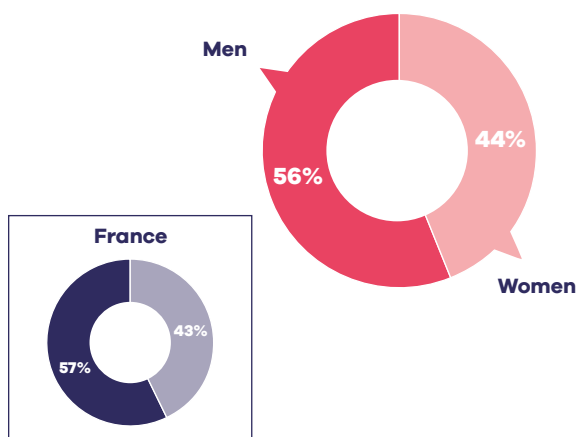
Share of managers in managerial and professional employees



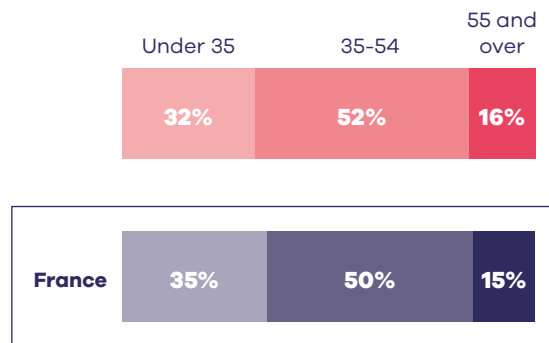
Distribution by sector



Distribution by gender



Distribution by age



Scope: private-sector employees, EU 27 plus the UK
Source: Eurostat, LFS 2019

Managerial and professional labour markets grappling with severe recruitment difficulties

The core of this study is based on qualitative interviews carried out with labour market experts and recruiters in six European countries: Estonia, France, Germany, Spain, Sweden and the UK. Above and beyond the questions of definitions and the key figures on managerial and professional employees, therefore, this makes it possible to focus on the context in which recruitment takes place in these countries and on the difficulties that SMEs and large companies might encounter in this area.

Despite the significant differences in the managerial and professional populations and labour markets, the shortage sectors, occupations and competences prove to be the same in general terms in all of the six European countries studied. These shortages intensified in 2022 as a result of the ever increasing number of managerial and professional employees hired, particularly for positions requiring considerable skills and expertise in the new digital technologies. The pandemic, which accelerated the digitalisation of companies' operations, aggravated the shortages in certain areas of IT and R&D. These occupations suffering from skill shortages all require a considerable degree of technical expertise, which limits companies' room for manoeuvre in terms of adjusting the employee profiles they are looking for.

In France and in other European countries, managerial and professional employees are also expressing new expectations of their work, and notably a desire for a better balance between their work and their personal lives. This may lead to a change in the balance of power between companies and managerial and professional employees, to the benefit of the latter.

According to some of the experts interviewed, the recruitment difficulties are due in part to gaps in the education and training system, which have given rise to a shortage of candidates, in both quantitative and qualitative terms. This is particularly the case in Spain and Estonia. In other countries, such as Sweden, demographic

reality is one of the explanations for the shortage of suitable applicants, in conjunction with specific difficulties linked to the Swedish language, which is little spoken outside of the country.

“ (Referring to scientist profiles)

There's strong demand from companies and there's no great interest on the part of students within the education system to turn towards this type of career.

Expert, recruitment agency, Spain

“ Seven people a year leave the

University with the engineering skills we need, and we're not the only ones looking for them. In other words, we have to keep these people with us at all costs, support them and help them to grow professionally.

Large construction company, Estonia

Some companies must also face competition from abroad for highly qualified or specialised staff. This competition has intensified in the information and communications technologies sector since the health crisis and as a result of the spread of teleworking, whether part-time or full-time, in these areas.

