

Candidate Experience Report:

See what it's like to apply to Europe's biggest employers

The second annual survey report explores the experience people go through as they search and apply for jobs at the largest European companies. The research helps companies evaluate, compare, and improve their application process and talent experience through their career sites and other virtual recruitment and engagement technologies. This research was conducted in partnership with HEC Junior Conseil, the Junior Enterprise of HEC, the number one business school in Europe, according to the Financial Times.



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Introduction

Talent shortages are impacting employers worldwide. People are leaving and changing jobs at accelerated rates, with nearly 7 in 10 companies (69%) reporting talent shortages and difficulty hiring, according to ManpowerGroup. The same research found that employers anticipate growing payrolls in 42 of the 43 countries and territories surveyed, making the growing demand for labor even stronger. Talent teams are faced with fierce competition for talent in light of the pandemic and significant restructuring and redistribution of labor. To build and attract winning teams, it is crucial to build strong virtual connections with talent and to prioritize both the candidate and employee experiences.

How a company treats its candidates could be an indication of how employees are treated. A modern, seamless recruitment experience is important for candidates around the globe when considering joining a company.

Are the biggest European companies role models when it comes to candidate experience? What is it like to search for and apply to a job at some of the most prestigious companies in Europe? **Read on to find out.**

The pillars of the candidate experience:

- Clear view of employer's culture
- Seamless application process
- Timely, personalized feedback



Introduction



iCIMS' second edition of the annual Candidate Experience Report highlights the experience that some of the biggest organizations in Europe provide to job seekers and applicants, including the efficiency of the application process and the website experience at the start of the recruiting process.

The report covers all Fortune 500 companies headquartered in Europe to evaluate if reality matches candidates' expectations. Talent, technology, and business leaders can learn what candidates care about, how various technologies and elements of the job search and application process impact their overall experience, and more.

Career websites were evaluated and rated on: design, number of clicks required to find a relevant job, application complexity, and quality of applicant tracking. Results show that many companies are still not giving candidates a 21st-century experience fit for virtual hiring needs, despite innovative technologies and process advancements that are available.

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Attract

Career sites should reflect a company's culture, authentically communicate its mission and values, and make the application process easy and personalized.



Attract:

Career sites are often the first impression that companies can make on candidates. It is where companies can showcase brand image, values, and culture and promote all positions and career paths. However, our research reveals that not all companies may understand the importance of a dedicated career site to meet candidates' needs and modern recruiting goals.

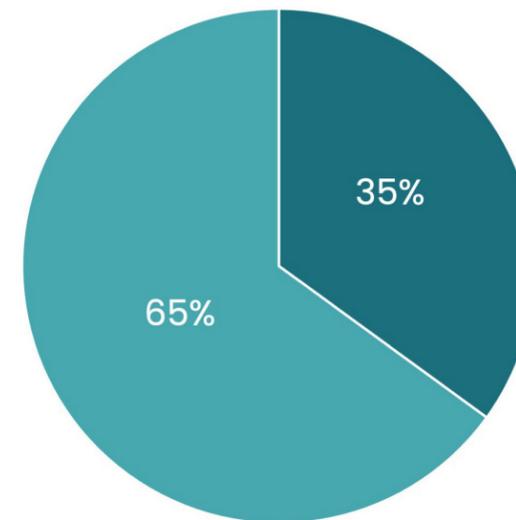
Career sites: A need or an option?

Criteria: Do they have a dedicated career destination?

- From a simple tab or section on the website that has basic job listings to a dedicated career destination and experience, almost all of Europe's 133 largest companies sampled had a specific career space.
- Only a single company, located in France, lacked a career space.
- 65% of companies had a dedicated career site, leaving 35% with just a simple list with open jobs.

A dynamic career site can help a company attract talent and differentiate itself from the competition.

Website careers spaces



■ Basic Job Listings ■ Career Site

● basic job listings ● career site

Breakdown of how companies attract talent for open positions: career sites vs. basic job listings

Criteria: Is the career site mobile friendly and responsive?

100% of companies in the study had a mobile version of their career page (whether it was a dedicated career site or a tab of job listings on the company website), including the two French companies, which did not have a mobile version in 2019.

Attract:

User interface (UI) and user experience (UX)

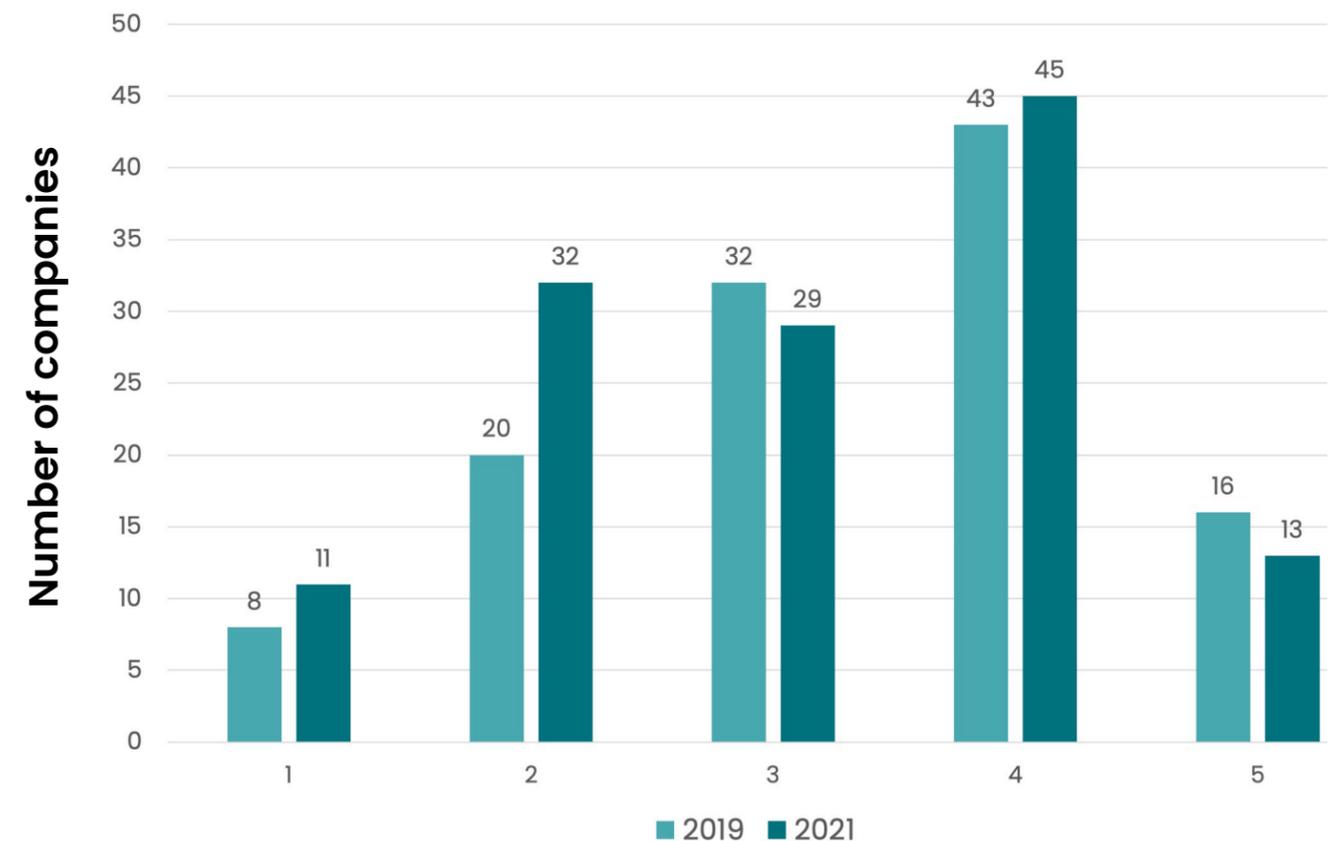
Criteria: What are candidates' overall impression of career sites?

Innovative and forward-thinking brands are adopting consumer-driven trends when it comes to designing career sites and revamping recruitment and talent engagement efforts. Take influencer marketing on social media, for example. HR leaders and talent teams are adopting similar technologies and practices to engage with candidates and employees via user-generated video content. Candidates value interactive experiences, clear templates, quick applications, and modern design when searching and applying for a job.

The European employers surveyed received an average score of **3.1 out of 5 for the design** of their recruitment sites.



- Overall, candidates were satisfied with the design of the interface when they applied.
- However, there was still considerable room for improvement, with more than half (54%) of the companies scoring between 1-3 out of 5.
- Even more striking is the increase in the number of groups that scored between 1-2, compared to the 2019 report (+11%).

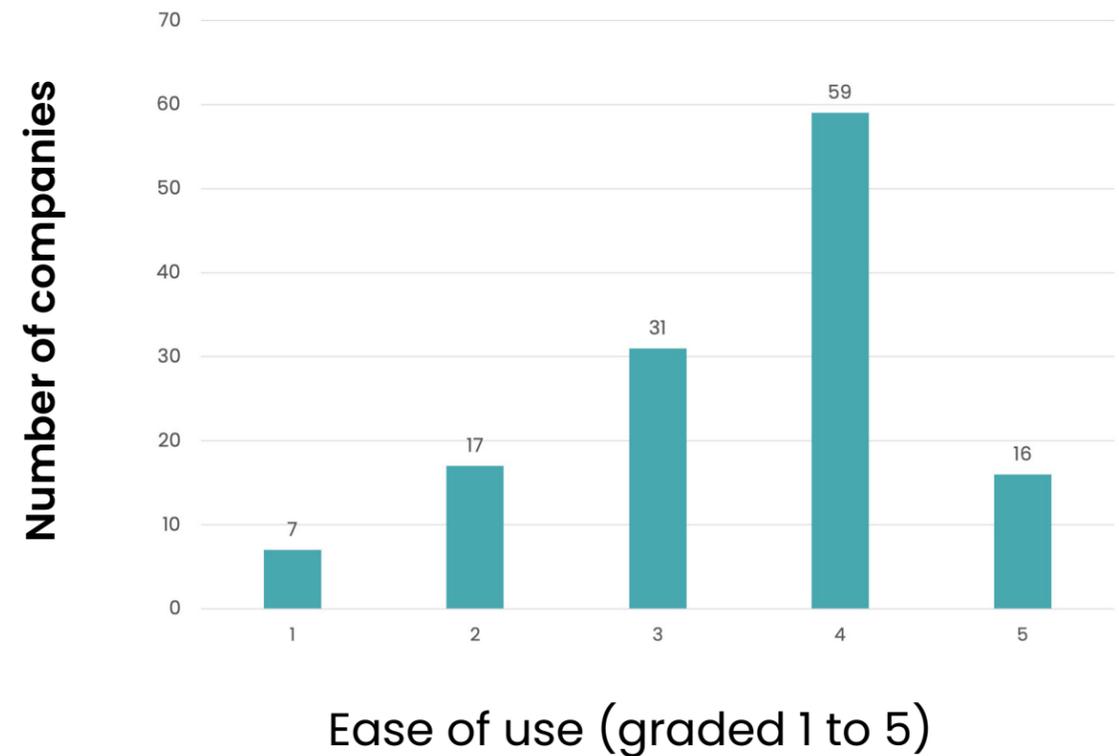


Career site's design (graded 1 to 5)

Attract:

Criteria: Is the career site user friendly and does it have a pleasing design?

- The survey looked at two components: look and feel and general ease of use. In general, candidates were more critical when it came to look and feel.
- 58% of the sample scored a 4 or 5 for the ease of use of the career site.
- On average, candidates rated the user-friendliness of the websites sampled at 4 out of 5, but only 3.5 for the look and feel of the career sites.
- Candidates tended to like the overall design of sites that used light colors, featured images and videos, and had less text.



Ease of use by industry (graded 1 to 5)

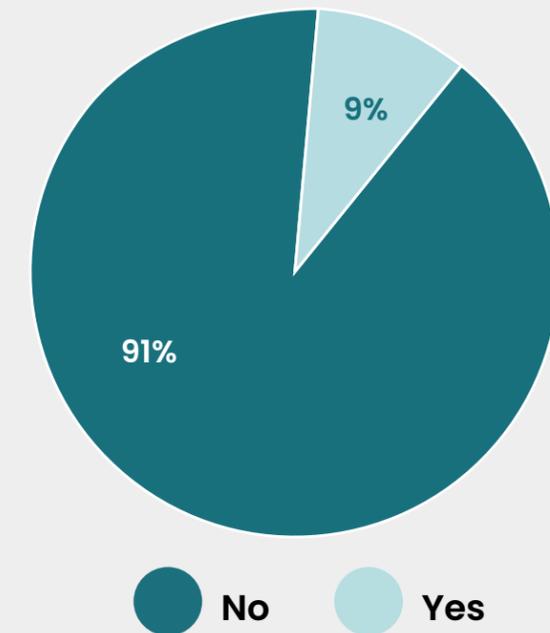
Attract:

**Criteria: Is there an AI-powered digital assistant
(also known as a recruitment chatbot)
to provide immediate assistance?**

A digital assistant can simplify the career site journey

Recruiting chatbots are effective in improving the candidate experience and having one may indicate whether the employer is staying on top of tech trends. Leading employers leverage AI-powered digital assistants to recruit anytime or anywhere, at scale, keeping talent pipelines warm by engaging candidates with automated text campaigns. Digital assistants can engage candidates 24/7 on career and social sites to nurture immediate interest, answer questions, collect information, automatically screen candidates, schedule interviews, and convert online visitors to qualified candidates. They can even connect job seekers to roles and help them apply in their native language. Findings show that despite the proven benefits, only 9% of the employers use chatbots. While only 9% of the largest European companies leverage this technology, it can improve recruiting efficiencies and positively impact the candidate experience.