Other companies are relying on talent searches abroad. Thus German companies are increasingly choosing English as the sole working language in order to accelerate the integration of European talents or those thrown up by the great waves of migration (Ukraine, Syria, etc.), even though, in practice, legal and cultural constraints limit the use of these sources of talent.

“ The recruitment of personnel is

very difficult. The solution is to go and look for talented people wherever you can find them. So if I can't find them in Germany, I go abroad. [...] However, I don't have the right to hire a colleague to work remotely in another country without having legal representation for the company in the country in question.

Expert, university, Germany

15 inspirational ideas to help improve **managerial and professional recruitment practices**

In a context of severe labour shortages, all companies owe it to themselves to follow already well established recruitment practices, which are similar in all the countries:

- Draft a clear job advertisement;
- Offer decent working conditions;
- Diversify the recruitment channels;
- Put in place effective recruitment processes;
- Nurture the relationship with candidates;
- Support induction, etc.

All companies operate along these lines, but that is not always sufficient, particularly when recruitment difficulties are escalating, which is why it is important to be able to trial new solutions all the time in order to improve recruitment practices and to mitigate any difficulties that might arise.

Nevertheless, it turns out that innovation in recruitment practices is more diffuse than spectacular. Technical and technological innovations do exist, but recruitment is still above all an activity based on human contact. Thus in the absence of reference points in terms of innovative practices,

companies are obliged to proceed by trial and error, making use of whatever is at hand. To innovate sometimes simply involves adapting to the market, by relaxing certain selection criteria, for example, and accepting candidates with atypical profiles if it is judged that they have the ability to acquire the necessary competences quickly.

Thus the operational solutions described by the companies and the experts constitute extensions of existing practices rather than true innovations or breaks with current practice. They come into play at all stages of the recruitment process: **upstream in long-term strategies**, at the time when skill requirements are being defined and articulated in order to make **the value proposition more attractive**, during **the recruitment process** itself in order to make it **more effective** and, finally, **downstream in order to nurture relations with both successful and unsuccessful candidates**.

Thus the feedback and sharing of experiences in the six European countries included in the study constitute so many inspirational ideas derived from the realities of corporate life.

15 inspirational ideas to help improve managerial and professional recruitment practices



Long-term strategies upstream of sourcing

- Invest at as early a stage as possible in the relationship with initial education and training providers.
- Involve co-workers as much as possible in promoting the employer's brand.
- Organise talent spotting and role changes internally.



Attractiveness of the value proposition

- Highlight the company's unique characteristics in terms of values.
- Make the remuneration package more attractive, over and above the actual salary.
- Show some flexibility within the work environment.
- Review actual job contents in order to diversify remits.
- Get away from the beaten track in drawing up job advertisements.



Effectiveness of the recruitment process itself

- Adopt direct approaches, which are more personalised and substantive.
- Use role-play scenarios in order to improve the assessment of soft skills.
- Optimise recruitment deadlines in order to offer a better candidate experience.
- Consider using artificial intelligence for greater agility.



Downstream investment in nurturing relations with successful and unsuccessful applicants

- Put in place a strengthened induction process prior to commencement of job.
- Improve the employee experience in order to enhance staff loyalty.
- Maintain links with candidates in anticipation of future needs.



(1) - Invest at as early a stage as possible in the relationship with initial education and training providers

Some companies are seeking to attract young graduates by stepping up their cooperation with initial education and training providers. The aim is to strengthen partnerships with universities and schools by developing programmes (for example, summer camps in Sweden) and courses leading to the award of qualifications aimed at students.

Other companies are even trying to attract high school students by offering well-paid and worthwhile summer jobs and dedicated programmes, such as those in the IT sector. Their efforts may also involve putting in place initiatives such as clubs and workshops that enable young people to get to know the company and its operations before the end of their education or training.



We need to start much earlier.

There are programmes for the very young, 12-13 year olds, where they can take computer courses and learn to code. It's an area in which we have to begin to interest people in doing computer science at high school. You have to get them hooked even before they're 15 years old.

SME, IT, Sweden



Since the spring we've had a computer club to which we invite students and other interested people. We organise workshops in various areas. Topics have included television, then cybersecurity and networks. So we've already had a meeting with them and it's really enjoyable.

Large company, telecommunications, Estonia

More traditionally, other companies endow university chairs or fund research programmes, e.g. by offering opportunities to work on a PhD within the company.



We give money to fund a professorship in a highly regarded university but we have no influence over the content of the teaching. We propose topics for master's degree and PhDs and provide funding for the students.

Large company, technology, Germany



(2) - Involve co-workers as much as possible in promoting the employer's brand

Some companies rely on their co-workers to beat the drum for the company and raise its profile. Managerial and professional staff are encouraged to publicise their company's values and successes widely, and indeed to act as true "brand ambassadors". They are urged to get involved by taking part in forums and trade fairs and, increasingly, in videos portraying their daily work routines and work teams in an attractive light.

They are also encouraged to share their enthusiasm and promote the company on social networks such as LinkedIn. Here, these "ambassadors" discuss their organisation's successes, the convivial times they have experienced and the human dimension, the values and good practices, etc. One of the SMEs studied in Spain rewards its "ambassador" employees with gift tokens in order to motivate them.

“ There’s a good team spirit and we’re increasingly trying to highlight that on our website. We have a team page where we’ve made a video of each team member. They each introduce themselves, describe their work and it seems rather pleasant to work with us because everyone’s smiling, it all appears to be very agreeable.

SME, IT sector, France

“ We’re going to put in place a brand ambassador programme [...]. We really want to identify some already, the ideal being for them all to be ambassadors.

Large company, agri-food industry, Spain

This role of ambassador sometimes applies even to unsuccessful job applicants and former employees. In this case, a clear and respectful recruitment process must be put in place, feedback must be provided when requested by the unsuccessful applicants and exit interviews must be conducted to understand the reasons for departures.



(3) - Organise talent spotting and role changes internally

Among the strategies intended to increase the loyalty of talented employees and anticipate future recruitment, some large companies are banking on internal mobility and developing the skills and competences of their managerial and professional employees. In order to fire up enthusiasm for certain careers and to promote certain activities and occupations, one solution adopted in large companies is to organise career development seminars internally. These seminars may be devoted to one speciality or to a particular area; the various facets of work there are outlined to employees, as well as the job and career development opportunities. There may also be seminars during which the mechanisms, conditions and opportunities for internal mobility are presented to all employees.

In other large companies, identification of employees’ talents and aspirations may be entrusted to departments dedicated to talent management and responsible for putting in place personalised development plans in order to encourage both vertical and horizontal mobility (the latter being the most common).

“ We’ve also organised internal career seminars. We constantly keep this subject in mind so that our people can discover the options available to them. Internal mobility is encouraged... If we know we’ve got a lot of young people in the call centre, where might they go? Into customer management or IT?

Large company, telecommunications, Estonia

“ We try to create an environment in which employees feel they can develop. In the interviews we conduct with employees every six months, it is important to ascertain whether or not they are happy and whether they are ready to change jobs. If that’s the case, then we have to try to see whether there’s an opportunity for them to stay in the company in a different role. This is extremely important!

SME, IT sector, Sweden



(4) - Highlight the company's unique characteristics in terms of values

Companies seem to be increasingly diligent in communicating the social responsibility dimension of their activities in such a way as to align their image with values that may make the difference for potential job applicants, rather than basing it solely on their dynamism or sound economic health.

“ *This whole question of sustainable development, doing something about bullying at school, cyberbullying, women in technology. All those issues that show we can contribute to society are very attractive to young people [...]. So when you join our company, you're influencing people's lives directly. It's more than just a job.*

Large company, telecommunications, Estonia

A company's exemplary approach to diversity and inclusion may also be a criterion enabling it to attract talented employees. Thus the experts we met in the UK emphasised that a management team that is diversified in terms of gender, ethnic origin, etc. is likely to attract a greater number of applicants of both genders. The fact of feeling "at home" in a company regardless of one's gender, age, skin colour, sexual orientation or beliefs is a major criterion for managerial and professional staff making choices.