Chabot on the website



- Only 9% of companies used a digital assistant on their recruitment sites.
- This remains unchanged from two years ago.

Attract:

Criteria: Are employers using videos on career sites?

Videos help showcase employer branding

Videos give brands a more dynamic and authentic way to communicate culture and the benefits of working there. Many European companies have embraced the use of video testimonials that feature employees talking about their jobs and sharing a day in the life at the organization.

- 74% of companies feature videos on career sites. Videos mostly featured new employees or interns discussing career paths within the company.
- There was only a slight increase (+3%) from 2019 in the use of videos for communication, showing that there is an opportunity for more companies to enhance their career site and communication methods with videos.

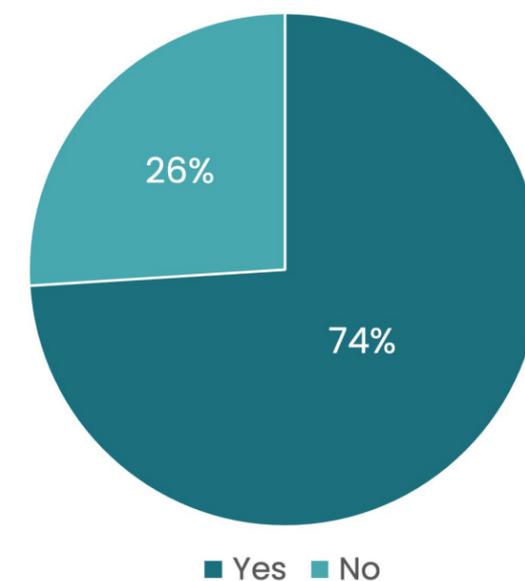
While employers value video communication on career pages, few use that technology for **job postings**. However, video is a powerful way to share details on specific jobs and projects, especially by a real team member, to help candidates understand more about a role before applying. It's a win-win for candidates and employers. Given that so few companies

currently use video in this way, those who do could differentiate themselves in the market and better attract the right talent for the right roles. In fact, separate data from the iCIMS platform revealed employers that use video saw an increase in SEO traffic to their career site by 75%.

Additionally, job seekers spend up to 37% more time on career sites when video testimonials are present and applications increase up to 34% when video testimonials are present on job descriptions.

Yet, only 8% of European companies on the Global Fortune 500 included videos on job postings

When employer branding resonates with visitors to a career site, candidates may be more likely to apply. To improve engagement and conversion, employers should consider adding an easy apply option, video testimonials and an option to join a talent pool for future opportunities.



Videos present on career sites

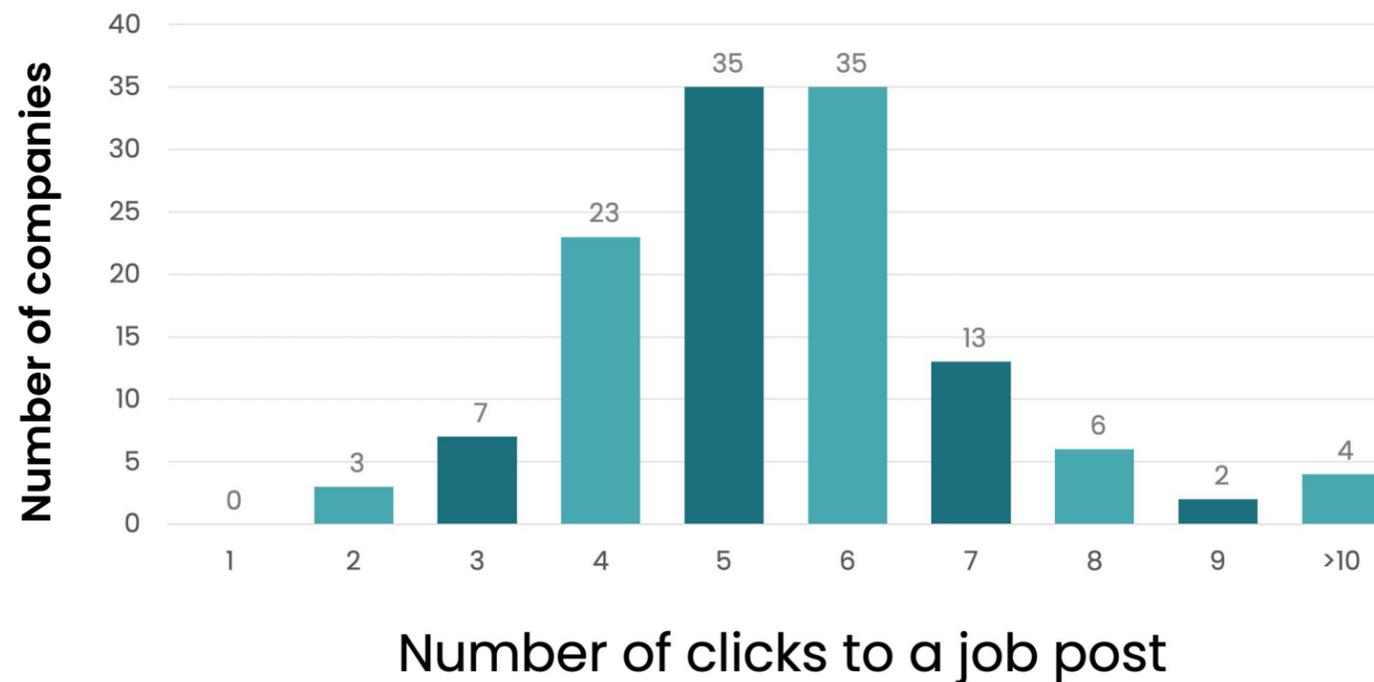
Attract:

How do job postings measure up?