“ *The burning issue for us is diversity and inclusion in one form or another. To achieve a better representation of gender, racial and ethnic diversity. It's more the case when we're looking for managerial and professional staff than in recruitment in general.*

Expert, recruitment consultant, UK

“ *We often take part in networking events, whether virtual or face-to-face. Whenever possible, we ask one of our senior female partners with the right technological competences to take part in these recruitment rounds and to go to these university job fairs and graduate career fairs and to encourage talented young people to consider a career in technology. These sorts of events are put on in order to try to show a model, so that a young woman studying at university who's thinking of her future career can say to herself: "I thought this was a sector reserved exclusively for white, middle-aged males ... but this women is like me. If she can do it, why can't I?"*

Large firm, consultancy, UK



(5) - Make the remuneration package more attractive, over and above the actual salary

In France, the salary is the main criterion in the eyes of managerial and professional employees when they are seeking to change company. This criterion is all the more important in the current context characterised by high inflation. However, it is a lever on which companies, and SMEs in particular, have only limited room for manoeuvre.

In order to increase their attractiveness, some companies are increasingly putting in place "à la carte" packages with various benefits that recruiters showcase, whether in job advertisements or when first making contact with potential applicants.

The benefits on offer vary depending on the countries' specific economic characteristics or social system. Thus, in Estonia, some companies mention their guarantees regarding the quality of the health cover on offer. And in the UK, it is common practice to mention profit sharing schemes and the length of paid holidays. Some companies headquartered in London opt to compensate managerial and professional employees for some of the difficulties they face, such as the cost of housing and transport.

“ We have to present all the benefits, right down to the last detail. However, at this salary level, you shouldn't be talking about the complimentary fruit basket. You have to explain in detail the supplementary pension scheme, the opportunities for teleworking and type of company car. A Mercedes S is the minimum. There's also a question of salary and the relocation package, that is the help with housing costs. And of course since 2020 the home office is an important issue.

Senior consultant, executive recruitment consultants, Germany

“ There's the flexible remuneration scheme. There's the tax advantage scheme, the health care voucher, the fine dining voucher and the childcare voucher. We also have a life insurance scheme that's paid for by the company.

SME, technology, Spain

“ If we're talking about London, everything becomes so expensive: travel, transport, everything. So even the fact of being able to pay for travel for yourself and your family is an important incentive. Managerial and professional employees are very concerned about individual benefit packages.

Expert, recruitment consultants, UK



(6) - Show some flexibility within the work environment

In order to stand out and be attractive, some of the companies investigated have granted their employees greater flexibility with regard to working time in order to promote their well-being and to help them better reconcile their work and personal lives. For example, employees are offered the option of alternating between full-time and part-time working for personal reasons (elderly parents, leisure time, charity and voluntary work, etc.).

Other companies are offering greater flexibility in the workplace by allowing employees to telework for more days of the week or even, for certain shortage occupations such as IT specialists, to work at home all the time. This also enables them to recruit in areas other than that of the actual workplace, or even internationally. Furthermore, for those managerial and professional employees who wish to work on site, there is the possibility of working at a different site closer to their home than their usual one.

“ Applicants are requesting the flexibility of being able to telework; that's happening automatically now regardless of the applicant's age. We've agreed a compromise: working 60% in the office and 40% at home.

SME, health sector, Sweden

“ We have an à la carte work organisation system. In other words, there are people who are in a hybrid model and there are others who telework all the time. Since we're a relatively small company with a small workforce, we offer our people a good deal of flexibility for their personal problems.

SME, technology, Spain

“ People are often looking for high salaries, a car or a car allowance. That's not what we do. What we do offer, on the other hand, and people like it a lot, is flexibility and this hybrid work organisation model.