Criteria: How many clicks does it take to find a job posting?

Job postings are relatively easy to find.

- It took an average of **5.5 clicks** to find a sales position once a website was opened.
- 3% of companies required more than 10 clicks to apply for a job, while 2% of companies only needed two clicks.



Criteria: How do you rate the job posting?

To engage candidates and encourage them to apply, job descriptions should be precise with all the information related to the role, including location, salary, and required skills. But most of all, job postings should use storytelling to encourage job seekers to apply.

Germany (3.8)



England (3.5)



Switzerland (3.5)



Italy (2.6)



Spain (2.6)



France (2.8)



3.2 The average job posting score per country

Engage

Engaging with talent – both candidates and employees – should be authentic, personalized, and convenient. Candidates want to get a feel for what it's like to work for an organization before applying and accepting a job. Talent teams should consider the technology they use to communicate and engage and ensure the application process is quick and easy.



Engage:

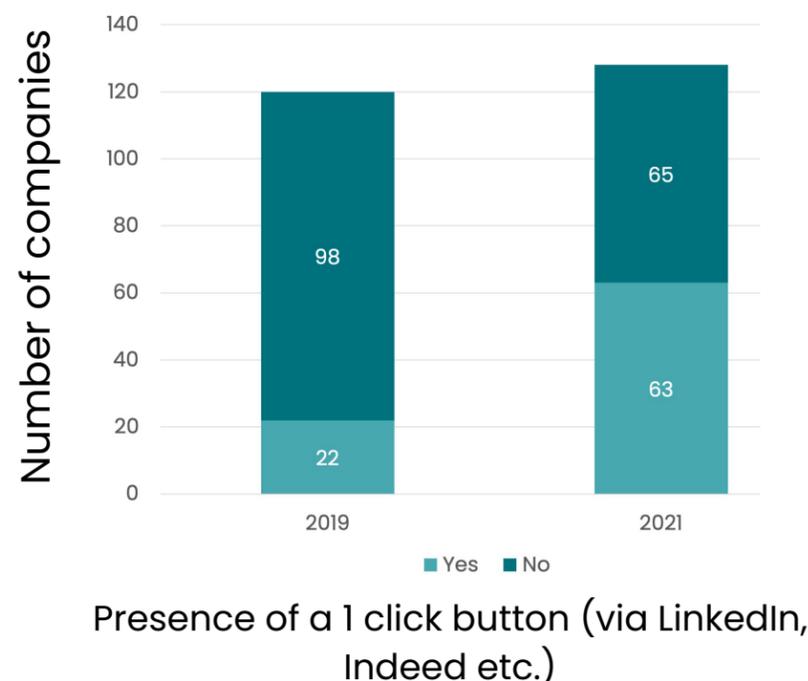
The candidate journey doesn't start or stop with the application. No matter how desirable a company is, candidates may give up if the process is too long, complicated, or tedious.

Facilitate the application process

Criteria: Is there an easy, one-click-to-apply option?

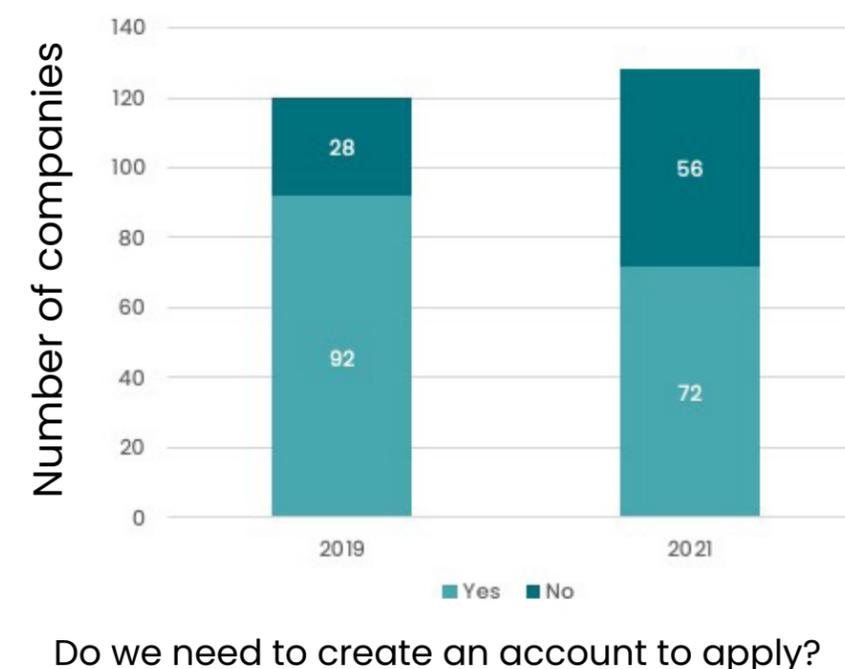
Whether on social media, job boards, or a career site, the ability to apply in one click is the easiest way to immediately engage candidates and increase applications.

- Almost half of the companies (up from 22% in 2019) imported applicant data from LinkedIn or Indeed.
- There's still room for improvement: Some candidates still had to fill out redundant information later with one-click apply



Criteria: Do candidates need to create an account to apply?

- Recruiters are increasingly doing away with requiring candidates to create an account, dropping from 76% to 56%. Despite the trend toward simplification, this study found that many companies still have a long and sometimes disjointed application process.
- Employers should consider integrating with social media sites and job boards and offering one-click to apply to reduce frustration associated with long applications and dead links.
- Efficiency indicator: CVs already contain all the information a recruiter needs; this step could be automated.



Engage:

How many clicks to apply?

27 clicks to apply on average

Applying can still be tedious, but companies are starting to decrease the number of clicks required in the process.

- It took an average of 27 clicks to apply for a sales job, down from 41 clicks two years prior.
- More than half surveyed required more than 26 clicks.