SME, housing, UK



(7) - Review actual job contents in order to diversify remits

In order to overcome their recruitment difficulties, some companies are reviewing actual job content by diversifying remits in order to make the value proposition more attractive. After all, while managerial and professional occupations are characterised by a considerable degree of autonomy and are often described as enriching, some may also prove to be exhausting (particularly because of the work rate required or the working conditions) or repetitive. This is the case, for example, for sales managers' jobs that are focused solely on winning new customers or HR managers dedicated to sourcing job candidates¹⁰.



Candidates ask not to be confined to recruitment but to be assigned other HR tasks, such as salaries, marketing, communications, they want to do a bit of everything, etc.

SME, recruitment consultants, France



(8) - Get away from the beaten track in drawing up job advertisements

In any recruitment campaign, job advertisements are an initial window on the way a company operates, on the working atmosphere, the proposed duties, the prospects for career development, etc. Consequently, some recruiters strive to draft them as a value proposition in order to succeed in setting themselves apart from the competition. In Estonia, for example, it is common practice for job advertisements to begin by mentioning the advantages of the job for applicants and their career evolution. It may also be a question of varying the tone, by writing in a more personal, emotional, or even humorous way.

The format of the job advertisement is also important. The length of the advertisement is perceived as an issue by some of the recruiters we interviewed. To catch potential applicants' eye, they strive to keep advertisements short. They may also change the format completely by incorporating into the advertisement videos of statements by co-workers.



We use the polite "Sie" form of address. So the polite form is also used in our advertisements. And we would like to use the familiar "du" form in our job profiles. If you simply write: "We have a horizontal organisational structure, so join us and be innovative within that horizontal organisational structure and a collegial atmosphere", that does indeed sound very different from "Come and work with us in a hip and friendly atmosphere."

Large company, insurance, Germany



We've also put quite a lot of effort into our content, with videos and portraits of co-workers who may seem to be associated with the adverts and give them a more lively and personalised dimension.

Large company, banking, France

¹⁰ Apec, Bilan 2020 des difficultés de recrutement, 2023.



(9) - Adopt direct approaches, which are more personalised and substantive

Against a background of particularly intense competition for managerial and professional staff in certain occupations, companies have generally adopted a direct approach and increased the number of recruitment channels to include professional social networks, specialist websites, co-optation, attendance at specialist trade fairs and so on. In this case, they often use outsourcing in order to compensate for a lack of the in-house resources or expertise they would need to search for the required personnel themselves. As a result, digital platforms have emerged whose purpose is to bring companies and recruitment consultants together.

“ I'm thinking of a solution that I haven't told you about, actually, which we've used quite a bit recently and which is something of a mix between the two, it's called *Hunteed*, it's a platform that establishes contacts between companies like ours and recruitment consultants. The prices are much lower [...]. And you only pay in the event of success. We've used it to recruit two people recently.

Large company, manufacturing industry, France

Some large companies, such as those studied in Germany and Spain, have added talent acquisition specialists to their HR

teams and given them the task of developing more personalised strategies in order to attract, or even go out to seek, some of the potential candidates. These HR employees have skills similar to those of a headhunter.

In all cases, it would seem essential that the direct approach is more substantive and personalised, in order both to differentiate the company from its rivals and to make the proposition aimed at potential candidates more concrete. A Swedish expert cited the example of senior managers representing their company at conferences with the aim of attracting talented new personnel eager to acquire knowledge.

“ Another innovative method is to try to hire senior personnel, if you manage to attract very experienced individuals and give them space to be spokespersons for the company in the community. Put in their job description that 50% of their work consists of speaking at conferences. This is an excellent tool for finding new talent. Because these people generally don't like being headhunted, they don't like being recruited by someone who doesn't know their field, but they do like linking up with someone from whom they can learn!

Expert, recruitment company, Sweden



(10) - Use role-play scenarios in order to improve the assessment of soft skills

For the companies studied, looking for a high level of adherence to the company culture and its mode of operations is one way of guaranteeing better integration and long-term collaboration. Consequently, the assessment of behavioural competences or interpersonal skills is an increasingly decisive factor in deciding between potential candidates.

Some companies, usually larger ones, use an assessment centre, established either

internally or by external agencies, that consists of a battery of individual tests and role-play scenarios. Other companies are turning to immersive interviews involving several members of the assessment team in order to quickly ascertain whether the candidate matches their expectations. These interviews may take the form of a more informal meeting during a tour of the offices or of a production site with a few members of the candidate's future team.

“ We often invite someone to spend half a day with us. For us, that’s almost like immersing someone in the workplace. We let the individual concerned discover the environment but with regard to the most advanced technology part, we more or less subject them to a number of tests based on role-play scenarios to see whether their level of competence will enable them to learn with us and to join the team.

Large company, automotive sector, France

“ We generally try to get them to come on site with us at the company’s premises. A sort of social meeting with their team. Obviously, their team must also give its opinion.

Expert, recruitment consultants specialising in the technology sector, UK

In smaller companies, the validation of soft skills is less formalised and usually consists of coaching type interviews. These are closer in form to a discussion during which candidates are not assailed by questions but rather encouraged to speak freely about themselves, their strong points, their goals and so on.

“ I don’t have a plan or any questions. I simply have a conversation with the person and then they leave having had a very pleasant conversation that was very easy for them. I make a note of the skills I want for this job and I adapt the questions a bit depending on the discussion.

SME, technology, Spain



(11) - Optimise recruitment deadlines in order to offer a better candidate experience

In a labour market characterised by severe shortages, the speed of the recruitment process is crucial in order to avoid the risk of losing candidates on the way. Thus the majority of the companies studied have been obliged to become more agile in their recruitment efforts, particularly by adapting the course of the process and the meeting with company managers to the candidate’s profile. To this end, some of them have put in place extremely simplified procedures in order to respond rapidly to candidates and to avoid boring or annoying them, along the lines of the simplified applications proposed by certain actors in the on-line recruitment business.

“ It’s really LinkedIn that works the best. And there are also one-click applications. The whole application process is very simple [...]. It is not obligatory to attach a cover letter, for example. For us, the CV takes priority. It must be as easy and quick as possible to submit an application.

SME, distribution, Germany

Deadlines can also be shortened by adapting the tools used. Some companies will prefer video conferencing interviews at the beginning of the process or to use video interviews – candidates film themselves as they answer questions and then upload the video to a platform – which they can view later. This enables them to process a larger number of applications quickly.

“ We have video interviews and a platform to which they can be uploaded. For example, all candidates have to answer three questions and each one sends their response. And if you add a CV to it, you get a complete picture [...] this enables you to get through a lot of candidates in a short space of time. A video also demonstrates a candidate’s motivation – if they can’t always be bothered to make a video, that’s their choice.

Large company, telecommunications, Estonia



(12) - Consider using artificial intelligence for greater agility

When questioned about the place of artificial intelligence (AI) in recruitment processes, most of the experts and recruiters interviewed agreed that the main advantage of these technologies, which are still in development, is that they reduce the time spent on the logistical aspects, particularly in large companies. For example, AI can make it easier to sort through applications and help to fine-tune the hunt for candidates, to draft job advertisements (particularly when it comes to observing certain legal obligations) and to track candidates during the recruitment process.

“With regard to shortage jobs, our recruiters will even ask us, myself or my managers, for the profile of an individual already employed in the company who has a well-filled LinkedIn profile and all the key skills and on that basis they use artificial intelligence so that the search engine looks for similar profiles and potentially contacts people.

Large company, manufacturing industry, France

Besides recruitment, AI can help to identify a possible future disinvestment and suggest training programmes. However, the experts pointed out that this is a technology that requires considerable quantities of good-quality data to be effective. Furthermore, it brings with it the risk that profiles will become standardised and possibly a discriminatory risk¹¹. It can also be used during video interviews to decode non-verbal language, although this use of AI is still in its infancy.

At this stage, AI can be used primarily as a process optimising tool and cannot replace human expertise and perception in candidate selection.