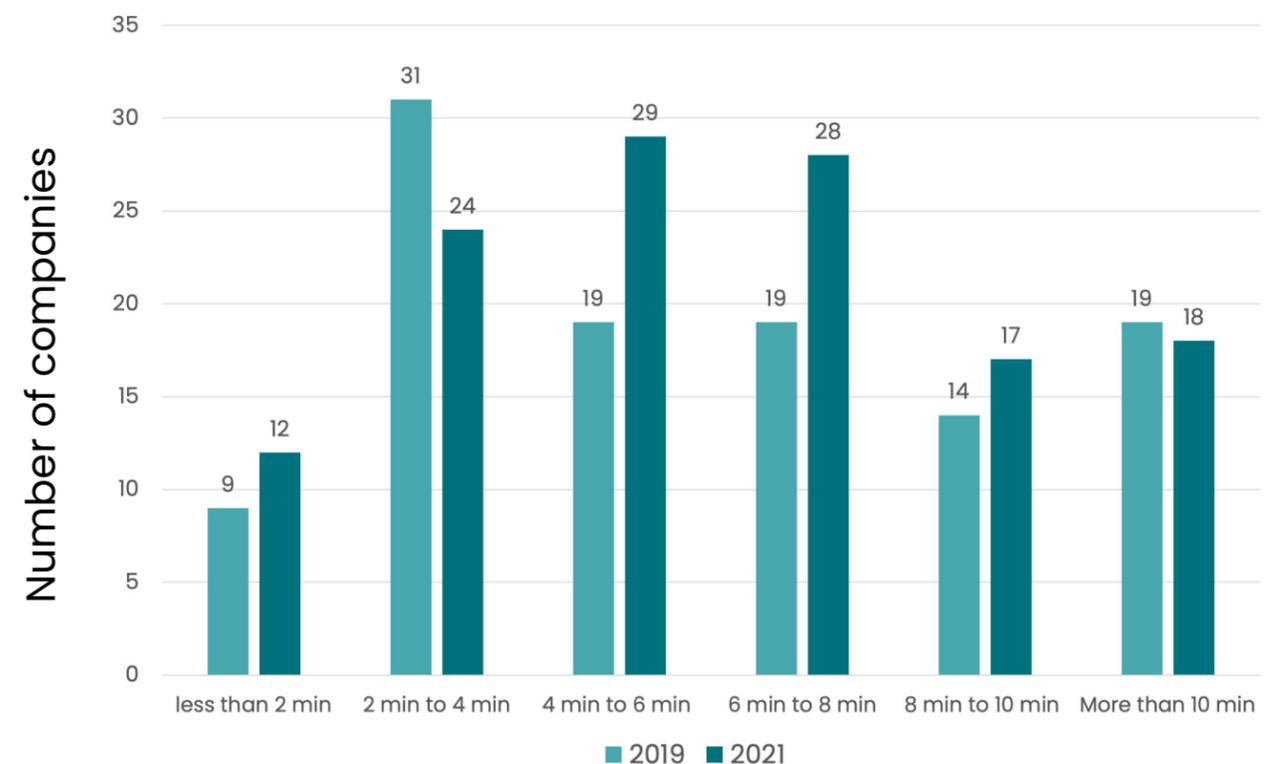
A few organizations allow candidates to email their CV and cover letter instead of applying through a career site, social media, or job board. This simplifies the process for some candidates. Some technology providers may enable organizations to integrate their email applications with their candidate relationship management system (CRM) and application tracking system (ATS) to make it easy on the candidate while supporting the recruiter experience.

This indicator highlights the disparities between career sites as the number of clicks ranges from 6 (with automatic CV parsing) to >50.

Criteria: How long does it take to apply?

About 6 minutes. The average time to apply remained about the same.

Only three companies required 15 minutes or more to apply. Candidates reported these applications were painful; companies required them to re-write all of information from their CV.



Time to apply (minutes)

Engage:

Application done! Now what?

If you don't want top talent to ghost you, don't ghost them during the hiring process. Confirming that an application was received and providing personalized feedback are easy ways to provide a great recruiting experience. This report also evaluated the follow-up by hiring managers.

Feedback or no feedback: Not a question anymore

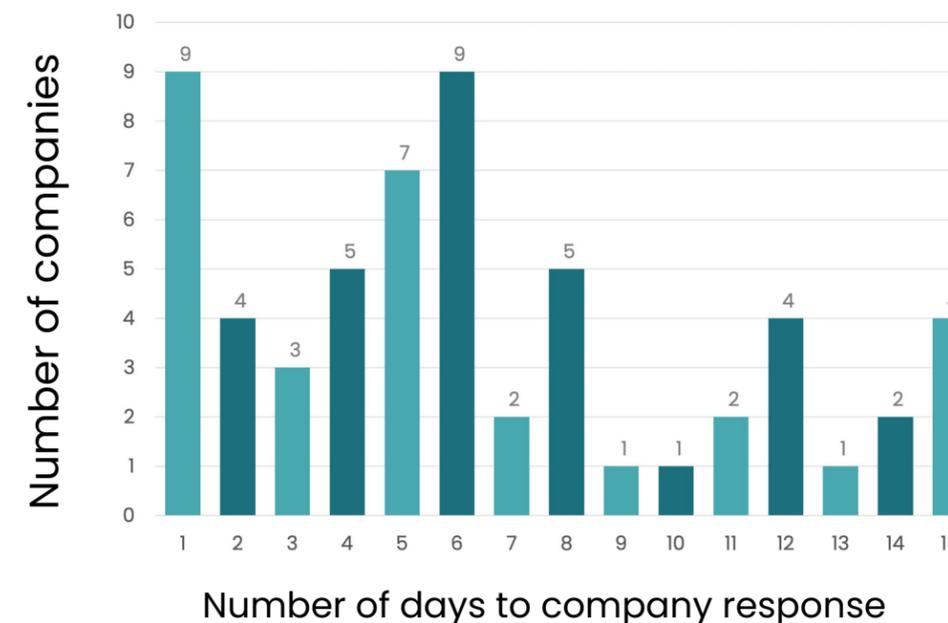
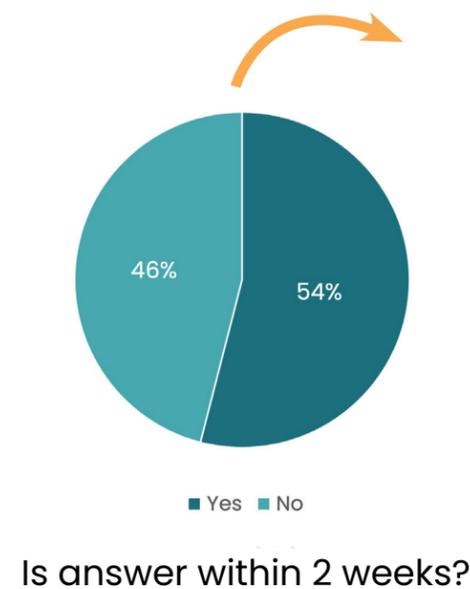
Criteria: Did candidates receive an automatic confirmation email?

In 2021, **7%** of companies didn't send an automatic confirmation email after submission, compared to 8% in 2019. It is surprising that there are still companies that skip this step that's easy to automate and is a simple way to improve the candidate experience.