(13) - Put in place a strengthened induction process prior to commencement of job

In all the countries studied, the large companies investigated were unanimous in acknowledging the importance of the induction period and their desire to strengthen this stage even further. In those sectors experiencing labour shortages, induction often gets under way prior to commencement of the job with the process known as pre-boarding. This emerging practice involves nurturing the relationship with the successful candidate as soon as the employment contract is signed in order to continue to arouse their interest and enthusiasm and to avoid their leaving for a rival company during the notice period if they are employed.

“We hope the pre-boarding goes smoothly, from the moment the candidate signs the contract to their first day at work. They're invited to visit a portal when they can obtain information on the company and to all events and afterwork gatherings.

SME, IT activities, Sweden

“Contact before the start date with the team principal is a measure against candidate ghosting. We often invite future co-workers to team events before they actually start work with us.

Large company, insurance, Germany

¹¹ Apec (2020) “État des lieux et prospective d'IA dans le recrutement”.

Because of their more limited resources, the SMEs studied often stick to a more basic form of on-boarding that focuses on helping successful candidates to familiarise themselves with company procedures, tools, direct colleagues and so on. The larger ones have put in place expanded processes that may extend over several days and include a range of activities.

“ They all come to head office for three days and take part in various activities. Some of them are not directly linked to their jobs but with the company generally. For example, they go on a tour of the R&D centre, and they're taken to carry out product tests, etc.

Large company, automotive sector, France



(14) - Improve the employee experience in order to enhance staff loyalty

In order to retain talented colleagues and avoid excessive turnover, the companies studied are putting in place measures to improve the employee experience.

For example, many companies are seeking to reach out to their employees and to listen to their concerns in regular interactive sessions in order to better understand their employees' expectations and aspirations. In some companies, the annual appraisal interviews leave room for regular assessments based on collegiality and feedback, both between colleagues and with management.

“ And what's super cool, and I think it's also an appreciable advantage, is that twice a year we have a “performance cycle”, which means that twice a year we receive intensive feedback and have an opportunity to speak with our manager about salaries.

Large company, engineering, Germany

On the personal level, greater attention is being paid to employees' physical and mental health. Thus some companies are encouraging them to take up a sport, putting on stress management workshops, improving the work environment with chill-out spaces, etc.

“ We do everything for well-being, from physiotherapy to sessions with psychologists and life coaches. Our offer in that respect is very wide-ranging. We put on a course on emotion management, a course on laughter therapy, a course on time management. We also organise trips outside of the work environment, in the countryside for example, or a two-day retreat where we work on personal development.

SME, technology, Spain



(15) - Maintain links with candidates in anticipation of future needs

For a long time now, large companies, aware of the need to anticipate their future requirements for managerial and professional staff, have been establishing recruiting grounds for potential candidates. As recruitment difficulties have worsened, this practice has spread to SMEs. Thus, talent management is conceived of as a continuous process, with qualitative, long-term relationships being established with potential candidates.

For example, some companies seek to remain in contact with previously unsuccessful candidates who might, nevertheless be of interest to the company in future recruitment rounds. Other maintain links with former co-workers by setting up associations and clubs for former employees or organising events, particularly in order to keep them informed about developments in the company. In this way, companies hope to reawaken former employees' interest by offering them a job or allowing them to act as "ambassadors" even though they are no longer part of the company, possibly with a view to co-opting them.

“ I have a file with a whole group of people who have taken part in the recruitment process, who were not necessarily taken on but who were such strong candidates that I would like to remain in contact with them.

Large company, technology, UK

“ Barely two months ago, we held our first event for former employees because we say that once you've been part of the company, you remain attached to the company. And as we've experienced things together, it's absolutely logical to have a programme for former employees. Sometimes, people like to come back to us. They express a desire to stay in touch. About twenty people turned up and they showed a great deal of interest in our job adverts.

Large company, engineering, Germany

The Observatory of Managerial and Professional Employment



RECRUTEMENT
FORECASTS
& PROCESSES



TRAJECTORIES
CAREER PATHS
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COMPETENCES
OCCUPATIONS
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ISSN 2681-2819 (COLLECTION RECRUTEMENT)

April 2023

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April 2023