Criteria: How many days will it take the company to reply?

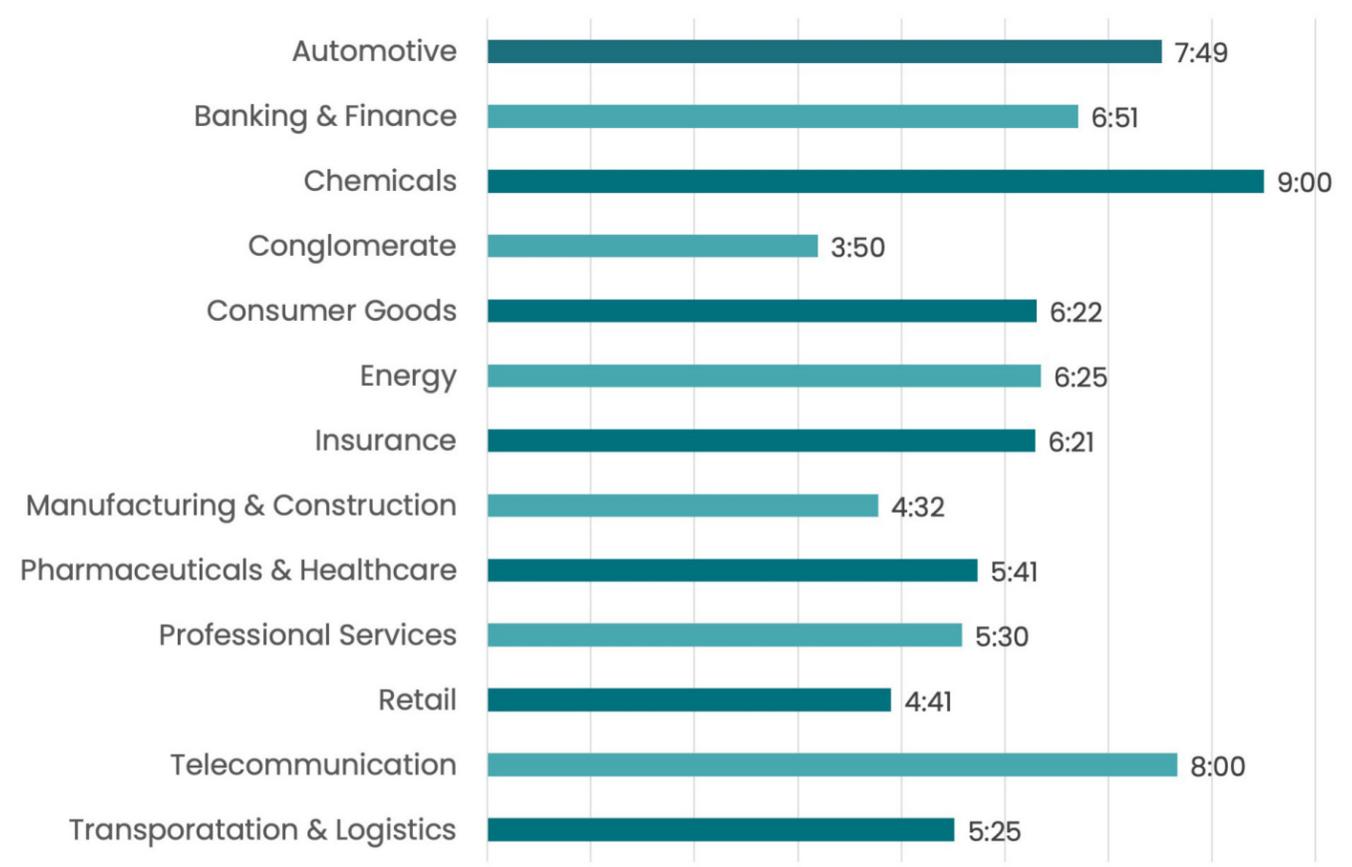
In 2019, **half of the companies did not reply within two weeks**. This year revealed similar results. In 2021, **nearly half of the companies did not reply by the time the analysis was conducted**. The companies that *did* respond to candidates, **replied within just over six days, on average**. By not responding or offering updates, companies risk losing quality candidates, many of whom assume they've been rejected.

All answers within 15 days have been considered to build this model.

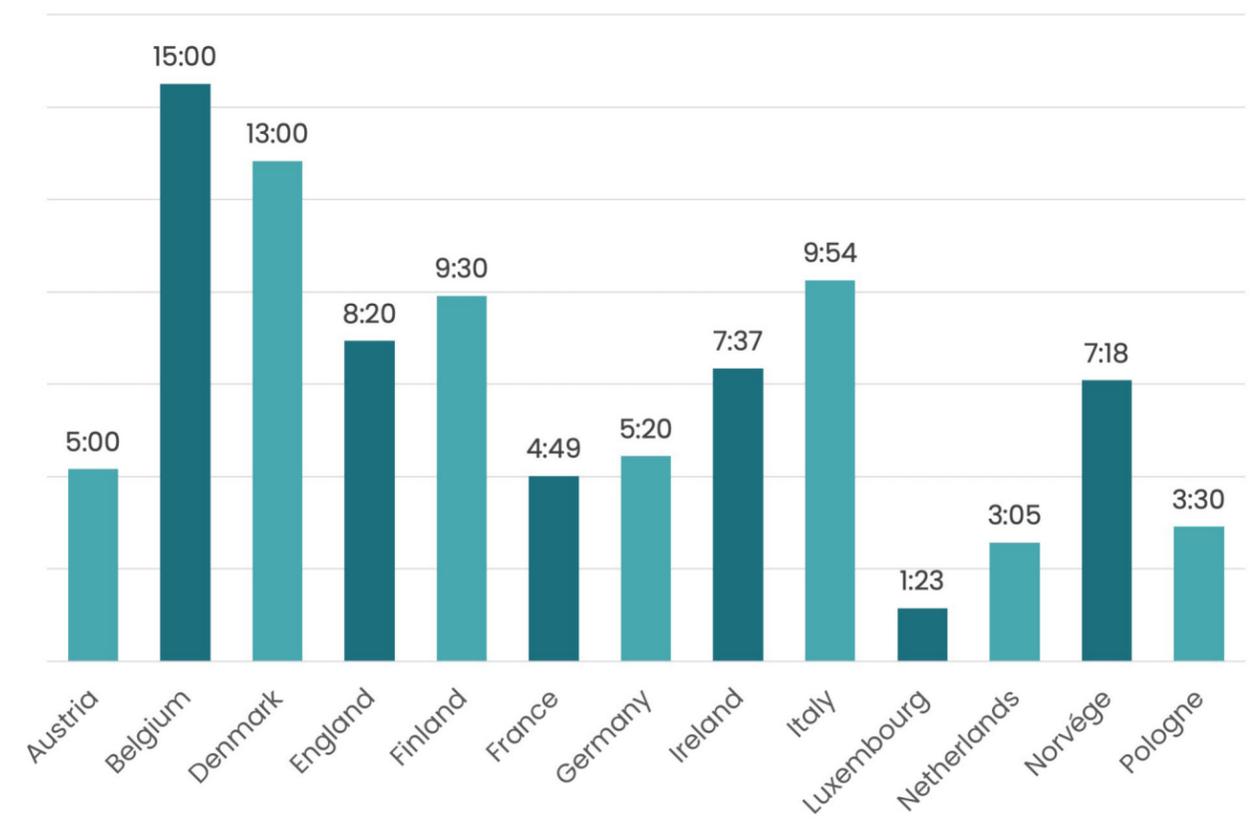


Engage:

Results per industry



Average time to apply per industry



Average time to apply per country

Engage:

Criteria: How did the company contact the candidate?



2% of companies contacted the applicant by phone in order to move forward.



97% of rejections were delivered by email.



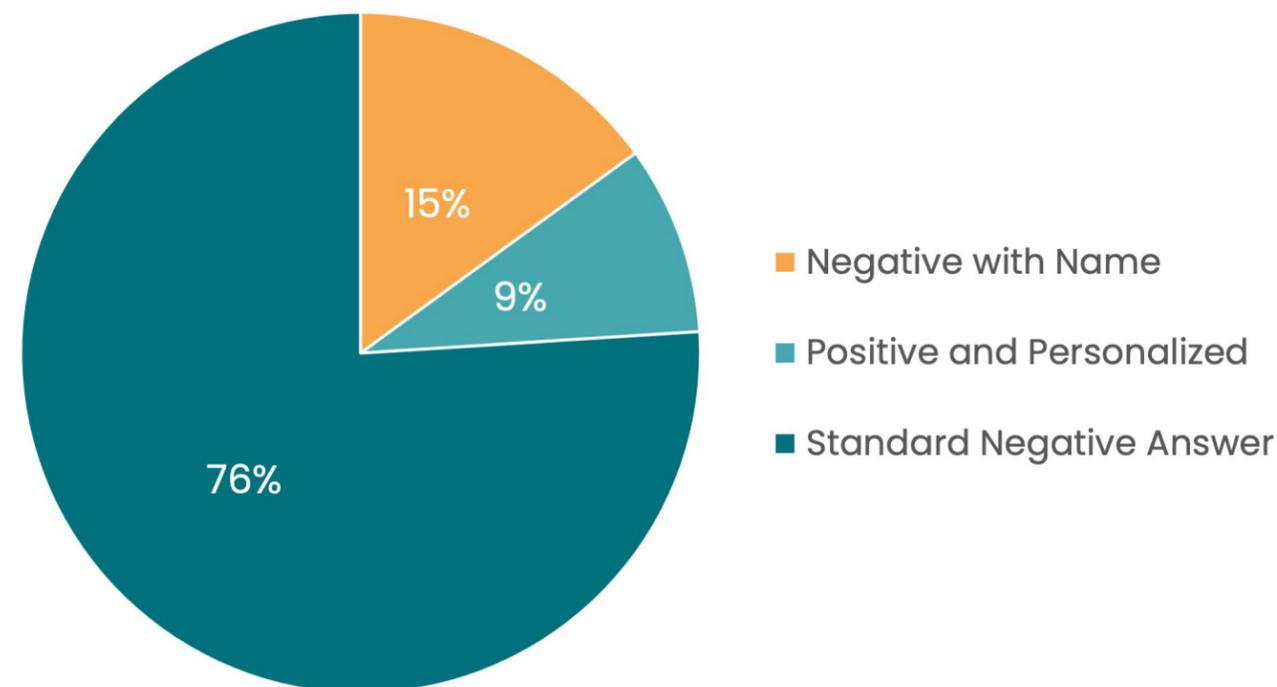
5% of responses were made by LinkedIn after a fast application.

To provide timely responses, improve the candidate experience, and reduce manual efforts, talent teams should also consider integrating texting into the larger engagement strategy. Text recruiting and engagement software can help to modernize, streamline and accelerate communication with both candidates and employees. According to data from Mobile Monkey, nearly 100% of people that receive an SMS are likely to open it, compared to only 20% open rate for email.

Criteria: Personalized feedback

Personalized but not personal

- Of the 59 organizations that gave an automated application response, most used a generic email to reject applicants.
- Overall, responses often lacked information about the specific job applied for or the reason for refusal.



Is the answer personalized?

Engage:

Criteria: Who is the sender?

88% of feedback emails were sent from a generic address

With this approach, the candidate is not given an HR contact to correspond with. This impersonal and anonymous feedback can leave a negative impression.

While not always feasible, getting personal feedback improves the candidate's impression of the company and increases the likelihood that the candidate will apply again and/or speak positively about the process and the company to others.



Analysis and recommendations

Efficiency, a cornerstone in the recruitment process

Companies today are more focused on improving candidate experience than ever before. Over the last two years, several indicators have improved, resulting in a smoother application process for candidates. Still, companies have a lot of opportunity to embrace technology to continue to simplify the process for candidates and their internal talent and hiring teams.

Companies tend to favor efficiency over design

Companies are looking for efficiency. Attracting top candidates requires a career site with a clear design, positive user experience and interface, features like real employee testimonials, integration to modern engagement tools, and a quick and easy application. Website design features remained the same on average, where user experience scored better than user interface. However, a few companies still used outdated systems that offered poor application experience.

Talent teams are slowly adopting consumer-driven trends

The growing prevalence of digital assistants makes it easier for candidates to apply and shows that companies are adopting new technology. However, the number of companies

using AI-powered recruiting chatbots was not significantly higher than in 2019. This indicates that companies have not made this technology a priority during the last two years.

Other technologies include the auto-filling procedures with CV parsing and LinkedIn integration and user-generated video storytelling. Few companies are using it, but it could be an efficient way to lower the application time (and number of clicks). In the meantime, companies try to simplify applications using one-click apply or eliminating requirements to create accounts.

There is still a lack of communication

One of the big challenges for large European companies is keeping candidates updated on their application status. Just because you're a recognizable brand doesn't mean candidates don't want to be kept in the loop of the hiring process.

Our consultants reported very few improvements in the time taken to answer or the quality of feedback since only positive answers were personalized and complete. Digitalization cannot replace a true human relationship with applicants.

Recommendations for happy and satisfied candidates

- Build a dynamic and engaging career site (or dedicated page). This is no longer optional for showcasing your brand image and offering a better user experience.
- Ensure you have a responsive version of your career site for mobile platforms.
- Decrease the number of clicks to apply to your job posting to fewer than 10.
- Send out an automatic email to candidates for each submitted application.
- Don't take more than a month to send out automatic rejection emails.
- Have an option to import LinkedIn data when applying.

Recommendations to take your candidate experience to the next level

- Use employee-generated videos for authentic testimonials on your career sites.
- Add videos to humanize your job postings.
- Implement an AI-powered digital assistant and text engagement.
- Don't make account creation mandatory and offer the possibility of easy applications with CV parsing.
- Increase the communication with your candidates during the first month after the application to keep them engaged.
- Personalize candidate feedback.

Methodology:

Collecting the data

Students from HEC Junior Conseil applied to jobs on the websites of the 133 European corporations ranked in the Global Fortune 500. They used the same CV, cover letter, pseudonym, and fictitious LinkedIn profile. Each student collected the same data according to 18 criteria and thematic questions:

Each student collected the same data according to 18 criteria:



Interface

- User interface and design (graded from 1 to 5)
- Is there a dedicated career site?
- Is there a recruiting chatbot/digital assistant?
- Is the employer using videos to present itself?
- Is the website mobile friendly?



Application process

- Number of clicks to find open jobs
- How would you rate the job posting?
- Is the employer using videos on job posting?
- Number of clicks to apply
- Is there an “easy apply” option?
- Does the candidate need to create an account?
- Average time to apply (timer)



Application follow-up

- Confirmation email
- Average time before a company replies
- Feedback sent by email or by phone/text?
- Is negative feedback personalized?
- Is feedback sent from an HR’s email address?

Methodology: Application process

- ▶ Students applied to sales positions.

The application process indicators were not recorded when the applications were submitted by email or LinkedIn, except for the number of clicks to a job posting.

- ▶ The number of clicks included clicks on each form field. Time to apply was calculated from the moment the site page was opened to when the application was submitted.

- ▶ When it was possible to apply by importing data from LinkedIn, this method was preferred to manual data entry because it is closer to reality and what candidates usually choose.



Important information

Early bumps in the road

Of the 133 companies sampled, the researchers could not apply directly to five of them (3.75 %), compared to nine in 2019. Here's why:



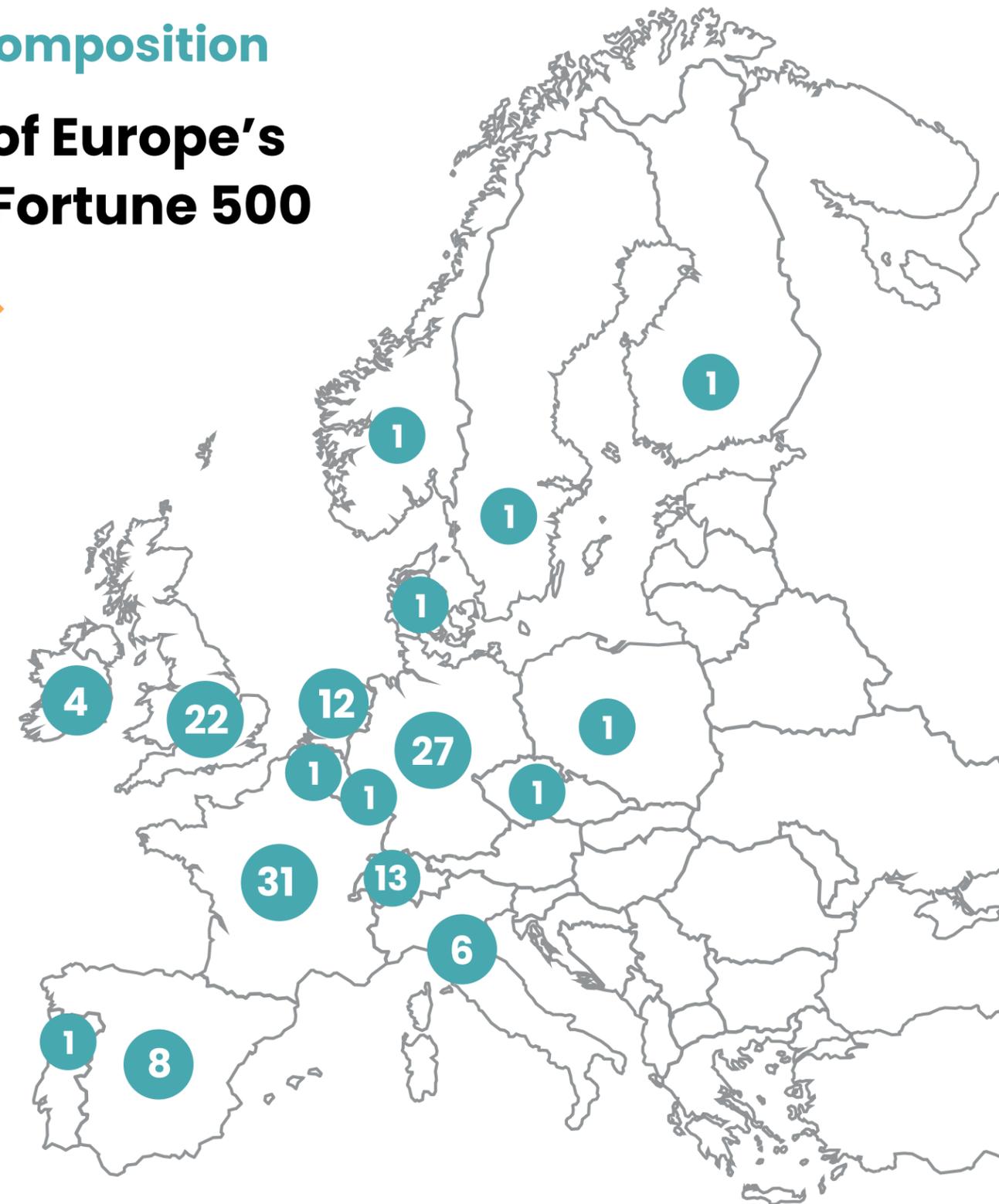
No open jobs on their career site



No possibility to apply

Sample composition

133

 of Europe's Fortune 500



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